Inside Checkpoint 300: Checkpoint Regimes as Spatial Political Technologies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

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Abstract: As a part of the architecture of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories, the Israeli government introduced in 2005 a series of so-called terminal checkpoints as "neutral border crossings", to minimise the impact of these barriers on Palestinian lives through a different design and the use of several machines, such as turnstiles and metal detectors. In this article, we analyse terminal Checkpoint 300 in Bethlehem, framing it as a spatial political technology aimed at controlling the movement of Palestinians. More specifically, we investigate the interactions between Palestinian commuters, Israeli soldiers/security guards and the machines operating inside Checkpoint 300. We conclude by suggesting that Checkpoint 300 is a porous barrier whose regime is produced, reproduced but also challenged by such interactions, and that, despite the new "neutral design", Checkpoint 300 is a place still filled with tension and violence, often exercised by the machines and their "decisions".

Keywords: checkpoints, spatial political technologies, architecture of occupation, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Palestinian mobility

Introduction

In 2003, the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) launched the programme "Another Life" in the Occupied Palestinian Territories aimed at "minimizing the damage to the Palestinian life fabric in order to avoid the humanitarian crisis that will necessitate the IDF to completely take over the provision of food and services to the Palestinian population" (Weizman 2007:149). As explained by Israeli architect Eyal Weizman, one of the objectives of this programme was to reduce the disruption of the ordinary lives of Palestinians caused by the proliferation of checkpoints in those territories. In the aftermath of the occupation of the Palestinian Territories (West Bank and the Gaza Strip) in 1967, the mobility of Palestinians was in fact still relatively unconstrained. While Palestinians needed personal permits to enter Israel and East Jerusalem,[1] this restriction on mobility was of relatively low impact

(Keshet 2006). However, this changed dramatically after the first checkpoints appeared in the early 1990s. Since the 1990s, in fact, an increasingly dense network of checkpoints was established to intensify the control over the movement of Palestinians, a process accelerated after the construction of "the Wall" started in 2002, during the Second (or al-Aqsa) Intifada (2000–2005). The Wall—in certain points a nine-metre high concrete barrier—has been the focus of rich and detailed scholarly work (see, among others, Azoulay and Ophir 2009; Handel 2009, 2016; Jones et al. 2016; Sorkin 2005). Inspired by existing debates, here we approach the Wall as part of what Weizman (2007:6) has famously defined as the "architecture of occupation", made of checkpoints, fences, Israeli settlements, bypass roads, road blocks and no-go military zones. Due to this architecture of occupation, Palestinians are often unable to travel inside the West Bank or to East Jerusalem and Israel without taking several detours and passing through checkpoints. These daily journeys may entail long queues, the arbitrary implementation of rules by checkpoint "managers", humiliating and, at times, violent encounters with IDF soldiers/security guards.

As a part of "Another Life", the IDF had originally planned to introduce a set of newly conceived checkpoints, the terminal checkpoints, located on the "border" between Israel and the West Bank,[2] and accordingly minimise the number of checkpoints inside the West Bank. This second step, however, was never implemented; in 2005, two years after the programme was launched, B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (see https://www.btselem.org), registered 53 active checkpoints inside the West Bank and on the Israeli border (B'Tselem 2005), while in January 2017 it reported a total of 98 checkpoints, of which 59 were inside the West Bank (B'Tselem 2017b). While the number of checkpoints was not reduced, numerous new terminal checkpoints were nonetheless opened as "international border crossings", although usually located inside the West Bank. In comparison with the checkpoints that were already active in the West Bank, which had often been created in a seemingly ad-hoc style, these terminal checkpoints were specifically planned, large airport-like structures. They were introduced to ostensibly address humanitarian concerns—such as long waiting times under the burning sun or on freezing cold days, and lack of toilets and water, and minimise the encounters between Palestinians and Israeli forces thanks to the deployment of elaborate technological devices, something confirmed by the high-ranking Israeli military personnel interviewed by Israeli geographer Irus Braverman (2011:279–280). One important aspect of this reconceptualisation of the checkpoints was in fact the introduction of new "machines", such as turnstiles, cameras, x-ray machines, metal detectors, fingerprint and iris-scanning devices. Along the same line of thought was the introduction in 2006 of private security guards, portrayed as professional officers who would operate border crossings with the objective of "taking the army out of the checkpoints" (Weizman 2007:150). The terminal checkpoints were thus supposed to represent neutral border crossings, with fixed "passage regulations" (Handel 2009). However, as noted by Israeli scholars Hagar Kotef and Merav Amir (2015), they remain places of tension and arbitrary power enactments directed at Palestinian bodies.

This article is focused on one of the busiest checkpoints in the West Bank, Checkpoint 300 in Bethlehem. According to ActiveStills, an NGO involving Israeli, Palestinian and international reporters, an average of 15,000 Palestinians currently passes through Checkpoint 300 each morning (ActiveStills 2018). In previous work we have discussed the biopolitical interventions of Checkpoint 300 to differentiate the Palestinian population via the relatively arbitrary use of specific categories like gender, age and ID status (Rijke and Minca 2018). Here, we analyse "terminal" Checkpoint 300 as a political technology operationalised via the use of specific material devices: turnstiles, metal detectors, fingerprint and iris scanning machines, and we reflect on how these intervene in the workings of the whole checkpoint machinery. We look in particular at the ways in which Palestinian commuters and Israeli soldiers/security guards interact with these material devices, since we consider such interaction essential to the functioning of the checkpoint as a spatial political technology. After briefly engaging with the existing literature on terminal checkpoints in the West Bank, we describe our methodology and some of the key machines inside Checkpoint 300 together with their specific functions. We then present our direct experience of three "passages" and reflect on how the power of those machines is exercised on different bodies at different moments and how, in interacting with the machines, Palestinian commuters accept, manipulate or reject their workings. But before stepping into Checkpoint 300, it may be useful to introduce the broader context of what has been famously named the "land of the checkpoints".

The Land of the Checkpoints

The Occupied Palestinian Territories have been coined the "land of the checkpoints" by Palestinian Israeli Knesset member Azmi Bishara, who has also described Israel as the "state of the checkpoints", the Israelis as "the owners of the checkpoints" and the Palestinians as the "people of the land of the checkpoints" (Bishara 2004, quoted in Braverman 2011:264). Checkpoints in the West Bank take many different forms (Tawil-Souri 2009), ranging from airport-like constructions, to car barriers resembling tollbooths, to sheds located in between two fences (B'Tselem 2017b).

The checkpoint regime in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the introduction of the terminal checkpoints has been critically analysed by relevant academic work. The appearance and functioning of terminal checkpoints are described by political scientist Daniela Mansbach (2009) as a move by the Israeli government to normalise the control of Palestinian movement and uncouple the checkpoints from the military occupation. The intention of "civilizing" the checkpoints is connected by Hagar Kotef and Merav Amir (2007) to the Israeli government's intention to create the illusion of the end of the occupation. While the material design of terminal checkpoints and the introduction of new technological apparatuses have represented very important changes in how checkpoints work, most of the research focused on checkpoints in Israel/Palestine—led predominately by Israeli and Palestinian academics such as Rema Hammami (2004, 2010, 2015), Yehudit Kirstein Keshet (2006), Ilana Kaufman (2008), Hagar Kotef and Merav Amir (2007, 2015),

and Helga Tawil-Souri (2009, 2010, 2011a)—has taken only partially into account the role played by the new spatial arrangements and the machines. However, two Israeli authors, Daniela Mansbach (2009) and Irus Braverman (2011), have analysed in detail the architectural changes inside the checkpoints designated to become terminals. Both authors highlight the failure of such changes in developing seemingly "neutral" and "civilized" border crossings. Braverman (2011) focuses in particular on "welcome" signs, queues, turnstiles, and electronic sensors, and on how they have been put in place to make the checkpoints seem more "neutral" and "civilized". Braverman argues that, while the increased presence of "things" in the checkpoints may be in line with the Israeli goal of "decreasing the tension in the checkpoints" and "civilizing" them, it dehumanises the Palestinians moving through them. Due to this, she concludes, the terminal checkpoints are places filled with tension and violence, far from representing "neutral and civilized border crossings". Mansbach's (2009) and Braverman's (2011) studies are both based on data collected during interviews with high-ranking Israeli military personnel and female Israeli activists of Machsom Watch—a volunteer organisation of Israeli women opposing the occupation of the West Bank—and on their own direct involvement with Machsom Watch. Their perspective provides a unique insight into the rationale behind the terminal checkpoints and the workings of their new machines, while at the same time it opens up space to consider the diverse experiences and the complex interactions of the thousands of Palestinians who pass through these checkpoints on a daily basis.

In this article we thus place particular emphasis on the interactions between Palestinian commuters, Israeli soldiers/security guards and the machines operating inside Checkpoint 300. Here, the power of machines such as turnstiles, metal detectors and fingerprint- and iris-scanning technologies cannot be separated from the power of the soldiers and security guards and the *things* they are armed with—such as guns, pepper spray, teargas canisters and handcuffs. As Braverman puts it: "the threat of violence is always implicit in the physical state of things at the border crossing" (2011:267). Indeed, the material devices analysed here often produce dramatic and subtle *violent* effects on those who are exposed to them.

Looking at the checkpoint from this perspective, we found inspiration in Reviel Netz's analysis of barbed wire. In his book *Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity*, Netz (2004:xii) discusses the development of barbed wire from its initial design to control the movement of cattle and enclose space, to its use in wars and camps to control the movement of humans. In this process, barbed wire has become an important spatial political technology, originally designed with one rationale in mind—to keep cows from walking away and protect them from other animals and humans—but developed into doing much more than it was initially intended for; a technology used, for instance, to enclose the victims of murderous regimes such as Hitler's Third Reich and Stalinist Soviet Union. Similar to the power geographies generated by barbed wire, checkpoints may be conceived as specific spatial formations generating new political geographies and new relationships of power for all those who are involved, in different ways, with their workings. A spatial political technology is a technology that produces, via the interplay of human and non-human agency, a specific set of relationships. At Checkpoint 300, these

relationships incorporate the possibility and the actualisation of violence on the commuters, by constraining their mobility and subjecting them to a regime of uncertainty and arbitrariness. The machines and the other materials making the checkpoint, we claim, are constitutive elements of how this political technology works and is effective. In addition, this is a *spatial* political technology, in the sense that it is based on specific spatial arrangements and that it produces a specific political geography (related to the broader architecture of occupation). In line with Netz's (2004) understanding of barbed wire, we thus treat checkpoints as geographical formations capable of implementing specific strategies of control and limitation on the mobility of people and things. We focus here on what makes the "checkpoint regime" an effective and complex political technology: the workings of the machines and material barriers; the combination of calculative rationalities (see, among others, Crampton and Elden 2006; Elden 2006, 2007) and procedures of control and management; and the selective spatial practices of movement management and resistance to this very management.

What is more, checkpoints also represent limited and unpredictable "openings" in the occupation of the Palestinian Territories: according to Nigel Parsons and Mark Salter, "the barrier does not incarcerate the OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territories]; rather, it radically constricts the flow of population (and goods). Palestinians can still pass through the barrier—the issue is then not enclosure, but control of porosity" (2008:703). Accordingly, we wish to conceptualise Checkpoint 300 as a spatial political technology aimed at controlling movement, as a porous barrier made of the endless interplay among Palestinian commuters, Israeli soldiers/security guards and control machines. In previous work on Checkpoint 300, we have shown how many Palestinians are able to negotiate, and in part subvert, the impact of the arbitrariness implemented by the occupation forces. Here, we propose to analyse how the checkpoint regime, with its brute materialities, is produced, reproduced and challenged by Palestinians commuters and Israeli soldiers/security guards. As such, we wish to complement Griffiths and Repo's (2018) recent work on Checkpoint 300, where it is discussed as a biopolitical technology aimed at ordering and managing the lives of Palestinians, rendering their bodies instrumental to the realisation of the colonial project of the Israeli state in the Occupied Territories. Also inspired by Randall McGuire's (2013) analysis of the wall in an American/Mexican border town, we thus not only look at how the checkpoint and its machines violently clash with Palestinians bodies, but also at how Palestinians continuously engage with and often transgress the intended workings of the checkpoint and its machines and, in the process, produce endless unexpected outcomes.

Inside Checkpoint 300

This research is based on a six-month period of fieldwork spent by the first author in the Bethlehem area in 2016 and 2017[3] during which she has used multiple methods to collect data, including in-depth home interviews, go-along interviews and participant observation. In particular, she has spent an average of eight hours each week at Checkpoint 300, often during rush hour from 4 am to 8 am, and has passed through multiple checkpoints in the West Bank on numerous

occasions. For this article, we have adopted a mobile methodology to three strategically selected moments/passages of Checkpoint 300, all from the entrance on the "Bethlehem side" to the exit on the "Jerusalem side".[4] The go-along interviews, during which the first author joined her interviewees on their commute to work or school through the checkpoint, were especially important in analysing the interactions taking place inside the terminal checkpoint, as they provided her with a diverse set of data, and allowed her to connect the conversations with the interviewees to the smells, the sounds and the rhythms accompanying and affecting each passage. Following Gabrielle Ivinson and Emma Renold (2013) and Gillian Rose et al. (2010), we have combined go-along interviews with in-depth interviews and participant observation. Ivinson and Renold have used go-along interviews, together with photo-elicitation, in-depth interviewing, film-making and participant observation, to analyse how gendered histories of place are repeated and ruptured in the conscious and unconscious relations of teenage girls in a semi-rural post-industrial area of Wales. The use of go-along interviews allowed them in particular to explore everyday practices, routines and rituals in which a complex combination of fear, discipline but also sense of independence and love for the outdoors came together. Go-along interviews, according to Rose et al. (2010), offer the researcher the possibility to directly experience the route taken by the interviewees: while during in-depth interviews it may be possible to discuss how people interact with and co-constitute places, go-along interviews allow one to observe and experience these interactions *through* those same places. By putting herself "into the midst of things", the first author was thus able to observe and experience the workings of the checkpoint in ways that would have been impossible otherwise. For Mark Griffiths (2017), who, as a researcher, attended "political tours" in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the use of mobile methods reveals to the researcher—while firmly planted in her/his own positionality—something about the embodied experience of life-under-occupation.

By joining her interviewees on their daily commute, the first author had the opportunity to be present during the interactions here examined, witnessing their effects first-hand, but also experiencing them on her persona. This included feeling the pressure of the crowd and the hard materiality of the turnstiles on her own body, hearing the sounds of turnstiles and metal detectors, feeling cold and hot temperatures during the passages, fatigue in her legs and back after standing still for long periods, frustration when a turnstile did not turn without any apparent reason, and tension in getting close to heavily armed soldiers or private security guards. However, the embodied experiences of the first author were positioned within existing "power geometries", where different bodies were caught up in the midst of things in different ways (Tolia-Kelly 2006). As a white woman with a Dutch passport, she engaged and was engaged with the machines and related disciplinary regime inside Checkpoint 300 in ways that were always different from those experienced by her Palestinian interviewees. This different treatment also influenced the checkpoint's workings, as clearly stated by one of her interviewees: "it is easier to pass through the checkpoint when *you* are here with us" (Mahmoud, Interview, 18 July 2016). While the first author experienced

several mornings when her presence did not seem to make the soldiers more leni- ent or the passages easier, on many other occasions she was informed by intervie- wees or other commuters that she had positively influenced their own passage. Aside from these important practical implications, it is perhaps important to state that the first author was always aware of the fact that, while for the commuters the checkpoint regime was a fact of life they could not avoid, going through Checkpoint 300 for her was a deliberate choice related to her research project and that she could, in any moment in time, simply leave and return to Europe. While it is difficult to say how this awareness affected the material here discussed, at the same time it is key to recognise that this subjective condition certainly influ- enced the ways in which she experienced the workings of the machines and of the whole checkpoint regime on her body and persona.

   The following pages discuss in detail three "passages" through Checkpoint 300: (1) a quiet go-along interview with Mahmoud and Sara; (2) a crowded morning shared with Nisreen; and (3) the first author's final passage in June 2017. The first author approached Mahmoud, Sara and Nisreen after learning from her contacts in Bethlehem that they travelled through Checkpoint 300 on a daily basis. Mahmoud and Sara were interviewed three times in 2016, once at home and twice on a go-along interview. Nisreen was interviewed three times in 2016, once at home and twice on a go-along interview, and once in 2017, at home. These interviews often included sharing dinner or breakfast and were con- ducted in English, a language both Nisreen and Mahmoud were fluent in, while Sara at times used her husband as a translator. The three passages here analysed certainly do not tell us "everything" about the checkpoint regime (Griffiths 2017); however, they are illustrative of specific engagements with the checkpoint regime: Nisreen being a woman travelling by herself and Mahmoud and Sara being a couple—their experience of the passages being different from, for instance, that of the large groups of men who line up at 4 am hoping to find a contractor to employ them for the day. We have elaborated on the implementation of categori- sations like "gender", "age" and "ID card" by the checkpoint regime and their implications for the commuters elsewhere (Rijke and Minca 2018). Here, we dis- cuss these three passages, out of many possible others, because we believe that, despite their specificity, they help in showing how the checkpoint works as a spa- tial political technology exercised on different bodies and in different moments. Before engaging directly with these passages, however, it is helpful to spend some time on the checkpoint design in relation to the different "stages" charac- terising each passage, and the devices that contribute to make it work as a spatial political technology: the entry lanes, the turnstiles, the metal detectors/x-ray machines and the checking stations.

Entry Lanes

At arrival on the Bethlehem side, there are three tunnels located next to each other (see Figure 1). The tunnel on the right is the deactivated humanitarian lane. Terminal checkpoints have "humanitarian lanes" that, at specific times, can be used by select groups of Palestinians, such as women, children and elderly, who

are allowed to use the lane to avoid the pressure of large crowds in the main entrance lane (on the workings of the humanitarian lane in Checkpoint 300, see again, Rijke and Minca 2018). The first author has seen this humanitarian lane in use in 2013 and 2014, but since then it has been de facto closed. Next to the humanitarian lane is the general entry lane. This is a broad and well lit tunnel used by the majority of the people entering the checkpoint from the Bethlehem side. During rush hour this lane can receive thousands of people at the same time. The third tunnel, located next to the Wall, is the exit lane. This lane is used by people exiting the checkpoint on their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Since the original humanitarian lane is closed, the exit lane also functions as a humanitarian lane. The three tunnels are made up out of steel bars, stones and a corrugated zinc roof (see Figure 2). These tunnels constrain the flow of commuters, shaping and directing their mobility. As it has been argued by Peter Adey in his analysis of the affective role played by the design of airports:

> the architect … [tries] to give the passenger "no option" … The passenger is faced with a situation in which forwards or backwards are the only directions they may go. The airport creates an environment that invites an automatic response from the passenger … Obstacles such as walls, glass and metal barriers produce a maze-like effect that restrict the passengers' … response. (2008:444; see also Adey's [2009, 2010] other work on airports)
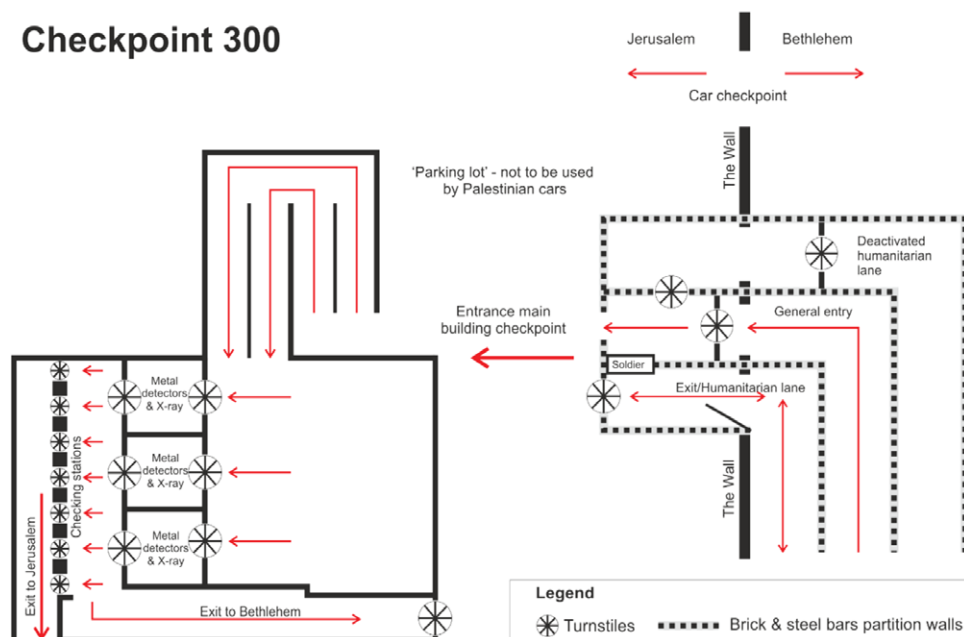

Figure 1:   A map of Checkpoint 300 based on the first author's field notes and drawings during her multiple passages of the checkpoint (source: Iulian Barba Lata; used here with permission) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Figure 2: The general entry tunnel of Checkpoint 300 (source: photo by first author, May 2017) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Similar to the role played by walls, glass and metal barriers inside airports, the tunnels leading into Checkpoint 300 give the commuters no other options on their route to the first turnstiles: one can only move forwards or backwards.

The Turnstiles

Each passage includes four turnstiles, which represent an important component in the management of people's movement through Checkpoint 300 (Braverman 2011). Together with fences and walls they create a "funnel effect", as they "channel a human mass from a wider, somewhat disordered space, through a narrow, covered, box-like passageway, and then out into an open space" (Peteet 2017:100). These turnstiles are made out of steel arms (see Figure 3). According to technical engineer Tal Arbel, cited in Eyal Weizman's (2007) *Hollow Land*, the turnstile arms here are 55 cm long; that is, about 20–25 cm shorter than the standard turnstile arms commonly used in Israel. As Arbel explains, the Israeli Ministry of Defence asked the manufacturer to reduce the length of the arms, so that they can easily press against the body of Palestinian commuters, ensuring that nothing is hidden under their clothes (Weizman 2007). Consequently, the turnstiles are structured in ways that ensure that Palestinians only pass one-by-one. Practically, this also means that they press against each and every body, entrap larger individuals and elderly using walking equipment, separate parents from their children, and workers from their equipment (on this, see also Griffiths and Repo 2018). In Checkpoint 300, the turnstiles have three arms.[5]

Turnstiles are one of the devices introduced to maintain the distance between Israeli soldiers and commuters and reduce the friction inside the checkpoints (Braverman 2011). Soldiers in fact lock and unlock the turnstiles from inside their control room, without having to be in (physical) contact with the commuters. The control rooms are bulletproof fortress-like constructions with thick walls and opaque windows located behind the turnstile or even completely out of sight, making it impossible for Palestinians to see the soldiers or communicate with them. On top of each turnstile there are two lights: green meaning "go!", red meaning "stop!". Hence, technically, no contact is necessary between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers, since the turnstiles should "tell" the commuters whether they are allowed to move on or they need to stop. However, the lights often do not work as expected; green at times could mean: stop! or red: go!; other times they are just off. The frequent "failure" of the lights means that other "expressions" of the turnstiles are read by commuters to know when they can move forward, such as the "click" one hears when the turnstile is activated or the rotation of the arms when pressing against them. However, these two "expressions" depend on one's proximity to the machine, forcing commuters into physical contact with the turnstile before they can determine whether or not it is activated.

Metal Detectors and X-Ray Machines

After entering the main building—with its pink and green walls, benches, (fake?) plants, cameras and an air bridge that provides soldiers/private security guards an overview of the whole building and allows them to keep everyone at any
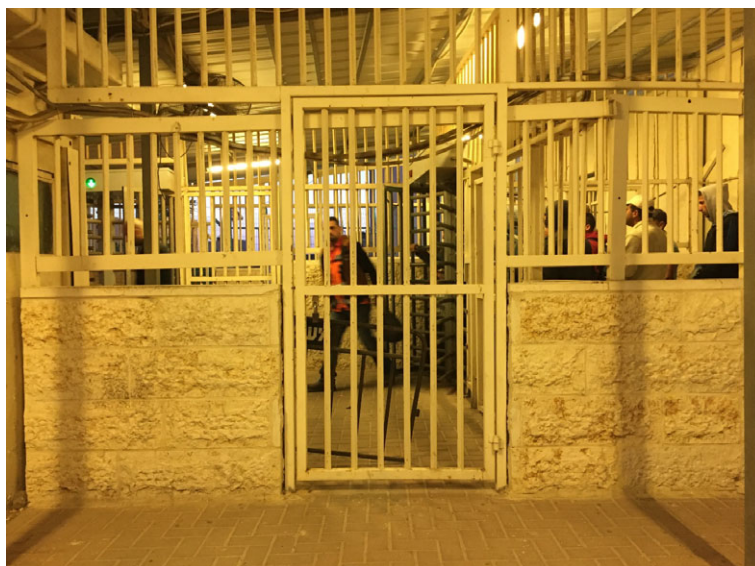

Figure 3: First turnstile passages at the end of the general entry lane (source: photo by first author, May 2017) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary. com]

moment at gunpoint—one passes through the second turnstile and is confronted with a metal detector and an x-ray machine. These machines allow soldiers to see what everyone is carrying and alert them to the presence of metal objects, in this way replacing any direct contact between Palestinian commuters and Israeli soldiers/security guards with the "ostensibly less intrusive act of seeing" (Braverman 2011:281) (on body scanners at border crossings, see Amoore and Hall 2009; Bellanova and Fuster 2013; Martin 2010; Redden and Terry 2013). From here, the soldiers/guards are visible, since the control rooms in this part of the checkpoint are well lit and the windows transparent. However, this does not mean that one can easily communicate with the soldiers/guards since most of them speak only Hebrew, a language that many Palestinians do not master (Kotef and Amir 2015). This difficulty in communication is enhanced by the fact that inside the control rooms there is a loudspeaker used by the soldiers/security guards to give the Palestinians commands, but seemingly no technology installed to hear possible responses, which explains why Palestinians have to shout or communicate via signs. The indirect interaction reliant on sensory technology is described by the Israeli army officials as being more humane (Braverman 2011:282), since a commuter can be alerted by "the machine" that s/he is carrying something with her/him, and in this way avoid being touched by anyone. The decision about whether or not someone may continue without problems is made solely by the machine. If one responds "correctly" to the loud beep of the metal detector, by turning back and removing the suspect item, the machine will remain silent, a sign that the commuter is allowed to continue. This process can take place several times, without any interaction with the soldiers inside the control room.

Checking Stations

After passing through the metal detector, and the third turnstile, commuters have to show their permit/ID card/passport/entry card at one of the checking stations. As explained by Hanna Barag, a member of Machsom Watch, "there are 12 checking stations and they are never all open, even when it is very busy. This is one example of how the inefficiency, the long lines, the long waits for Palestinians, is an outcome of purposeful behaviour of the Israeli government" (Interview, 30 July 2017). This was confirmed during the first author's passages when she never found all the stations open.

To travel to Israel and East Jerusalem every Palestinian with a West Bank ID needs a magnetic ID card and a permit,[6] both issued by the Israeli District Coordination Office (DCO). A magnetic ID card is only granted to individuals who are not blacklisted as a security threat by the DCO, or who have no misdemeanour on their or their immediate family members' record (Berda 2018). Once the magnetic ID card is obtained, one can apply for a permit. Our interviewees often joked about the presumed existence of some 101 different permits Palestinians can apply for (Omer, Interview, 23 June 2016),[7] including work permits, permits to go to school, to the hospitals, the mosque or the church, but also to reach one's land or visit a foreign embassy in East Jerusalem to apply for a visa (Alqasis

and Al-Azza 2015). All checking stations have fingerprint scanners and sensors that read the magnetic ID cards, and one station has an iris scanner.

It is thus time to move to the three "passages" during which we have observed how these machines exercise their power on the bodies of any individual passing through the checkpoint, but also how the commuters differently respond to the machines, again, sometimes going along with their rationale, other times tricking them, or completely subverting their workings.

The Passages
Mahmoud and Sara—28 June 2016

Arriving on the Bethlehem side of the checkpoint I am early for my interview. When walking up to the entrance, I pass by several street vendors selling coffee, tea, sandwiches, cigarettes, but also tools, household items and canned food. At 6:20 am I meet Mahmoud and Sara for a go-along interview. It is the third week of Ramadan and the checkpoint seems calm this morning. The sun is shining, and it is already getting warm. This is the second interview with this married couple and when they get out of a "service taxi" (a shared taxi) I recognise them immediately. They are travelling from their home in Al-Khader, a village south of Bethlehem, to their work in the old city of Jerusalem. They are both in their 50s and have been working in Jerusalem for almost 20 years. After brief greetings, we enter via the general tunnel, which is almost empty.

Mahmoud and Sara are in a rush. The tunnel goes uphill (see Figure 2) and soon Sara is out of breath and slows down. Mahmoud softly tells her to hurry up, "*yalla*", since they cannot be late for work. They live approximately 12 kilometres away from their work but have left their home at 6 am to ensure they arrive at their destination by 7:30 am. We approach the end of the tunnel, walk through an opening in the Wall, and are confronted with the first turnstile. On a quiet morning such as this one we pass through the turnstile one by one and, since the turnstile lights do not work, we push our bodies against the arms and move on without any friction. We continue and cross the empty, un-used parking lot located between the first section of the checkpoint and the main building (see Figure 1).

We then enter the main building where there is only one man waiting at the second set of turnstiles. While lining up for the turnstile, we are unable to see the next room due to a sharp corner. We can see, however, at least one camera watching us. The turnstile lights seem intact but are off. We hear someone passing through the metal detector, beeping twice, and then all becomes quiet. Mahmoud is impatient and pushes against the turnstile. The arms, however, do not move. The man and Mahmoud shout to the soldier. After a few minutes, the soldier shouts something back and the man, Mahmoud and Sara start moving back. Mahmoud explains that they asked the soldier if the turnstile would open and he answered negatively. Here, the design of the checkpoint not only creates confusion and delays, but also leaves one at the mercy of the invisible person in the control room.

This morning, the soldier responded after only a few minutes, but I experienced situations in which the turnstiles remained deactivated and I had to wait for much longer before it became clear which one I could use, again without seeing the soldier in control. We try another turnstile. It is locked when we push against its arms, but after a few seconds we hear a clear "click". Mahmoud immediately moves forward, pushing the turnstile without hesitation. I follow him and Sara and enter the next room. Here our belongings must be scanned by the x-ray machine and our bodies by the metal detector. Mahmoud quickly walks through the metal detector, which beeps loudly, to a big pile of trays located on the other side. He walks back with one tray, provoking another loud beep, and puts his belongings (belt, phone, coins) on the tray. There is no reaction from the soldiers in the control room. I put my own items into Mahmoud's tray, and walk through the metal detector. No beeping, the machines have appraised us and deemed our possessions acceptable. We move on.

We pass the third turnstile, which is unlocked, and walk up to the stations where our documents will be checked. Only four stations out of twelve are open today, but it is a quiet morning and the queues are short. After a few minutes, it is our turn. Mahmoud and Sara pass easily, they both have work permits, and after pressing their finger and magnetic card on the scanners, the soldier inside the booth flicks her hand: their data have been read and accepted by the scanning technologies, and they can move forward to the final turnstile. I do not submit any biometric data but simply hold up my passport, show my entry card, and pass the final turnstile. As a white European woman this proves to be an unproblematic final check. We exit the building and take the bus to Jerusalem. It has required only eight minutes to go through the checkpoint, but due to the indirect and busy bus route—Palestinians with a West Bank ID are not allowed to drive their cars in Israel and East-Jerusalem—we need another 45 minutes to reach our destination just outside the old city where Mahmoud and Sara work.

Nisreen—14 July 2016

On Thursday 14 July, ten days after the end of Ramadan, I meet 54-year-old Nisreen at 6:15 am for a go-along interview. She travels through the checkpoint five times a week to go to work and has been doing this since the first checkpoints appeared on the road between Bethlehem and Jerusalem in the 1990s. Nisreen lives right next to the checkpoint, so we meet on her front porch and walk together to the entrance. While we arrive at the same time I did with Mahmoud and Sara, this morning the general entry tunnel is full of people waiting to pass. We walk calmly, while several men run towards the general entry tunnel, hoping to get in line as quickly as possible. When asked if the tunnel is full because more people want to pass the checkpoint that day, Nisreen responds that there is an equal amount of people every day. Long queues, she says, usually depend on the soldiers and on how many checking stations are open. Nisreen does not enter the general entry lane, but directs me towards the exit/humanitarian lane. We thus bypass hundreds of men waiting and dozens of young men climbing the bars that separate the two lanes to skip the queue. We reach the door giving access to

the exit/humanitarian lane where three Israeli soldiers are checking people's ID cards or permits, their (heavily armed) bodies blocking the opening of the door. We, two women, are allowed to pass easily.

We cross the empty parking lot and enter the main building. Again, it is very busy. The queues for the three turnstiles leading to the metal detector/x-ray machine are long and messy. When we get to the front we are confronted with the second turnstile. This time, all three metal detectors/x-ray machines are in use and the turnstiles are seemingly activated and deactivated based on the amount of people in the metal detectors/x-ray machine room. We wait a few minutes for the room to clear, but then we hear the familiar click and the turnstile allows us to pass. We enter and, again, there are no trays available, so Nisreen has to walk back and forth through the metal detector, causing a loud beep both times, to get one. No response from the soldiers. During my first interview with Nisreen, a few weeks ago, she mentioned how unpredictable the metal detectors are: "the soldiers can play with the sensitivity of the machine. The same shoes, the same item of jewellery, sometimes they beep and sometimes not" (Interview, 23 June 2016). While she felt that the level of sensitivity of the metal detector was higher during periods of increased tension between Israelis and Palestinians (such as in October 2015, when 68 Palestinians and 10 Israelis were killed [Benoist 2016]), she also indicated that often there seems to be no specific reason for the increase in sensitivity: "this is the checkpoint. Every day a surprise" (Interview, 23 June 2016). The metal detector's "unpredictability" sheds light on what happens when machines do not work as expected. While this does not necessarily mean that they are failing or behaving in conflict with their rationale, since they nonetheless assess the bodies of the commuters, their unpredictability significantly affects the commuters' mobility and daily whereabouts: one day one may pass without problems and the next day the machine may "decide" otherwise—its loud beep forcing people to move back and forth, often several times, shedding their possessions in the process, to be able to pass.

When asked what she does when the machine beeps, Nisreen explains that she normally continues: "I beep very often and if he [the Israeli soldier] does not tell me to turn back, I don't turn back. If they don't say anything, I don't even look at them" (Interview, 23 June 2016). However, at times the soldiers decide that the beep of the machine does matter, and consequently ask her to move back and forth until the metal detector remains silent. To avoid this, she preventively checks with a magnet if her clothes or jewellery could possibly activate the metal detector, avoiding to wear these items on busy mornings or during tense periods. She even takes the magnet with her when shopping:

> especially when I go to buy boots, I take the magnet and check them. If the magnet "catches", it means that there is something in the sole that will make the machines beep. If they are nice and comfortable, I might still buy them, but if I am already doubting and the magnet catches, I won't. (Interview, 23 June 2016)

The unpredictability of the metal detectors is something I experienced as well. While on certain days the same shoes, watch or belt would not elicit a beep, on other days everything seemed to activate the detector. When the sensitivity of the

machine is higher, confusion dominates the experience of Palestinians engaging with this section of the checkpoint since they need to pass through the machine over and over again until deemed acceptable.

This morning, the machine does not find anything suspect and we move on without beeping, passing the third turnstile, towards the checking stations. Surprisingly, the queues are very short here. Nisreen says that she does not understand why the first part of the checkpoint was so full this morning, perhaps there were problems at the metal detectors and x-ray machines? While in line, next to us a Palestinian man is having trouble getting his finger scanned. He is wearing clothes covered in paint and rubs his finger before he presses it against the scanner, over and over again. Nisreen suggests that he may have paint on his finger, or calluses. After several attempts he is denied passage and has to return back through the checkpoint. Despite having his permit and magnetic ID card with him, the machine has "decided" that he is not allowed to pass since he cannot be "read" biometrically. He will need an appointment with the DCO to submit new fingerprints. When we get to the front of the queue the soldier checking the paperwork does not even look at us. Nisreen puts her magnetic card and finger on the scanners and looks at the soldier, while the soldier still ignores her. After a few seconds, she pushes against the final turnstile and goes through, having been categorised by the scanning devices as biometrically acceptable to travel to Jerusalem. I walk up to the station and hold my passport and entry card up to the glass. Again, the soldier does not look up. After a few seconds, Nisreen indicates I should just pass the turnstile, which indeed is activated. I join her on the other side, puzzled by the lack of interest of the soldier as my passage was not submitted to and assessed by the scanning technologies in place. Again, my white body and EU passport are enough to allow me to pass. We exit the checkpoint and take the bus to Jerusalem, where Nisreen works.

First Author's Last Passage—24 June 2017
This morning I am on my way back home to the Netherlands. While I have been returning several times to Bethlehem since 2013, I have now completed my fieldwork and leaving Bethlehem feels somehow like a farewell. I am able, with my EU passport, to return to a country with no occupation, no Wall, no checkpoints, no guns, tear gas, night raids or constant arbitrary changes in my daily life. I am leaving behind dear friends who do not even have the possibility of passing through this checkpoint and visiting Jerusalem. While I have always been aware of my privileges, especially when experiencing how I was treated by the checkpoint regime compared to my Palestinian interviewees, my return to a safe and predictable life in Europe marks in a painful way the insurmountable differences produced by my passport and white body.

I enter the general lane, walk up the hill pulling my suitcase, and quickly run out of breath. Walking through the tunnel I cannot help but recall this lane during the past weeks: whether due to an increased number of permits issued, the mood of soldiers, the limited metal detectors and/or checking stations operating —nobody seemed to know—almost every morning between 4 am and 8 am

during Ramadan the checkpoint was overcrowded. One specific morning comes to mind: on Thursday 8 June, I arrived at the checkpoint at 4 am and the general entry tunnel was completely full. I continued to the first turnstile via the exit/humanitarian lane and during the four hours in which I observed this turnstile, it was locked on numerous occasions. Why the turnstile was locked and when it would be unlocked was never communicated to the commuters "in waiting". The pressure of the crowd was very high. I could see how tightly packed the queue was, hear the shouts of the men frustrated by the situation, feel the heat produced by their bodies, thousands of them, stuck in such narrow space. The unpredictable functioning of the turnstile, combined with the chaotic atmosphere due to the long queue, resulted in a frantic pressure of the crowd once the turnstile was finally unlocked, with the bodies of the men in the front heavily pushed against the steel fence and the turnstile. Despite the limited space between the turnstile arms, on mornings such as these, two, three or even four Palestinians pushed through at the same time. The turnstile was slowed down dramatically by these attempts, while the soldier inside the control room was shouting through the loudspeaker "*wahid wahid*" ("one by one" in Arabic)—one of the few Arabic sentences used by soldiers/security guards at the checkpoints (Kotef and Amir 2015); then the turnstile was locked again for a few minutes. On mornings like these it became painfully clear how the unpredictable functioning of the turnstiles, arguably introduced by the Israeli army to "decrease human friction and promote orderliness" (Braverman 2011:279), together with their unyielding steel nature, enhanced the chaos and friction. However, many commuters were able to trick the machine by not following the instructions to pass one at a time, and in the process overcome the first hurdle of the checkpoint spatial regime.

Let us return to my "last passage": I continue through the first turnstile and cross the empty parking lot. The main building is completely empty. Unsure about which one of the turnstiles is activated I walk up to the first one and push against the arms a few times. I don't know if there is anyone inside the control booth of this turnstile, since I can't see it, so I decide to call out. After shouting "hello" and "is anybody there?" a few times without getting a response, I give up and try the second turnstile. Here, I hear the click indicating that the turnstile is activated, and that I am watched by the cameras and the soldier in charge. Manoeuvring myself through the turnstile, I reach the room with the metal detector and the x-ray machine. I hoist my suitcase on top of the belt of the x-ray machine and walk through the metal detector, which beeps loudly. I decide to keep on moving, ignoring the machine and trying my luck to see if the soldiers will let me pass. As stated by Nisreen, often the beep does not elicit a response from the soldiers. This lack of interaction was described by another of our interviewees as "dehumanising". Saba, a 52-year-old resident of Bethlehem, who used to regularly commute through Checkpoint 300, explained that in this section of the checkpoint "it is like you are walking in a maze, like you are a testing animal … like I am inside a lab … I don't see anyone … If the bell of the metal detector rings, I have to go back by myself, no one tells me to go back! I feel humiliated" (Interview, 10 June 2017). He claimed that he often continued to walk when he beeped if they did not stop him, refusing to be disciplined by

responding correctly to the machine. Nisreen used the same strategy. I could also normally continue after beeping, something seemingly determined by my white skin and EU passport (a similar experience described by [white British] Mark Griffiths [2017] in Hebron). On those occasions, I was assessed by the metal detector, hence the beeping; but this assessment was ignored by the soldiers. However, ignoring the metal detector is a riskier exercise for Palestinians, as Saba recalled occasions in which he was denied passage through the checkpoint or even deprived of his permit.

This morning, the soldiers remain silent and I move on. I take my suitcase off the x-ray machine belt and engage the third turnstile. All checking stations seem empty, but as I get closer, I can see a soldier in one of the stations, focusing on his phone and seemingly not expecting any commuters. I approach the station and hold up my passport and entry card. The soldier looks at them, glances at me and wishes me a nice day. Again, I do not have to submit my biometric data to the scanning devices, my EU passport and Israeli entry card categorise me as a priori "acceptable to pass", without further assessment. Pushing against the final turnstile, I walk free towards the exit door.

Concluding Remarks

In this article we have analysed Checkpoint 300 in Bethlehem as a spatial political technology by focusing in particular on the interactions between Palestinian commuters, Israeli soldiers/security guards and the machines operating inside the checkpoint. Passing through a checkpoint is a daily exercise many Palestinians cannot avoid on their way to work, school, their families or their mosque/church. Terminal checkpoints were originally introduced by the Israeli government as "neutral border crossings" aimed at minimising the impact of these barriers on Palestinian lives through a different design and the use of several machines, such as turnstiles, metal detectors, x-ray machines, finger and iris-scanning devices. The presence of these machines was supposed to increase the distance between soldiers and Palestinian commuters and accordingly decrease the tensions amongst them. However, as we have shown in this article, Checkpoint 300 is still a place filled with tension and violence, often exercised by the machines in operation and by their "decisions".

By incorporating the "agency" of the machines in our analysis, we have shown that Checkpoint 300 is a porous barrier whose regime is produced and reproduced by an endless interplay among Palestinian commuters, Israeli soldiers/guards and a series of technological devices. The brutal materialities of the checkpoint regime, we argue, significantly affect the daily lives and the mobility of the Palestinian commuters, with the machines' "responses" marking the body of the individuals subjected to their decision: from beeping to remaining silent, from reading their biometrical identities to refusing to do so, from the contact of the turnstiles' arms to their subtle but liberatory "clicking". More specifically, the three "passages" described in this article show how the material agency of the machines is exercised on different bodies and in different moments. The quiet morning with Mahmoud and Sara revealed that, even when the passage is

smooth and with no major disruptions, the machines affect the bodies of the commuters and crucially determine the modalities of their passage and, accordingly, their daily lives. Our passage on that occasion was smooth because metal detectors and scanning devices worked according to the expected "rationale" and allowed us to pass after having thoroughly "assessed" us and our bodies. The morning with Nisreen instead has shown moments of tension between the machines, the soldiers/security guards and the commuters. While during that passage the machines seemed to "behave" in line with their own presumed rationale, Nisreen tried to influence their "response" in order to increase her chances to pass (by pre-scanning her jewellery and clothes/boots), but also challenged them by walking through the metal detector and ignoring its beeping. On that occasion, also the soldiers selectively chose not to "listen to the machines" and allowed her to go through.

The last passage of the first author before returning home represents instead a self-reflection on the many mornings spent inside Checkpoint 300 observing its deeper workings. On some of those mornings, when the pressure of the crowd was large and the feeling of chaos and tension palpable, the brutal operations of the machines was painfully visible: the unyielding steel of the turnstiles when thousands of bodies were pressed against them; the loud, often seemingly random, beeping of the metal detector when people had to keep on going back and forth, trying to discover what the machine deemed unacceptable for their passage; and the moments in which the scanning devices at the checking stations decided not to allow one specific individual to pass and her/his whole exercise through the previous stages of the checkpoint was nullified. These three passages (but also many other passages observed during fieldwork) have highlighted diverse ways in which Palestinians interact with, reproduce, but also challenge the workings of the Checkpoint 300. During these interactions, they generate, as observed also by Randall McGuire (2013) on the US/Mexico border, endless unexpected outcomes—again, ranging from behaving as "intended" by the machines, to trying to minimise the chance of clashing with them or even actively reshaping their effects, for example by having up to four individuals pressed against the arms of the first turnstile. This possibility of twisting the workings of the machines is known to the people who daily travel through the checkpoint. It is also known to the soldiers inside the control booths, who may simply ignore it or, alternatively, quickly intervene by deactivating the turnstile. But in those minutes of confusion and actual disruption of the workings of the machine, while the commuters are still passing the turnstile, feel its steel on their skin and manoeuvre their bodies through its limited spaces, in those moments it is the commuters who "speak" to the machine and manipulate their rationale, and with that, the political technology incorporated by the checkpoint regime as a whole.

The "wilful inefficiency" we observed inside Checkpoint 300 is explained by Julie Peteet as one of the key characteristics of the Israeli checkpoints, creating a "population in a perpetual state of anxious anticipation" (2017:119). Mikko Joronen (2017) even suggested that making Palestinians wait is an important form of government that upholds the status quo of the occupation of the Palestinian Territories. Such arbitrariness and inefficiency are not eliminated by the presence of

the machines at Checkpoint 300, but rather produced by and reproduced also via their operations. This is perhaps the most powerful "special effect" of a spatial political technology like the one here analysed. On the one hand, checkpoints are installed to control and manage the mobility of a specific population of commuters subjected to their disciplinary regime. There is a whole geography produced by the presence of such barriers in the Occupied Territories. On the other hand, while the calculative rationalities guiding the realisation of specific spatial arrangements in the checkpoints and the machines installed to support such rationalities are in place, their unpredictable inefficiencies and the arbitrary interventions on the part of soldiers and guards in their workings expose the body of the commuters to a regime of uncertainty and fear. Many passages may thus be unproblematic and surprisingly fast; others, for unpredictable reasons, may become long and painful experiences, and can even lead to rejection or sanctions.

This is precisely how spatial political technologies work: their spatialities are marked by strict and rather explicit rules of conduct while at the same time they remain open to the soldiers' arbitrary intervention, to malfunctioning machines, or even to explicit manipulation on the part of the commuters. The fact that Checkpoint 300, despite the introduction of the machines' "neutral" assessment, remains porous and subject to acts of resistance and manipulation is precisely what makes it a powerful instrument in the implementation of the architecture of occupation, an architecture in which the presence of uncertainty and arbitrariness is as important as the hard materialities (walls, barriers, etc.) that populate the Occupied Territories.

Endnotes

[1] East Jerusalem was annexed by Israel in 1967.
[2] A clear border between Israel and the Palestinian Territories is in practice difficult to identify since Israel, following the Oslo Accords, partly or completely controls 82% of the West Bank (Area C, 60% is under full Israeli control; Area B, 22% is under partial Israeli control), but also due to the checkpoints and the presence of over half a million Israeli citizens living in illegal settlements inside the West Bank (B'Tselem 2017a).
[3] In addition to a four-month period in 2016 and a two-month period in 2017, the first author spent one month in 2014 and three months in 2013 in Bethlehem; these periods have helped in formulating the questions discussed here.
[4] These terms should be interpreted loosely here as Checkpoint 300 is not located on the "border" between the Bethlehem municipality and the Jerusalem municipality, or on the Green Line, but inside the Bethlehem municipality.
[5] In other checkpoints in the West Bank, such as Qalandiya Checkpoint, the turnstiles have four arms, making the space between the arms even smaller.
[6] Five different ID cards/passports categories are present in the OPT: (1) Palestinian West Bank ID cards; (2) Palestinian East Jerusalem ID cards; (3) Palestinian Gaza ID cards; (4) Israeli passports (held by some Palestinians); and (5) other passports (also held by some Palestinians). These categories are connected to different levels of freedom of movement. For more, see Helga Tawil-Souri's (2011b) in-depth analysis of the ID cards politics in the Occupied Territories.
[7] All names used are fictitious, since the interviewees asked to remain anonymous.

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