



Civilized Borders: A Study of Israel's New Crossing Administration

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Abstract: At Israel's new border crossings with the West Bank, modernization has become *the* buzz-word: not only referring to modernized mechanical means—a Wall, newly designed crossings, and micro-mechanics such as turnstiles, signs, and fences—but also to new and sophisticated scientific technologies, such as sensor machines and scanners, and to modernized means of identification, such as advanced computer systems and biometric cards. This paper considers the transformation of the Israel–West Bank border to be a result of four major processes: reterritorialization, bureaucratization, neoliberalization, and de-humanization. I utilize in-depth interviews with top military and state officials and with human rights activists as well as a series of participatory observations to explore the on-the-ground implications of the borders' transformation.

Keywords: borders, Israel/Palestine, Thing theory, neoliberalism, bureaucratization, territorialization, regulation of movement

Introduction

The occupation of three years ago . . . is not the occupation of today. The occupation has undergone a process of professionalization, or I don't know what to call it. Today the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] Spokesperson will tell you that everything is much more humane and much more adapted. No one stands in the rain any more and god knows . . . everything is in tip-top shape (Hanna Barag, interview).

According to Palestinian Israeli Knesset member Azmi Bishara (2004), Israel has become “the state of the checkpoints”, the occupied territories are the “land of checkpoints”, the Israelis are “the owners of checkpoints”, and the Palestinians are “the people of the land of checkpoints”. At least from a Palestinian perspective, then, the relationship between the two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, is very much formed within and informed by the space (and time) of the checkpoint. This paper highlights the military nature of Israel's relationship with the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and its underlying scheme of heightened control.

Yet this paper also corresponds with what Derek Gregory has identified as the “twilight zones” of “mobile frontiers”: a cartography

of temporariness where “nothing is fixed, nothing is clear”, and in effect, whereby every space in the occupied Palestinian territories becomes a border. “The border keeps creeping along, surrounding villages and watering places” (Gregory 2004:126–128). Similarly, the recent literature on borders has been increasingly stressing the growing informalization and flexibilization of border enforcement. In the context of the European Union, a number of scholars have highlighted the deterritorialization of border enforcement, namely that it has moved inwards to encroach upon everyday spaces and that it has become more mobile, more ad hoc, less formalized, and as a result, more omnipotent and dangerous (Andreas and Snyder 2000; Bigo and Guild 2005).

A similar development has been identified by various border scholars with regard to the US–Mexico border, namely the migration of border enforcement into the interior and into multiple aspects of daily life as well as its rescaling by various government agencies (Amoore 2006; Coleman 2007; Gilbert 2007; Varsanyi 2008; Winders 2007). These changes have been captured in a variety of overlapping terms such as globalization, deterritorialization, and the breaking, blurring, merging, and morphing of traditional borders along with the appearance of new borders (Marx 2007:84–85).

It is precisely this mobile and capricious impression that the State of Israel has been trying to move away from, at least toward certain audiences. Instead of what it formerly identified as “checkpoints”, the Israeli vocabulary now emphasizes the terms “border crossings” and, yet more recently, “international terminals”. But the shift is not only in vocabulary. It is a shift in the governing philosophy applied at the Israeli–West Bank border: from a military to a consumer-based approach, from old style checkpoints to new and modernized border crossings, administered through a rationalized bureaucracy. If before, the checkpoint represented an uncertain and transient place, operated by the whims of ad hoc, low-level soldiers and policemen, it is now being transformed, so Israel’s official claim goes, into a permanent physical construction, regulated by and operated through automated devices and professional officers. Israel’s old-style occupation, the claim continues, with its narrow focus on security and its aggressive on-the-ground manifestations, is now being replaced by efficient regulatory systems that foster an open and cooperative relationship with Palestinians.

The paper thus takes the debate in the current literature on borders toward a different direction. Essentially, it reminds readers that border regimes are historical and geographical contingencies in terms of logic and operation. In particular, if the EU and the US–Mexico borders are becoming leakier and more mobile in terms of their operation, the Israel–West Bank case is clearly not following this trend, at least not exclusively so. While some aspects of this border are indeed fluid and capricious—or, in Michael Mann’s terms, military and

“despotic”—it is at the same time becoming more fixed, more territorial, more bureaucratic, and more “infrastructural”—again, using Michael Mann’s terminology (Mann 1984).

This reterritorialization of the border is not, by any means, intended to create a de facto two-state solution, nor is it an Israeli disengagement in action. It is, rather, a shift in the mode of occupation in the West Bank: from an ad hoc military power to a sophisticated, modernized, and professional bureaucratic regime. This reterritorialization of Israel’s border regime in the West Bank is strongly tied to *bureaucratic* power. In this sense, my analysis departs from the narrow military lens of much of the critical literature in geography on this topic (see, eg, Gregory 2004; Graham 2002a, 2002b). It explores the changes in the Israeli–West Bank border administration since the Oslo Agreement of 1993, and in yet more detail, in the aftermath of the second Intifada of 2004. This emphasis is a direct response to Joe Heyman’s call for a reflective and critical literature on bureaucracies in unequal societies (1995:285). My use of the term bureaucracy draws on Max Weber’s typology of rational administration (in Gerth and Mills 1946:204), which is part of his larger discussion of societal power, as well as on Michael Herzfeld’s emphasis on bureaucracy’s indifference toward outsiders (1992:19).

I situate this movement toward bureaucratization and the overall civilizing mission of the Israeli occupation regime in a *neoliberal* context. Here, my work draws on and corresponds with a growing trend in the literature on borders. This literature emphasizes neoliberalism as shaped at once by the transnational entrenchment of free market rights—which refashions state practices in the idealized images of the free market—and the increasingly oppressive impact of securitized nationalism (Sparke 2006; Varsanyi 2008). Indeed, at Israel’s new border crossings, modernization has become a buzz-word: not only referring to modernized mechanical means—a Separation Barrier, newly designed crossings, and micro-mechanics such as turnstiles, signs and fences—but also to new and sophisticated scientific technologies, such as sensor machines and scanners, and to modernized means of identification, such as advanced computer systems and biometric cards.

At the same time, there is also the modernized *human* management of the border: Israel has recently been transitioning from employing military personnel to the recent deployment of security guards hired by private companies. This, government officials stress, is part of a progressive effort to professionalize border operations and make them more efficient. It also makes the border into a more humane place. The term used by Israeli officials to indicate this shift in the human management of the border is “civilization” (*izruach*).

Underlying Israel’s shift from the old-style checkpoint to the new crossing has been a concern about its public image. Both the Israeli and the international media increasingly critiqued what was portrayed

as a regime of daily harassment of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers.¹ These images have elicited criticism in Israel and worldwide. In its performance of non-traditional military roles, then, the reputation of Israel's Defense Forces (IDF) as a strong and moral army was slowly eroding. This called for a dramatic change.

The paper explores the changes in Israel's border administration from the perspective of *things*. Throughout, it stresses the physicality of the technologies used at the border crossings, mostly drawing on the literature of Science and Technology Studies that focuses on things as actants that operate within human–nonhuman networks (see, eg, Brown 2001; Callon 1986; Latour 1987). The Separation Barrier and the architectural design of the crossings are two of the larger examples of physical border technologies provided in this paper, which are followed by a number of smaller things designed into the border: signs, mechanized queues, turnstiles and chimneys, as well as sensor machines, plastic cards, paper permits and computers.

What most interests me here is the work that the materiality of things does to naturalize, normalize and fix the mobile power dynamics that take place at the border, a work that is done precisely through their enactment in space. At the same time, I show that the physical cannot sustain itself as an exclusive technology of control. Rather, the threat of violence is always implicit in the physical state of things at the border crossing (Handel 2007). Through the design of nonhuman things into the infrastructure of the border, it is made to seem not only inevitable, scientific and neutral, but also progressive and civilized. But eventually, the intensified use of things—in effect, the *de-humanization* of the Israel–West Bank border—also translates into a project of *dehumanizing* the Palestinian at the border.

Finally, the paper is unique in the methodology it employs in this context. It relies on a dozen in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted in the summer and fall of 2008 with former and present high military officials and with several activists in the Jewish Israeli human rights and women's organization MachsomWatch. It also relies on my own observations as a former member of MachsomWatch, which I conducted on a weekly basis between 2002 and 2004, along with participatory observations that I conducted in the summers of 2005, 2006 and 2008 at Qalandia/Atarot (Arabic/Hebrew), Bethlehem/Rachel and Abu-Dis/Zeitim. Together, the interviews and observations construct an “insider ethnography” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:31) that reveals some of the on-the-ground implications of the spatial and administrative modernization of the Israel/West Bank crossings. As far as I know, the recording of Israel's acclaimed process of modernization from the personalized perspectives of both high military officials and human rights activists has not been utilized in other studies on the

Israel–West Bank border (see, eg, Abu-Zahra 2007; Handel 2007; Gordon 2008; Weizman 2007; but see Heyman 1995 for a similar ethnographic approach, albeit in the context of the US–Mexico border).

The paper starts by identifying the territorial aspects of the new border—namely, its mechanical fixing into the infrastructural design of the place, moves to explore its bureaucratic dimensions—namely, its heightened focus on identification and computerization, and concludes by reflecting on some of the neoliberal stances that underlie the project of transferring the border’s management to civilian hands.

Fixing the Border: A Project of Reterritorialization

In the beginning the checkpoint was made up of large tin barrels filled with stones . . . the barrels were later filled with concrete. They were soon replaced by red and white plastic road barriers, which were later themselves replaced with concrete road barriers, to which large concrete cubes were added, to which fencings of barbed wire were added and then rocks of many sizes (Bishara, in Weizman 2007:148).

The Separation Barrier

In June 2002, the government of Israel decided to erect a physical barrier to separate Israel from the West Bank. In most areas along its 723-km-long route, the barrier is comprised of an electronic fence with dirt paths, barbed-wire fences, and trenches on both sides, at an average width of 60 m (Figure 1). In some areas, a wall 8 m high has been erected in place of the barrier system. The Separation Barrier

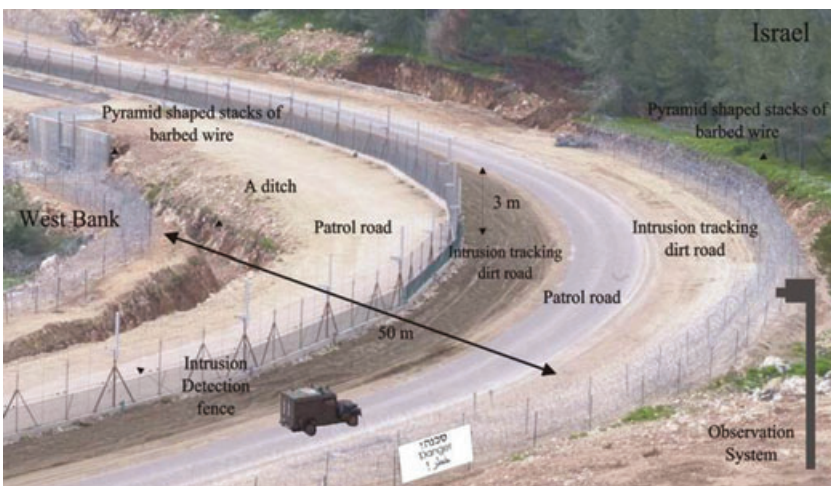


Figure 1: Israel’s multilayered security fence system, 2008 (courtesy of the IDF and Defense Establishment Archives, and the Israeli Ministry of Defense)



Figure 2: The wall at Gush Etzion (Etzion bloc) (photo by author, August 2008)

was to replace the previous situation whereby hundreds of checkpoints, mostly transient (or in the Israeli military jargon: “flying”; Handel 2007), were scattered through numerous routes, not only those leading into Israel but also those within the occupied territories themselves (Tirza, interview). The new border regime’s focus has been situated, conversely, on the line drawn between Israel and the occupied West Bank, and here is where its main efforts lie (Figure 2). In effect, the total number of checkpoints and roadblocks has been reduced in the new regime, a fact that the military officials interviewed here have highlighted to demonstrate Israel’s improved humanitarian attitude toward Palestinians (Paz and Tirza, interviews).

Barriers and walls perform a straightforward physical task: they prevent movement between the two sides they construct, thereby funneling human (and certain nonhuman) traffic to specific sites, be they crossings, gates, passages, terminals, or checkpoints. These sites then become obligatory passage points (Graham 2007). Similar to the US–Mexico border, which, at least on the face of things, blocks passage from south to north only (see, eg, Fletcher and Weisman 2006), Israel’s Separation Barrier is also apparently constructed to block only movement in one direction: from the occupied territories into Israel and only by those who are perceived as threatening Israel’s national enterprise. The movement of Jewish Israelis, especially settlers, is to remain easy and swift. This brings to mind the operation of expedited lanes in the US borders with Mexico and Canada, which operate

based on the distinction between safe travelers, deemed for a high-fit primary processing, and questionable travelers, made subject to the ordeals of secondary processing (Pallitto and Heyman 2008:319; Sparke 2006:160).

But the distinctions between quick lanes at the US border and the binary mobility regime enacted by Israel far outweigh the similarities. First, while at the US border the separate lanes are part of the same crossing, in this instance settlers and Palestinians are funneled into separate crossings altogether (Weizman 2007:147), demonstrating Israel's deterministic view of risk, namely one that sees in every Palestinian a terrorist (Gregory 2004:21). This makes communication (or friction) between the two populations very difficult.

Secondly, while the US–Mexico quick-lane passage is essentially an economic privilege bought by business class travelers, here one's national identity predetermines the bifurcated alternatives. Colonel (retired) Tirza—Head of Security Fence Operations 1994–2007—provides an example for this bifurcated separation: Eliyahu Crossing, at the center of Israel, “is built for passage of Israelis”, he says, while “nearby there's an agricultural gate for Palestinian farmers”. Tirza compares this project with “the American system called ‘profiling’” (Tirza, interview) and explains that in order to manage risk effectively, Israel must distinguish between safe and dangerous populations, which translates here into a separation of Israelis from Palestinians. Tirza's depiction corresponds with various scholarly studies on the proliferation of risk management techniques as a means of governing mobilities (Amoore 2006: 337; and, more generally, Beck 1992).

A third difference between the two border geographies has to do with the means of movement that their administration affords to the crosser. Since the Oslo Accords of 1993, Palestinian cars have been prohibited from entering Israel. According to Tirza, “Palestinian cars don't enter because we don't have sufficient means to examine cars” (Tirza, interview). As a result, Palestinians must cross the border by foot. Crossing the border on foot is humiliating. It also strips Palestinians from the privileges of modern mobility, indirectly supporting the construction of every Palestinian as illegal, because who else would cross international borders by foot? As far as I know, this sort of blanket restriction toward an entire population has not been practiced on any of the US borders and on any other border for that matter.

Lastly, since Israeli settlers reside in scattered locations throughout the occupied West Bank and not in any particular side of the barrier, Israel's task of securing them as well as its own territories is somewhat more complicated than that on the US–Mexico border. Either way, the enhanced mobility afforded to the Israeli settlers is a direct consequence of the respective enclosure of the Palestinians, and vice versa (on



Figure 3: The same street in Abu-Dis before (on left) and after (on right) the Wall (photo on left by Neta Efroni, 15 February 2002; photo on right by Rachel Naparstek, 4 May 2005; both courtesy of MachsomWatch)

the distinction between enclosure and mobility, see Cunningham and Heyman 2004).

Several years prior to the Wall's construction in Jerusalem, low concrete blockades and roadblocks were prominent in certain areas. This ad hoc border was "passable", in the sense that Palestinians soon found routes around, under, and over it (Figure 3, left). However, when visiting the village of Abu-Dis in north-east Jerusalem in the summer of 2008, I encountered a different scene altogether. The semi-structured border has turned into a 24-ft-high wall (Figure 3, right), and thus the numerous improvised crossings have vanished from the border's landscape and been replaced with large crossings situated at much further distances from one another. In effect, the people of Abu-Dis, some of whom are residents of Jerusalem, must now travel for miles—and through a border crossing—to reach what was once the other side of the street.

Border Crossings

I see the passages as regular international passages. We try to make it so that the passage will be quick and swift, without any unnecessary interactions (Micha, interview).

Checkpoints, crossings, terminals, roadblocks, inspection points—Israel's military vocabulary is rich and precise, linguistically setting the stage for and reflecting various physical means of managing movement



Figure 4: Old-style checkpoint in El Hader, south of Jerusalem (photo by author, July 2004)

(see also Adey 2004; Amoores 2006; Cunningham and Heyman 2004; Pallitto and Heyman 2008; Sparke 2006). Together, these forms of movement govern the entire spectrum of Palestinian life under Israeli occupation (see also Weizman 2007:147).

In the old border regime, the checkpoints were situated in open space, where they were means of *blocking* movement (Figure 4). Then, Palestinians frequently worked around the checkpoints, many of them crossing illegally to get to work on the Israeli side. In the new regime, however, working around the wall or barrier is physically much more taxing (one can either dig below it or fly above it, the latter being almost impossible). In effect, the crossings have become potential (yet obligatory) points of *passage*. The barrier's slow but steady construction has thus gradually transformed the nature of the checkpoints, making the structure and management of the official crossings all the more important. In the new regime, then, the crossings have become the central node of Israel's bureaucracy of occupation.

The Separation Barrier contains 140 crossings composed of 40 or so pedestrian and commercial crossings and 100 agricultural gates (Tirza, interview). Not all crossings are staffed, Paz says, "because some are staffed only when they need opening". He suggests that there are another 30 or so checkpoints within the West Bank (not along the border) and approximately 500 roadblocks (Paz, interview).

Generally, every space embodies two alternative states of movement: "Go" or "No Go" (Levy 1997), or enclosure and mobility (Cunningham and Heyman 2004). The border presents a third state: the liminal movement that lies in between the "Go"/"No Go" stages (Turner 1975;

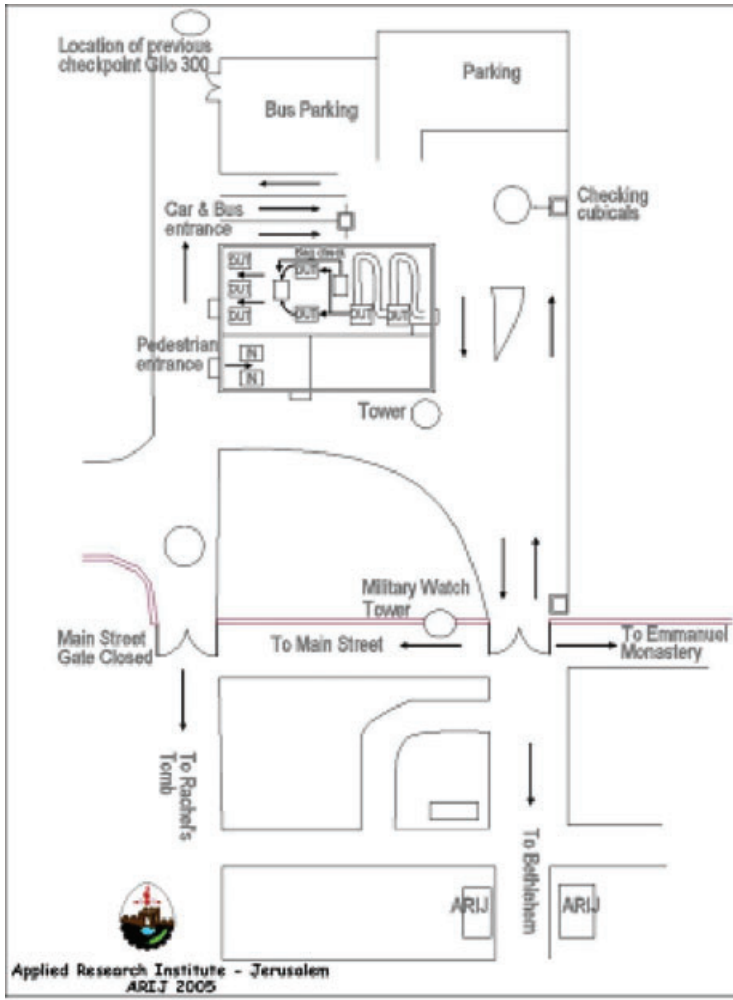


Figure 5: A 2005 scheme of Qalandia crossing (Israel on left, West Bank on right) (courtesy of the Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem)

Van Gennep 1960). For the most part, this is a temporary stage, a place in passing. Yet under the new Israeli border regime this liminal stage has been stretched in both space and time. The Qalandia crossing, situated north of Jerusalem by way of Ramallah, provides an excellent example of this stretch: the two to three-stage process used in most border crossings around the world extends here to five stages that are dispersed and separated through a maze of fences and enclosed spaces (Figure 5). Accordingly:

The new system includes a labyrinth of iron fences that channels passengers via a series of turnstiles. All passengers must go through five stages: the first set of turnstiles, the x-ray gates, the second

set of turnstiles, the inspection booth and an x-ray machine for the bags. This entire process is captured by a dense network of cameras, and the passenger is given instructions via loudspeakers. From their protected booths, Israeli security personnel operate the revolving gates remotely, regulating the rate of passenger flow. The inspection booths are encased in bulletproof glass (Weizman 2007:150).

Moreover, for the Palestinian, the process of crossing the border starts long before actually reaching the border itself: first, with the “upstream” preparations for the journey—both in the sense of getting the right papers and the right life (even avoiding the wrong kind of prior victimization, as illustrated below), then with the actual journey to the border through limited roads and checkpoints scattered on the way² and, finally, with the “downstream” effects of the border after crossing it. The prolonged state of liminality eventually extends to such a degree that the Palestinian comes to embody it and to take it with him or her wherever and whenever they go.

Yet although the Palestinian’s embodiment of a liminal spatiality and temporality extends beyond the actual space and time of the border crossing and in this sense it is internalized and thus portable (Amoore 2006:338; Ophir 2004)—it is precisely the new border administration’s intense focus on territorial infrastructure and its corresponding fixed bureaucracies that have enabled this extension. While both border productions exist in this context, this paper’s focus is on the spatially and temporally confined process of movement through the actual border crossing.

The regime of separation created by the post-Oslo border regime is double-edged: while its focus is the prohibition of Palestinians from entering into Israel, its less attended to proliferations are the prohibitions of Israeli citizens from crossing into the urban areas of the occupied territories (namely, Area A) (see, eg, Figure 6). This apparent symmetry encompasses many underlying asymmetries. First, while inspected on their way back to Israel, Israelis (although, to a much lesser extent, Palestinian Israelis) that have crossed the border illegally are only potentially susceptible to future criminal charges. By contrast, Palestinians who illegally cross into Israel undergo an immediate administrative detention that assigns them a permanent “prohibited” status (see below). The entry prohibition toward Israelis does not apply to Areas B and C of the occupied Palestinian territories, which are defined as such precisely because Israeli settlers live there, and therefore they are accessible to Israelis by definition. In effect, Jewish Israeli settlers weave across the lines wherever and whenever they please.

But for the large majority of Jewish Israelis, the distinctions between A, B and C zones as well as the distinctions between the various



Figure 6: A sign on the way to Jaba (Lil) checkpoint reads: “This way leads to Area A . . . Israeli entrance to Area A is prohibited, risks your life, and constitutes a criminal offence!” (photo by Tamar Fleishman, May 2009, courtesy of MachsomWatch)

crossings are irrelevant: the border is a dead end, not a point of passage. Israelis rarely venture beyond the border to visit Palestinian territories. This, it seems, is an important implication of separation regimes at large: when separating one group from the other, both groups are singled out. In other words, boundaries are fundamental to defining what is on *both* sides (Cunningham and Heyman 2004:295). In effect, many Israelis only look at the border from the outside; they do not access the space or communicate with the people that live beyond it.

The invisibility of Palestinian territories and people in the eyes of Jewish Israelis is also strongly tied to the theme of secrecy. Hanna Barag of MachsomWatch tells me that Israelis are not only prohibited from entering into certain Palestinian territories, but also from entering into the new terminals (to monitor soldier behavior, for example; see Braverman 2008). In her words:

There's this craziness in Israel that everything must be a secret, [even] things that are open for everyone to see. Why can't I go into the Bethlehem checkpoint? What happened? Any foreigner who comes from abroad enters and leaves from this checkpoint. At least 3,000 Palestinians cross it every morning. What could be so secret there? (Barag, interview)

This corresponds with what Jon Weiner defined as a “deep-seated tendency in all bureaucracies toward secrecy”. Classified files,

confidential documents, and official secrets, he continues, “are the means by which bureaucracies everywhere prevent scrutiny and criticism”. In the context of the Israel–West Bank border bureaucracy, Israel’s deployment of secrecy reinforces the invisibility of the Palestinian space to the larger Israeli public.

Within the crossings, multiple physical structures and things are physically designed to regulate the movement of those who wish to cross from one side to the other, especially from the Palestinian side into Israel. The next two subsections focus on some of these technological artifacts.

Micro-Mechanics: Signs, Queues, Turnstiles, and Chimneys

When approaching Israel’s new border crossings, large signs greet incoming passengers with promising images of flowers and trees. At the Qalandia crossing, for example, a large image of an open road features a series of signs that read “education”, “investment” and “happy holidays” (Figure 7, right). This image is physically surrounded by trash. The disparity between the welcoming image and the trashy reality around it makes one wonder about its purpose and effectiveness.

Similarly, inside the crossing, signs that wish passengers a “pleasant stay” are hidden by several layers of metal fences. In effect, despite their physical existence side by side at the space of the border and the balanced approach they are intended to promote, the consumer-based approach of the international terminal, on the one hand, and the security



Figure 7: Entrance to Qalandia Crossing. On left: debris under sign. On right: sign above debris. Translation of sign (from background to foreground): *Istithmar*: investment; *Tarbiya wa talim*: education and teaching; *Tanmiya*: development; *Izdihar*: prosperity; *Rizk*: “divine gift”, blessing, livelihood; *Kull am wa anutm bi kheir*: Eid Greetings (photos by author, August 2008)



Figure 8: Signs on the Palestinian side of Qalandia crossing (photos by author, August 2008)

based approach of the checkpoint, on the other hand, send out rather conflicting messages (see also Sparke 2006:174).

At the old-style checkpoints, the situation was transient and ad hoc: one moment one soldier's word was the official order of the place, only to be replaced by its opposite the next moment. There was no written set of instructions, at least not one that was visible to Palestinians. Signs were a rare occurrence. Conversely, at the new border crossings a multitude of signs awaits Palestinians at every corner and curve, visibly instructing them how to conduct themselves at every step of the way. The abundance of signs at the new border is yet another manifestation of Israel's show of permanence.

Now that written transcripts have come to exist, they are also vandalized as such, most likely by Palestinians. "Welco__t__th_insp__ __ __poi__" reads one of the signs (Figure 8), missing most of its Hebrew and English characters, probably a combination of Palestinian vandalism and Israeli neglect, not unlike the trash piling up at the entrance. The erased sign makes the site of instruction into a hollow caricature of itself, thus implicitly turning Israel's visible regulatory efforts on their head. In effect, the signs, along with their erased letters, are both a proclamation of Israel's new management of the crossings according to standardized norms, and a combination of two other statements: first, that inscribed by the Palestinians through their erasure of the letters of this text, and second, that of Israel's underlying statement of neglect by not taking action to amend the vandalized situation.

After encountering the series of welcoming signs, the first stage in the actual movement through the crossing is the queue. Whereas officially,



Figure 9: Queues and turnstiles in Qalandia, August 2008 (photos by author)

the queue is not part of the crossing itself but a preliminary function thereof, it is a critical stage in the Palestinian's experience of the border. Many Palestinians secure their position in line hours before the border crossing is officially open, hoping to make it to the other side on time to meet their employer just before the break of dawn. For years, the queues and their management were left to Palestinian responsibility and formed themselves in open space. Now, queues are constructed and enforced through metal fences that funnel Palestinian movement.

During a visit to Bethlehem crossing, Hanna Barag of MachsomWatch points to a special queue designed for disabled people. Yet it is almost always closed, she laments (Barag, interview). Otherwise, Israel's physically imposed queues are not designed to accommodate groups with special needs, for example parents with children and women. In effect, the new crossings exclude many Palestinians, especially traditional Muslim women, who usually refrain from direct physical contact with male strangers.

Moreover, instead of the old way of managing the Palestinian queue—which usually deployed an Israeli soldier shouting “*wahad-wahad*” (“one-by-one”)—the turnstile now makes it physically impossible to move in any way other than one-at-a-time and in any other direction but forward (Figure 9, right). This mechanism is hardly new, nor is it by any means sophisticated. Indeed, Barag refers to the metal queues as “cattle paths” and explains that they enable a strict control of movement by Israeli soldiers without necessitating any direct physical contact.

According to scholar Tal Arbel, upon a request by the contractors of Israel's Ministry of Defense, the manufacturer of the turnstiles reduced the length of their metal arms from the Israeli and international standard of 75–90 to 55 cm when manufacturing for the West Bank and Gaza (Tal Arbel in Weizman 2007). When I ask about this unique feature, Colonel Tirza insists that the turnstiles follow international standards and are not narrower than those used at, say, a bank. “It's just mean



Figure 10: Turnstile in Huwvara, January 2009 (photo courtesy of MachsomWatch)

all these things [that people say]”, he says in response to Arbel’s claim (interview). Either way, Barag testifies as to how the turnstiles regularly trap inside their arms larger people, parents with children, people with luggage, and pregnant women (interview; see also Figure 10).

Additionally, Barag points out that on top of the turnstiles there are two lights, green (“Go”) and red (“No Go”). Simultaneously, she instructs me, the turnstile’s operation is controlled by an Israeli guard, who is invisible to the Palestinian passenger. Once the passenger is inside the turnstile he is locked in until the invisible operator lets him out. The physical design that supposedly enables Palestinian discretion, however limited, is thus unnecessary and even misleading. The turnstile actually leaves no such discretion to its Palestinian user but rather is entirely controlled by the panoptic gaze of the Israeli soldier (but see Braverman 2008).

Barag also points to the metal fences situated on the top of turnstiles to ensure that Palestinians cannot cut the queue from above (Figure 9, middle). Just the other day, she continues, a Palestinian was crushed from the pressure between the entrance to the queue, on the one hand, and the turnstile, on the other hand, and as a result broke one of his ribs (interview). The physical technology of the turnstile, presented by Israel as decreasing human friction and promoting orderliness, thus ends up increasing other forms of friction and enhancing chaos. It does so, however, with no direct involvement by border officials.

Indeed, the nonhuman fixtures used in the new crossings—signs, fences, bars, turnstiles—distance their human programmers and operators and render their effects an inevitable outcome of technical design (see also, albeit in a different context, Braverman 2010a

forthcoming). This new form of inspection is sunk into the infrastructure of the border, and so it becomes embedded, standardized, routinized, and thus transparent (see also Graham 2008). As infrastructure, these technologies both fix and normalize the securitized modes of border operation.

And from the role of nonhuman technologies in reducing friction to their role in reducing time: Colonel Tirza insists that the new crossings facilitate swift and easy passage. In his words, “the intention isn’t to block passage but to let people pass and to provide a level of service to the person who needs to cross”. “For example”, he says, “I told the Court that in the checkpoints [that] I’m building in Jerusalem, anyone who doesn’t fall into the profiling won’t wait for more than an hour and a half, even at the busiest times. Today we’re at around 20 minutes—at busy times” (Tirza, interview). By contrast, a short video recorded by MachsomWatch at the Bethlehem crossing at 4:30 am shows that only 4 of 12 gates were operative at the time, which resulted in a several hour-long queue outside the crossing (MachsomWatch 2008). As in many other instances, it is hard to believe that the military officials and the human rights activists are actually speaking about the same places.

The next stage after crossing the first turnstile is the metal detector. Colonel Arieli—former head of the Negotiating Administration in then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s office and currently a member of the board of the Council for Peace and Security—says that “the metal detector for pedestrians [is] right at the beginning, so that no one would smuggle weapons in” (interview). At Bethlehem and Qalandia, the crossers are diverted into side rooms for further inspection or funneled to larger waiting rooms. Colonel Tirza explains what happens when a Palestinian is identified as posing a high security risk and picked out as such from the linear routine:

If the person is suspected, then he’s put into an additional room where he can be examined with additional technologies, for example the sensor. If he’s still suspected, he’s entered into the explosives room, and asked to take his clothes off . . . The room is built . . . like a regular room but there’s a shockwave [that] can disperse with minimal harm. [Anyway, the suspect] goes into the explosives room, gets naked. If there’s no problem he’s allowed to continue, if there’s a problem . . . the professionals are brought in.

The explosion room, Tirza further explains, is designed to facilitate explosion upward rather than sideways, which explains the design of chimneys on top of the terminal. He says:

In Qalandia, we built a 70-million shekel (15 million dollar) crossing—a nice, sophisticated crossing. [T]he day after it was opened, an Israeli group wrote *Arbeit Macht Frei*—“work shall set you free” . . . [They wrote it right there], on the sign that says “Welcome to Israel.” There

were chimneys, so that's why they did this. [As a result,] the building had to be covered . . . [Now,] the roof hides this chimney—you can't see it (interview).

MachsomWatch activist Yehudit Elkana has a different perspective about the architectural decision to construct chimneys on top of the new crossings. She ties it to Israel's unfortunate lapse of memory regarding the Holocaust's important lessons (interview). Elkana, herself a daughter of Holocaust survivors, bitterly complains that the signs of this tragedy are clearly marked on the ceilings of these fancy new terminals, even though they are now hidden from view.

Sensor Technologies

There's no genius inventions or anything [of the sort]. It's all simple things . . . It's how you operate the whole system and your intention behind it [that make all the difference] (Barag, interview).

The most profound technologies are those that disappear . . . They work themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it (Weiser 1991:94).

Beyond the infrastructural construction of the crossing, designed to tightly manage the physical movement of Palestinian crossers, more mobile fixtures have also been placed at the border crossing. Largely, these are put in place to ensure that the Palestinian passenger is unarmed. "Look", says Colonel Tirza in his interview, "there were attempts, more than once, to smuggle explosives in the rectum, and all kinds of other places, including by women. It's unavoidable . . . [But] today you have electronic means which allow us to [prevent this]".

In 2006, Israel spent some 50 million dollars on purchasing a series of sensors, developed by a US-based company (Figure 11) (Barda 2006). Electronically stripping the passenger down to his or her naked body, these sensors replace intimate physical contact with the ostensibly less intrusive act of seeing. Beyond being a source of information, the project of seeing into the body of the passenger establishes a physical and mental distance between the observed and the observer, all in the name of safety and security. This nexus between vision and safety is reflected in the product's name: SafeView. According to its manufacturer:

SafeView's patented technology detects objects composed of metal, ceramic, plastic, wood, or other materials that may be concealed. The technology was originally developed by a US Department of Energy lab, managed by Battelle Memorial Institute . . . SafeView's patented "active millimeter wave technology" is the safe, fast, and effective alternative to metal detectors, x-ray machines, and pat down searches at security checkpoints.



Figure 11: SafeView's Safescout 360 model (photo courtesy of US Department of Defense)

According to Tirza, “Instead of touching, [which is] humiliating . . . , their purpose is to check the person and his luggage, without having to touch the person himself” (interview). Tirza believes, then, that by eliminating the need for intimate physical contact between Israeli border officials and Palestinian passengers (namely, frisks and vaginal or rectal searches), this new sensor’s focus on seeing makes the required security checks conducted at the border more civilized, more humane (see also Braverman 2011). Colonel Arieli explains that:

The preference for automation in this case stems mainly from the risk to the lives of soldiers and the examiners and not just for the sake of efficiency itself. Because you know, there’s places where the speediest examination is always by a person, [while] the technological process takes more time. That’s why here they prioritized [security] (interview).

However, this electronic inspection is no less problematic than the old techniques (but see Volokh 2002). First, while pat-down searches involve a limited and known number of border officials, the information recorded by the machine is made potentially available not only to the officer at the here-and-now of the border crossing but also to an unlimited number of spectators in unknown spaces and temporalities. Also, it is precisely the invasiveness of the physical search that has triggered the intense array of legal requirements that pertain to searches in a variety

of modern jurisdictions around the world. But from a legal standpoint, the passenger does not have a reasonable expectation of privacy at the border. Thus, it is not even clear if he or she are entitled to be made aware of the search. “Why do we need his consent?” Bezael Treiber—current Head of the new Crossing Administration—asks me, “everything that has to do with obtaining permission wastes precious time” he concludes (interview). Finally, the focus on seeing the body of the passenger in this risk-phobic way reduces him or her to matter: flesh, organs, fluids and explosives. The passenger’s humanness, in other words, becomes fragmented and objectified.

Identifying at the Border: The Project of Bureaucratization

Who was born and who died and who wants to change address and who wants to get a passport and who wants to go here or there . . . All of this you have to register . . . in the Civil Administration. One mustn’t forget that the entire registration of citizens, including in Gaza, is controlled by Israel. The one who registers the citizens is the one in control . . . Bureaucracy reigns supreme (Barag, interview).

IDs, Permits, and Blacklists

The border is territorialized not only by physical designs of mobility and enclosure (Cunningham and Heyman 2004) but also by using population registries, identity cards, and permit systems to zone population movement (Abu-Zahra 2007; Gordon 2008). When passing through the new crossings, Palestinians must carry with them the following set of documents: their personal identification card, a permit to enter Israel at the relevant time and place, and a biometric or “smart” card, if they possess one.

In March 1968, Israel began issuing identity cards to every male over the age of sixteen. The cards have to be carried at all times (Gordon 2008:35). Israeli-issued identifications are color coded, which serves to visibly signify the geographic zone to which each person is confined. Initially, Palestinians in the West Bank were obliged to carry their identifications in orange plastic, Palestinians in Gaza in red, and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem in blue. In 1989, Military Order 1269 introduced green plastic covers for the identifications of former detainees, including those who were detained and released without charge. License plates follow the same pattern as identification cards (Parry 1995 in Abu-Zahra 2007). This seemingly technical administration of color hierarchies enables a simple and a routinized form of surveillance.

In addition to the identification card, a detailed system of permits administered by Israel regulates every aspect of Palestinian life. The permit system was first introduced in the West Bank following the Oslo Agreement of 1993 (Arieli, interview). Three types of permits enable Palestinian entry into Israel: general labor permits, merchant permits, and “all kinds of specific permits, whether [for] humanitarian, medical, or family visits”. According to MachsomWatch activist Ada Gorni:

In order to receive a permit to enter they need to go through several stages. First they need to submit a request. This costs them 40 shekels [10 dollars] in stamps. With this paper they come to the DCO [District Coordination Office] and go to the soldier. He checks on the computer. If they are lucky they get a magnetic card on the spot . . . The magnetic card is the first stage. Now you have to submit a request to enter (interview).

To obtain any permit, the person requesting it cannot be “prohibited” by either the Israeli police or the Israeli Security Agency (Shabak). Brigadier General (ret.) Ilan Paz—former Head of the Civil Administration in the West Bank—explains that:

[Prohibited by] the police is someone who got a fine and didn’t pay it or has a criminal record. It’s not a large number. The Shabak’s listing [on the other hand] is very serious: tens of thousands going on 200,000 people are blacklisted. [This,] because there’s a procedure for blacklisting a person but there’s no procedure for removing a name from the blacklist. Anyone who’s blacklisted—it’s almost for good (interview).

Paz continues:

Anyone who was involved in actions against security, anyone suspected of being involved in actions against security, anyone serving in the Palestinian security forces . . . Anyone who’s been married for several years and has no children . . . And there’s things that are less pleasant—like [blacklisting . . .] in order to [convince people] to collaborate, etc . . . Around 2 out of 3 adult Palestinian men are blacklisted.

A computerized data system manages Israel’s blacklisting of Palestinians. This system, Paz says, “includes whether a person is blacklisted, at what level, . . . and all kinds of information we know about him”. A connection to this system is now available at every crossing and in all the District Coordination Offices.

Hanna Barag of MachsomWatch depicts the computer as the utmost symbol of Israel’s convoluted bureaucracy of occupation:

You can’t maintain occupation with guns. It doesn’t work. It didn’t work. It won’t work. So they look for another tool. And this other

tool is bureaucracy: . . . taking over with the help of computers. What's easier? What's simpler? (interview).

Gathering, centralizing and constantly updating information about Palestinians, the computer creates a world of knowledge that is largely inaccessible to them, again contributing to the reinforcement of secrecy and invisibility at the border. Yet while the computer apparently functions quite well when utilized by Israel, it is much less reliable when it comes to direct Palestinian usage. Here, from the perspective of Ada Gorni, another MachsomWatch activist:

I was thinking that perhaps we can raise some money for the IDF to get them some more computers. There are only two in the DCO and also only two machines that produce the magnetic cards. And these machines break down constantly. There is always a problem: the computer breaks down, the machine doesn't work. "Computer *harbana*" they say to the Palestinians or sometimes they don't say anything at all and the Palestinians just sit outside and wait the entire day. This is twenty-first century technology. And no one bothers to update the people sitting outside and waiting, no one tells them "today the computer is out of order" (interview).

When applied toward Palestinians, then, the computer's physical thingness is highlighted, namely as something that can and that often does break. And things tend to become visible when they fail (Star and Strauss 1999). At the same time, when utilized by Israel this same computer system is made to seem technologically savvy. Highly dependent on the computer's operation, the smart card has recently become the pride of Israel's new border administration.

Smart Cards

First, there was the magnetic card. This card was required in addition to the permit, needed to be renewed every year or two and was, essentially, "an authorization that you're not blacklisted" (Paz, interview). In 2004, Israel began replacing the magnetic with biometric cards, first in Gaza and later in the West Bank. A senior official in the new Passage Administration explains that:

The reason we don't use magnetic cards any more is that they are easy to forge. The biometric card, [on the other hand,] is absolute. The idea is to supply such cards only to those Palestinians that want to pass into Israel. Otherwise it would be very expensive (Micha, interview).

Since their recent introduction to Israel's border, the operation of the biometric or smart cards has stirred much confusion. Are the cards a privilege or a burden? Who must hold them? What is the information inscribed on the card? Who is allowed access to this information? Are identification cards and permits still required for those holding smart

cards? And what is the new behavior required from Palestinians at the crossings with regard to this card?

When confronted with these questions, the two groups of interviewees, high military officials and human rights activists, contradict each other on numerous fronts. One example of such a contradiction regards the type of bodily information inserted into or read by the card. Both MachsomWatch activists and several retired military officials believe that the card reads one's fingerprints, "like at Ben-Gurion airport". Colonel Paz, on the other hand, insists that it was not a biometric machine that I saw at the Bethlehem crossing. The card is not yet in use, he assures me, and when they do activate it, it will read various bodily data but not fingerprints. Finally, a high official in the current Crossing Administration clarifies that:

Although it seems like it [the smart card] documents the front when you put your hand down—[the machine] actually checks the back of the hand. But, he says, "this isn't such a good system . . . [so] we are moving to the front of the hand and the iris (Micha, interview).

In an interview, Bezalel Treiber, Head of the new Crossing Administration, refuses to state the name of the biometric company that has been supplying Israel with its smart cards and machines. Eventually, he agrees to disclose that it is a company in Massachusetts; the only company there that provides back-of-the-hand biometric technology (interview). But what can be so secretive about a technology used in public and openly contracted by the Ministry of Defense? Again, the answer lies in the importance of secrecy to the occupation's bureaucracy, which is, in turn, highly fused with confusion. Inaccessibility to knowledge is the assumption, while accessibility is merely a privilege of the few. One way or the other, similar to the SafeView sensors, the new technology of smart cards facilitates both an objectification of the Palestinian and a translation of his or her human wholeness into fragmented bodily data (see also Amoores 2006).

Although nonhuman actants (Latour 1987) are perceived as stripped from agency and thus as passive and technical, they are in fact a crucial component of the complex identification networks operative in border bureaucracies. Despite being (or precisely because they are) nonhuman, computers, plastic cards, and paper forms are what makes the material connections between the Israeli registries and the Palestinian subjects. In the new regime, machines do most of the dirty work, obscuring within them the story of their human programming and design (see also Gary Marx's work on the techno-fallacies of the age of information; 2007:98 Braverman forthcoming 2010b).

A final remark about Israel's new smart cards. In October 2008, the Israeli Knesset passed a first legislation proposal that requires every Israeli resident to carry a biometric form of identification (Legislative

Proposal 2008). This proposal lays bare that alongside the border's intense reterritorialization, it is also fluid and dynamic. Despite the prominent belief that Israel can safeguard its citizens from what goes on at the border and can even make this border invisible to them, the lines are crossed in more ways than is apparent or that could have been foreseen. The recent improvement in surveillance mechanisms, although directed toward Palestinians, penetrates into Israel in all kinds of ways other than through its official entrance through the new border crossings.

Civilizing the Border: A Project of Neoliberalization

[T]o lessen the existing friction in the security checks, humanize the process, and improve standards of service, security will be privatized and civilians rather than soldiers will conduct all security checks (Spokesperson of the Ministry of Defense 2006).

Civilization

Up to this point, the paper has discussed some of the physical designs and technologies of bureaucratic identification utilized by Israel in its new border administration. I now proceed to discuss the *human* changes introduced as part of this renewal. In 2003 the IDF inaugurated the program "Another Life". The aim of this program was to "minimize the damage to Palestinian life fabric (*mirkam haim*) in order to avoid a humanitarian crisis that would necessitate the IDF to provide food and services to the Palestinian population" (Weizman 2007:290, n36). Baruch Spiegel, a graduate of an MBA program who previously convinced the IDF to employ a management strategy in Gaza—was then appointed as IDF Director of Civilian and Humanitarian Issues (Weizman 2007:143).

According to a plan that Spiegel devised, 12 permanent closure checkpoints were to be built along the length of the newly constructed Separation Barrier. Similar to Israel's other international terminals, they were to be operated by Israel's Airport Authority: Reshet. The first implementation stage rendered Reshet's management of the crossing impractical:

because of the scale . . . when the Gaza Strip was open for entry into Israel many more people crossed it in a day than they cross Ben Gurion Airport, and I'm talking about one crossing only . . . So, Reshet couldn't carry this [forth] (Paz, interview).

The task at hand, then, was to create an alternative administration that would take on the role of managing the new crossings. Eventually,

the Ministry of Defense—a governmental entity with security as its top interest—was chosen to oversee the management of the new border, while the on-the-ground work was to be conducted by private companies. In 2004, a separate body was created within the Ministry of Defense to manage this new apparatus. It was named *Minhelet Ha'Maavarim* or the Crossing Administration (Treiber, interview).

Shaul Mofaz, then Minister of Defense, appointed Bezalel Treiber to serve as head of the new administration. As former head of the cabinet of the Minister of Defense and former deputy chief of Israel's Airport Authority, Treiber embodies the two overarching agendas of the new border: security, on the one hand, and consumer orientation, on the other hand. The “civilization” (in Hebrew *izruach*, literally “making civil”) of the crossings is an ongoing process, Treiber tells me, and is taking much longer than originally expected.

Qalandia crossing, which connects Jerusalem with Ramallah, was the first to be civilized at the end of 2005. This process continued, Treiber tells me, and to date includes 11 of 40 passages. Because of their sensitive status, he says, Israeli border police continue to manage the Jerusalem passages, with assistance from private guards and Israeli soldiers.

The purpose of demilitarizing and then outsourcing the crossings was mostly practical: the IDF was needed for other missions, the daily border operations had a negative effect on the IDF's reputation, and a professional workforce was deemed to be more effective in this situation (Arieli, interview). Yet, Treiber goes out of his way to clarify that civilizing the crossings is worlds apart from privatizing them. In his words:

[T]his is absolutely not a process of privatization. The entire passage is under government responsibility from beginning to end. Indeed, the people who are doing the work are from a private company . . . but we manage their job. This is completely not privatization, it's as far from it as east is from west. This is not a soldier's job in any part of the world.

Treiber's explanation of the transition stresses the importance of normalization and professionalization at the border, attempting to draw comparisons with international border sites. This line of reasoning is also supported by various other governmental narratives. For example, Israel's Ombudsman Reports of 2003 and 2005 state the urgency of professionalizing the crossings and outsourcing them from military hands (*Border Passages* 2006). The spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense similarly declares that “the civilization of the checkpoints is a humanitarian action” (<http://www.mod.gov.il/wordfiles/n32612063.doc>, last accessed 7 October 2008).

On-the-Ground

A participatory observation that I conducted at the new Bethlehem crossing in 2008 might illustrate some of the on-the-ground implications of the civilization project. During my observation, I was confronted by a border official who requested that I stop taking pictures and that I erase all the pictures already in my camera. I was getting ready to do so when Hanna Barag, the MachsomWatch activist whom I accompanied to the crossing that day, asked the guard for the legal basis of his demand. As it turns out, although he was dressed like an Israeli police officer and behaved like one, the guard was actually an employee of a private security company and thus not legally authorized to stop me from taking photos.³ “How can one tell the difference?” I ask Barag, who explains that unlike police officers, private guards do not wear nametags, and in fact, unlike public officers, they are not even required to identify themselves by name. Meanwhile, the humiliated guard fetched the police officer in charge of the crossing. When the latter heard that I have a quirky academic interest in signs and turnstiles, he smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and said “take as many photos as your heart desires” (participatory observation, Bethlehem Crossing, 10 August 2008). The incident did not end there. The private security guard stood several feet away from us, eyeing our every move and smoking a cigarette (despite a large “No Smoking” sign situated above his head).

Several points can be inferred from this account. First, that the process of civilizing the border is not only about the border's transformation from a military to a civil entity, but also a process that enables a reallocation of blame and responsibility. The State of Israel realized that it has something to lose by sacrificing the reputation of its soldiers through the time-consuming and mentally eroding mission of routine checkpoint administration. Instead, the responsibility is civilized. If the occupation is associated with military order, so goes Israel's line of thought, then by civilizing the border's administration, Israel can finally step out of the occupation mode and enter into the global space of civilized nations.

Another on-the-ground implication of the new border regime that can be inferred from the above incident is its complicated authority structure. Currently, four different agencies manage the new crossings: the IDF maintains most of the crossings, the Israeli border police manages the crossings in and around Jerusalem, Israel's Airport Authority manages a few crossings on the border with Jordan, and civilian security guards dispersed through the crossings are employed by private companies but managed by the Ministry of Defense.

Who, then, is in charge in a particular place and time? According to Treiber, the hierarchy is clear: while those who do the on-the-ground work are civilians, the Crossing Administration he heads is always in charge. The same is true with regard to the soldiers or police who operate at the crossings, he says, whose authority is supreme to that

of private security guards. But while clear to Treiber, this situation is yet another source of confusion for Palestinians. Indeed, if not for my knowledgeable companion and for our privileged Jewish Israeli identity to back it up, I would most likely have refrained from a direct confrontation with the border official. This representation of authority is likely to yield even more success when exercised toward Palestinians, as any questioning of authority on their part could have severe and unforeseen consequences.

Supposedly constraining the behavior of certain border officials by increasing supervision of their conduct, the hierarchical structure at the new crossings in fact creates yet additional figures of power. Whereas in the past, the Palestinian could possibly identify the person issuing the commands, now this is made almost impossible. This perhaps unplanned but nonetheless useful uncertainty at Israel's new border feeds into Israel's overall bureaucracy of occupation (Handel 2007).

A third on-the-ground insight that could be drawn from my little incident at the Bethlehem crossing is about how the contradictory messages of consumer-based and security approaches reside side-by-side in this place. In light of the intended transformation of the Israel–West Bank border from a military to a civilian regime, one would expect that the civilian aspects of this border management would be highlighted and made immediately apparent. Instead, the new private guards are dressed like soldiers. To the untrained eye, this might seem like an extension of the old border regime. On the one hand, then, Israel goes out of its way to create an impression of newness and to let the world know that through civilization, it is now aligning itself with other nations. On the other hand, Israel does not bother to make this transformation more readily visible to anyone who actually visits this space.

How could one explain this discrepancy? The answer lies in the multitude of presentations that occur at the border and, more importantly, in the multitude of audiences that these presentations are intended toward. One presentation is meant for the Israeli and international eye. On this front, the border's re-design is made to seem significant and transformative. The Palestinians, on the other hand, rarely get to see this new face-lift, and instead are confronted with the confusion heralded by the border's increasing bureaucratization.

This sort of dissonance between performances is everywhere: in the outside signs welcoming the passengers and wishing them good health that are surrounded by heaps of trash and debris; in the inside signs blinking "have a pleasant stay", yet obscured by thick layers of bars and fences; and in the 12 new booths installed to serve passengers, of which only four are regularly operative. The general design of the place thus sends conflicting messages: you are a customer, and as such, we are here to serve you better, but you are at the same time also dangerous

and, remember, you also live under an occupation regime that strictly controls your every move.

Similarly, Israel's official brochures as well as its official website (2008) speak about a consumer model that includes considerations of the local *mirkam haim* (fabric of life). On the other hand, a virtual tour of recent images, videos and reports presented on MachsomWatch's website depicts Palestinians standing in line for hours, climbing over each other to make it to the Israeli side, and subjected to overwhelming and confusing instructions.⁴ Furthermore, these human rights websites do not distinguish between Israel's old and new crossings. Have they neglected to notice the transformation in Israel's border regime? MachsomWatch activists interviewed here are not only skeptical about this transformation, they are also pessimistic: they perceive the new regime not only as an extension of the old, but even more so, as enabling a more sophisticated mode of occupation altogether (see, eg, interviews with Elkana and Barag). In the name of improved service and humaneness, then, Israel's new border actually secures a tighter form of control, they say.

Conclusion: The "General Wink"

You work vis-à-vis a well oiled machine, messy on purpose . . . Today it's closed, tomorrow open, today there's no this, tomorrow the machine breaks down, all kinds of nonsense, none of which are coincidental. It's all directed. Of course, there's no one sitting upstairs saying 'make a mess' . . . No one would dare say such a thing. But there's a—I call it—a general wink, and the general wink makes all of this possible, otherwise it wouldn't be happening (Barag, interview).

This paper has focused on the changes that have been taking place at Israel's border with the occupied West Bank in the last two decades, and especially since 2004, the time of the Wall's inauguration. It has explored these changes through a variety of themes. First, the reterritorialization of the border. The paper identified the many ways in which the Israel–West Bank border has shifted from being ad hoc and transient into a fixed infrastructural construction. This is not to say that Israel's occupation has ceased to take place through portable and internal(ized) borders. In fact, I have pointed to several instances where it does, for example in the stretching of liminality in both space and time to include the upstream and the downstream movement toward the border. But this, I have argued, is precisely an extension of the physical border, and depends on its materiality and stability as such. Contrary to the recent border literature on the EU and Mexico–US border, then, I have highlighted here the material, mechanical, and infrastructural elements of the Israel–West Bank border.

Secondly, the paper has situated the border's territorialization within an enhanced process of bureaucratization. This is to say that instead of focusing on the despotic military power inherent in this border, the paper has focused on its infrastructural properties. The consolidation of the border and its mechanization have enabled its increased rationalization, standardization, and professionalization. The infrastructural turn, then, has brought about a new form of surveillance, one that relies on intensified networks of identification and on bureaucratic sophistication. These have given birth to another sort of confusion, another mode of alienation of the Palestinian subject from that which was produced by the aggressive physical encounter that was the strength of the old model. The old model, I should again clarify, has all but disappeared from this space. But while it is still operative, it is much less at the center of Israel's new border regime.

Thirdly, both the infrastructural mechanization of the border and its heightened focus on identification have been carried out in the name of the modernized neoliberal project. Israel's rhetoric throughout this shift has been consumer based and has highlighted efficiency and globalization as its central themes. Accordingly, the new border vocabulary refers to the checkpoints as international crossings and to the Palestinians as passengers. But at the crossings, the signs that welcome the incoming passengers and bid them a safe and productive journey are obscured by iron fences and piling trash. Israel's neoliberal move is thus cluttered, or perhaps intensified, by its heightened securitization.

Finally, there is the paper's heightened focus on things. Along with their role as the most visible manifestations of Israel's modernization scheme, things also implicate the complexity of the bureaucratic and the neoliberal schemes. Computers, smart cards, turnstiles, queues and SafeView machines are all things that hide within their design a human form of surveillance, taking the edge off of Israel's enhanced regime of occupation. Through utilizing things, border inspection seems not only technical, scientific, and neutral, but also positive and progressive. The border is thus rendered part of Israel's project of civilizing this space. However, as I have shown, the intensified use of nonhuman things—in effect, the de-humanization of the border—has simultaneously translated into a project of dehumanizing the Palestinian.

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Interviews

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- Hanna Barag, activist, MachsomWatch, interview, Jerusalem, 7 August 2008
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- Ilan Paz, Brigadier General (retired), former Head of the Civil Administration in the West Bank, interview, Tel Aviv, 12 August 2008
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- Bezalel Treiber, current Head of *Minhelet Ha'Maavarim* or Crossing Administration, interview by telephone, 18 September 2008

Endnotes

- ¹ A 2007 survey found that 250 of each 1000 soldiers were involved in or witnessed harassment against Palestinians at the army checkpoints. <http://www.imemc.org/article/52016> (last accessed 23 January 2009).
- ² For example, a sick Palestinian woman had to travel 125 km to reach the nearby hospital 45 km away (Handel 2007:113).
- ³ Two laws regulate the authorities and conduct of Israeli security guards: *Administration of Security in Public Agencies Law* (1988) and *Authorities for Securing Public Safety Law* (2005) (both in Hebrew).
- ⁴ See, for example, Qualandia Checkpoint, the second Friday of the Ramadan at http://www.machsomwatch.org/en/qualandia_checkpoint_second_friday_ramadan (last accessed 1 November 2008).

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