AN UNDOCUMENTED ECONOMY OF CONTROL[1]

Workers, smugglers and State authorities in southern Israel/Palestine

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This chapter focuses on informal crossings of undocumented Palestinian workers from the southern West Bank to Israel. Relying on ethnographic data, it studies the modes of organization and the ramifications of this border crossing economy throughout the post-Intifada period (2007-2010). It highlights the extent to which Israeli state authorities have *de facto* managed to involve informal actors in controls of Palestinian mobility.

While Palestinian employment in Israel has been extensively documented, little attention has been paid to the tactics involved in illegal passages into Israel. In the 1980s and 1990s, research has mostly focused on the changing role of the Palestinian population within the Israeli economy. Scholars have described how Palestinian workers, seen as a highly desirable, cheap, flexible and mobile labour force from the 1970s until the end of the 1980s (Portugali 1989), were increasingly perceived as a security threat after the outbreak of the first Intifada (1987-1993). They have documented the way that movement restrictions (Hass 2001) have reduced the number of work permits and marginalized their presence in the Israeli economy (Farsakh 2005, Arnon et al., 1997), a process that accelerated during the years 2000 to 2010 (Mansour 2010, Etkes 2011, Ekstein 2011). Following the second Intifada (2000-2004) and the Gaza War (2006), the entry of Palestinians has been further limited by Israeli

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governments. In 2011, Palestinian workers represented only 2% (Ekstein 2011) of the Israeli work force, compared with 7% in 1987 (Portugali 1989).

Yet, in concentrating on the shrinking role of Palestinians within the Israeli economy, this literature has overlooked the parallel rise and professionalization of an informal economy of border crossing. As in many other border contexts (Andreas 2001), the escalation of controls forced labourers to resort to new tactics in their attempts to transit the reinstated 'border zone' between Israel and the Occupied Territories. The first to focus on this development was the anthropologist Avram Bornstein who carried out fieldwork in the northern West Bank in the late 1990s. Already there were many more Israeli checkpoints and random patrols along the Green Line,[2] when Bornstein (2002) began his study of routes taken by Palestinian workers and contractors to reach work sites in Israel. Later research described how crossing into Israel became more difficult due to tighter controls (B'tselem 2007a, 2007b). Palestinians improvised new tactics (Parizot 2004, Kelly 2006, ch. 4), skills and knowledge in order to find a way through the cracks in Israel's surveillance system (Amiry 2010, Bontemps 2011). Others took advantage of business opportunities generated by the difficulties faced by Palestinian workers looking for jobs in Israel. In this way, they fostered the emergence of a new 'border economy' (Parizot 2008).

The term 'border economy' refers first to the 'industry of crossing' (Hernandez-Leon 2008) in which formal and informal entrepreneurs are *de facto* participants, alongside the State institutions¸ in the process of regulating mobility across boundaries. It also refers to new types of economic activities that emerge in and structure border areas. This is not simply a question of readjusting the shape and range of cross-boundary networks set up by workers, smugglers, employers, and state institutions: it also affects the nature of relationships linking these various actors by creating new power relations, antagonisms, and forms of exploitation (Parizot 2004, 2008).

This article will pursue an earlier analysis of this 'border economy' in order to understand how it affects and contributes to readjustments to Israeli control mechanisms. Until now, there has been little interest in the implications of informal activities for Israeli control procedures. Scholars and observers in this field have mostly sought to document the hardship of daily life

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[2] The Green Line corresponds to the armistice line agreed by Israel, Egypt and Jordan at the end of the first Arab-Israeli conflict (1949). After Israel invaded the West Bank and Gaza, this line was recognized by the UN as separating Israel proper from the Palestinian Occupied Territories but has never been accepted by Israel as a legal border.

in Palestine and the way the Palestinian people resist and denounce injustices resulting from Israel's separation policy. My aim here is neither to neglect the suffering of Palestinians, nor to fall in with the discourse of resistance. On the one hand, observing human behaviour through the prism of resistance can often be misleading. John Comaroff (1993) has shown that using such an approach often leads to the observer's interpretation being projected onto the people observed. As Lila Abu Lughod (1990) states, it tends to overestimate the capacity of the powerless. It also reinforces a binary construct of the conflict, based on the opposition of Israeli against Palestinian, which neglects other significant interactions between these protagonists. On the other hand, by focusing solely on how Palestinian lives have been reshaped by Israeli controls, scholars limit their focus to the sociology of power.[3] By taking a different approach, i.e. by examining how Palestinians adapt and take advantage of faults and opportunities created by the Israeli surveillance system, we can obtain a more dynamic and nuanced understanding of the way this system operates.

My argument here is that, despite the small numbers of Palestinian workers smuggled daily, the emergence of this informal economy has deep ramifications for both Israeli and Palestinian societies. It establishes a variety of networks linking groups and actors that are usually thought to be independent. By taking into account the multiplicity of participants (Palestinians and Israelis, Jews and Arabs) in the border economy and the nature of their relationships with Israeli authorities, I shall demonstrate that they are in fact fully integrated in the mechanisms regulating the movement of Palestinians.

This chapter draws on ethnographic data I have collected since the mid-1990s in the southern part of the West Bank between the Jebel al-Khalîl (South Hebron Hills) and the northern Negev. Thanks to my ability to travel freely with a French passport and the networks I developed on 'both sides' of the Israel/Palestine divide, I was able to interview Palestinian workers, watchers, drivers, and contractors, as well as Israeli employers (Jews and Arabs living inside Israel and settlers in the West Bank), smugglers, and representatives of Israel's army and police. By comparing this data to other observations from previous visits to clandestine points of passage and taking into account prior research, I concluded that the dynamics observed in the southern West Bank are indicative of a wider trend found throughout the border zones between the West Bank and Israel.

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[3] I owe this idea to Alessandro Petti (Al-Quds University, Jerusalem)

I will first describe the changing nature of the borders between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and how this has affected the passage of Palestinian workers into Israel over the last 20 years. This will be followed by an assessment of how this new context has progressively favoured the emergence of a well-organized informal border economy. Finally, by focusing on the ramifications of this economy, I will examine how it has become an integral part of informal Israeli controls of Palestinian mobility.

1967-2011: FROM OPEN BORDERS TO SEPARATION

Palestinians were first hired to work in Israel after the annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967. Since then, their place in the Israeli economy and society has changed considerably, as have their conditions of living and border crossing. Between the early 1970s and 1987, they were fully integrated in the Israeli economy. The fact that most of them did not have work permits was not considered to be an issue (Portugali 1989). However, after the first Intifada (1987-1993), they were seen as a growing security threat which led the Israeli authorities to impose tight restrictions as a way of regulating and monitoring their mobility. Though introduced as ad hoc security measures, these regulations became the basis for a systematic policy of separation.

From integration to separation

Contrary to Israeli's expectations, employment of Palestinian workers did not prevent them from rebelling against the colonial regime imposed after the Six Day War in 1967.[4] Between 1987 and 1993, Palestinian political factions called for a number of coordinated actions that would free them from economic dependence on Israel: general strikes, refusal to pay taxes, and boycotts of Israeli products. Palestinians were encouraged to stop working for Israeli employers in both the private and public sectors. These actions had a profound impact on both the Israeli and the Palestinian economy. In parallel with these campaigns of pacific resistance, there were confrontations between Palestinian demonstrators and the Israeli army in the West Bank and Gaza, including acts of sabotage and attacks against Israeli employers' worksites.

In order to counter this rebellion, the Israeli authorities resorted to different measures. Inside the Occupied Territories, they introduced curfews and closure (Hass 2001). They also set up checkpoints along the main roads linking the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to Israel. Between

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[4] The Israeli authorities believed that maintenance of a certain level of prosperity and of Palestinian dependence on the Israeli economy would avoid such an outcome (Hass 2001; Gordon 2008, Grinberg 2011, Bornstein 2002).

1989 and 1991, Palestinians working in Israel were required to carry magnetic cards and work permits (Hass 2001, Abu Zahra 2007). In 1993, the Israeli government created new quotas for Palestinians working in specific sectors (OECD 2010) and entry into Jerusalem (which had been annexed in 1967) was restricted to permit holders.

Although these steps were originally introduced as ad hoc counterinsurgency measures, they gradually became an integral component in a more systematic policy to separate Palestinians from Israelis (Hass 2002). The objective was not solely to prevent unwanted individuals entering Israel, but also to cut back on the number of Palestinian workers. It was thought that these steps would reduce Israel's dependency on Palestinian workers and thus the country's vulnerability to Palestinian resistance (Grinberg 2011). By the late 1980s, Palestinians represented around 7% of the Israeli workforce (OECD 2010, 213) and, in strategic sectors such as agriculture and construction, 49% and 45% respectively. It was not until massive numbers of workers arrived from Asia and Africa in the early 1990s, that the Israeli government could enforce restrictions on the movement of Palestinians (Kemp 2004).

Two other factors favoured implementation of the separation policy introduced by the Labor government elected in 1992. First, in September 1993, the signature of the Agreement of Principle between Israel and the PLO[5] presaged the gradual introduction of autonomy for Palestinians and, in the long term, the possibility of the creation of an independent Palestinian State (Grinberg 2007, Latte Abdallah and Parizot 2011). In this context, the international community began to recognize the legitimacy of steps already taken by Israel to end their responsibility for the economic well-being of the Palestinian population, particularly with the arrival of international aid and funding for the process of establishing a Palestinian State. Second, rising tensions between the Israeli government and the newly created Palestinian Authority, together with increased violence between the two populations[6] (Smith 2007) gave the Israeli government additional reasons for reinforcing its policy of separation.

Yet, by the end of the 1990s, this policy did not in fact create a territorial division between Israeli and Palestinian territories. Rather, it fostered the emergence of a complex patchwork of

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[5] Yitzhak Rabin (then Israeli Prime Minister) and Yasser Arafat (Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization) signed the Agreement of Principles in Washington DC.

[6] The first years following the signing of the Agreement of Principles in 1993 were particularly violent. On one side, Israeli settlers intensified their activities to take over Palestinian lands, in order to defeat the negotiations process. Some committed attacks directly on Palestinians, such as the Hebron massacre. Finally, in 1995, extreme right cells organized the assassination of Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. On the other, around 1994-1995, Palestinian factions began to carry out suicide bombings in the centre of Israeli cities.

Palestinian enclaves encircled by Israeli-controlled areas (Map 1). Even though Israel withdrew from Palestinian towns and delegated their administration to the newly created Palestinian Authority, it nevertheless reinforced its controls. Prior to the second Intifada (2000), the Palestinian Authority was responsible for security in only 18% of the West Bank. In B areas, which represent another 22%, it had to cooperate with Israel while the remaining 60% was fully under Israeli control.

Materialization of Separation and Control of Mobility

During the second Intifada (2000-2004), the Israeli authorities relied on a double-edged strategy: they reinforced the process of separation between the two populations and they attempted to regain security control over the Palestinian cities and villages from which they had withdrawn in the 1990s (Latte Abdallah and Parizot 2011).

To achieve this objective, controls of the entry of Palestinians into Israel were further tightened. In fall 2000, the number of permits was reduced, which led a sharp drop of the number of Palestinian workers in Israel (see Table 1) which remained very low until 2004. Despite a slight increase since 2004, the number of permits issued in 2011 was still much lower than in 2000. In addition, the criteria of eligibility in terms of biosocial and security issues have been redefined and are more stringent (Etkess 2011). In 2002, the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, launched the construction of the Barrier/Wall[7] around the West Bank (Rabinowitz 2003), as a way of preventing the passage of suicide bombers.[8] By creating a physical barrier, the number of 'points of passage' (*ma'avarim* [in Hebrew]) was reduced and security checks could be more thorough (Havkin 2008, 2011). The construction of these 'terminals' moved the checkpoints further east, as many were placed along the Barrier, rather than on the Green Line (Havkin 2008, 2011), as 85% of the route now lay inside the old armistice line (UNOCHA 2011a). This also led to some controls being allocated to private companies which, since 2006, were now responsible for most of the checkpoints along the Wall (Havkin 2011).

It was then decided to extend surveillance of Palestinian movements beyond the Wall by including all the C areas in the border zone. However, it was not possible to have uniform

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[7] There are several terms for designating the Barrier that Israel has built around the West Bank. The choice of term depends on the speaker's political position: Israelis in favour of this project use the term 'security barrier' (*gader bitahon*) or 'separation barrier' (*gader hafrada*); Palestinians and their supporters call it the 'Apartheid Wall' or just the 'Wall'. Here, 'Barrier', 'Wall' and 'Fence' are indiscriminately as this construction is in fact a series of concrete walls, electronic fences, and patrol routes.
[8] On the multiple functions of the Wall, see Latte Abdallah and Parizot (2011).

controls of movement in these areas, since different regulations were established for specific places. New military zones were identified and restrictions placed on Palestinians' ability to access Israeli settlements and bypass roads by Palestinians. In order to implement these restrictions, the Israeli army had to deploy additional road blocks near and around Palestinian enclaves. According to United Nations officers, the number of checkpoints, barriers, trenches, earth mounds, and road blocks remained relatively stable: 605 in February 2005 (end of the Second Intifada) and 589 in July 2010 (UNOCHA 2005, 2010).

The southern West Bank offers a good illustration of the impact this policy had on the local population. From mid-1996 to 2002, there was only one checkpoint between the Negev and the Southern West Bank: Meitar/Wadi al-Khalîl (Map 2), which monitored the passage of Palestinians and Israelis entering the West Bank from the south on Route 60. When the policy of confinement was launched in spring 2002, Palestinian villages and cities were temporarily re-occupied by the Israeli troops and long-term curfews and closures were introduced. In 2004, new checkpoints and roadblocks separated the South Hebron hills from Hebron and the rest of the West Bank. Later in the same year, after a suicide bombing in the Israeli city of Beer Sheva (August 2004), two additional checkpoints were installed south of the Samû'-Yatta enclave, blocking the two remaining roads giving access to Israel, and another checkpoint was added west of Ramadhin. In 2006, before completing the Separation Barrier along the Green Line, the army built an additional concrete wall (1.20m high) along Route 317 to prevent access to Palestinian cars from the North. This 'obstacle' (*mekhshol* [in Hebrew]) was removed in 2008, but access to bypass roads remained restricted for private vehicles for at least another year. Even though, a period of relative calm in the region, between 2007 and 2010, led to many roadblocks being lifted near the Samû'-Yatta and Dûra-Dhahriyya enclaves, surveillance along and close to the Separation Barrier was reinforced.

As in the rest of the West Bank, these measures had a dramatic impact on the mobility of Palestinians between local towns and villages and into Israel. In addition, the number of Palestinian workers employed in Israel in 2011 remained low compared to 2000: according to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, the figure was 60,000, of whom more than 50% entered without legal papers (Ekstein 2011, 10). Altogether, these workers represented 2.5% of the whole Israeli workforce and around 14% of workers in the West Bank. Even though the number of Palestinian employees in the Israeli job market has declined substantially since the first Intifada, they still hold a strategic role in some sectors such as construction and agriculture where they represent respectively 13% and 5.7% of the labour force.

Nevertheless, using statistics to assess the level of illegal crossings is problematic. First, these figures seem to underestimate the number of undocumented workers. Kav LaOved, an NGO advocating workers' rights in Israel, believes that they represent a much higher proportion of workers in Israel, with as many as twice the number of workers with permits (2009).[9] Second, institutional categories cannot be considered to be reliable analytical tools, especially since they aim to construct and dissociate groups of people according to their definition of what is legal or illegal status (De Genova 2002). These workers do not live in a separate world: they are not merely interconnected, but they are often the same people. Palestinian workers with permits often stayed overnight in Israel in order to avoid the difficulties involved in crossing the Barrier. Thus, the same persons could be 'legal' workers during the day and 'illegal' aliens at night. Furthermore, many Palestinians purchased permits from Israeli go-betweens without actually having a place of work. They could show their permit at the checkpoint but in fact worked illegally in Israel. Many more people were involved in these informal practices than the statistics claim, particularly if one takes into account the large number of people involved in helping workers to circumvent Israeli surveillance.

THE INFORMAL BORDER ECONOMY AND THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

The development of a border economy began in the 1990s but, until the early 2000s, the techniques used to circumvent Israeli surveillance were somewhat makeshift (Bornstein 2002, Kelly 2006). When Israel tightened its surveillance during the second Intifada (2000-2004) and the post-Intifada period, the Palestinians were forced to rethink their methods of transport, reallocate tasks and discover new forms of coordination across borders.

From an open transport market to a highly fragmented sector

In the mid-1990s, a number of people became involved in helping Palestinians avoid checkpoints in the southern areas of the West Bank. For example, as few workers could afford to drive their own cars into Israel, Israeli Bedouins[10]and West Bank residents offered illegal minibus services. Sometimes Jewish and Arab employers would collect their workers from their homes. As in the north of the West Bank, drivers and contractors would plan their

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[9] URL: http://www.kavlaoved.org.il/media-view_eng.asp?id=2223 (Accessed on 23.2.2012).
[10] Bedouins are descendants of the semi-nomad Palestinian population that remained in the Negev after the first Israeli-Arab conflict (1947-1949). They obtained the Israeli citizenship in the early 1950s. At the beginning of the 21st century, the majority was living in planned townships and the remainder inhabits unrecognized slums around Beer Sheva. Although cut off from their Palestinian kin and neighbors living in the southern West Bank and the Gaza Strip by the new political borders in 1949, they have maintained continuous social and economic relationships (Parizot 2001, 2004).

journey according to the legal status of their passengers: if all the passengers had a permit, they could use the main roads, if not, they found ways to bypass the checkpoints (Kelly 2006).

In the late 1990s, when Palestinian vehicles were not allowed to cross the Green Line, travel between Palestinian towns and Israeli work sites became more difficult. Previous systems broke down and new staging places had to be created. Most Palestinian workers had to choose whether to travel in an Israeli car, take the risk of entering in an illegal car, or change to an Israeli vehicle before crossing the barrier. In the short term, these new restrictions allowed the Negev Bedouins to take control of the transport business in Israel and, to a certain extent, in the southern West Bank, since, as Israeli citizens, they could travel freely between Israel proper and C areas in the West Bank.

After 2000, the introduction of more obstacles forced drivers to limit their activities to specific sections and routes. First, Israeli Jewish contractors stopped driving into the Palestinian enclaves to fetch their employees, because they were worried by the increased violence, the army's reoccupation of the area, and a number of attacks against Israeli Jews. Those that were still willing to collect their undocumented workers preferred to pick them up only after they had passed the checkpoints into Israel.

Because they are also Palestinians, Israeli Bedouin contractors and drivers were not worried about attacks from West Bank Palestinians, but the Israeli Army's re-occupation of Palestinian areas in 2002-2003 made it difficult for them to travel freely in the West Bank. Even after the army withdrew, their journeys were still hampered by road blocks, trenches, barriers and checkpoints. As a result, the Bedouin drivers also wanted to avoid picking up Palestinian workers until after they had crossed the Barrier.

Finally, it became increasingly difficult and more complex for Palestinian workers to travel to the checkpoints and be picked up by an Israeli driver. In 2007, a worker living in the suburbs of Yatta could use his private car to go into the centre of town but once Route 317 was forbidden to private Palestinian cars, he had to take public transport to reach Dhahriyya. There he had to wait for a driver who would take him safely from Dhahriyya to the Fence by avoiding Israeli patrols. There an Israeli driver waited to take him to his destination. Thus in the late 2000s, he spent one to two hours to make the same journey that took only half-an-hour before the second Intifada, even without leaving the West Bank.

As a result, drivers transporting undocumented Palestinian workers began to limit their activities to their own neighbourhood. They operated in specific areas in the West Bank and, with so many people involved, this necessitated a much higher level of coordination.

Division of labour

Since 2006 and the partial completion of the Barrier south of Dhahriyya and Yatta, Israel was able to channel the passage of undocumented workers and concentrate on establishing control over a small number of illegal crossing points: the areas around Ramadhin/Eshkolot, just north of the Wadi al-Khalîl/Meitar border terminal and of Masafer Yatta close to the Dead Sea (see Map 2). By tightening patrols in these areas, the nature of illegal crossings changed radically: in the late 1990s and early 2000s, drivers could still *circumvent* Israeli surveillance by taking alternative routes, but by the late 2000s, they literally had to *confront* Israeli checkpoints, i.e., they either had to force their way past border guards and army barriers in order to reach the Wall close to Ramadhin or cross the desert south of Yatta. In 2009-2010, large numbers of undocumented workers tried to cross into Israel on Saturday afternoons and evenings and this led to car chases between Israeli jeeps and Palestinian drivers (*shoferiyya* [in Arabic]). Drivers had to improve their driving skills if they wanted to outrun Israeli jeeps on a very rough terrain. As a result, crossing the barrier became increasingly dangerous with more Palestinian workers and their drivers being wounded or killed on these routes than in the past.[11]

With a few exceptions, these drivers were no longer workers, contractors, or even workers engaged in smuggling. In the Yatta region, most were unmarried male adolescents or young men who wanted to take up this lucrative, but dangerous, business. Most came from a few large families already involved in this business, but some were recruited from other groups. On the Israeli side, the Bedouins also appeared to recruit additional drivers but, given risks involved, there was often a lack of volunteers.

Drivers needed immediate and continuous updates on the whereabouts of the Israeli army, police and border guards. They had to set up networks of watchers or scouts who were sent ahead of convoys to check the roads for patrols. These were local residents or workers

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[11] Forcing their way through Israeli patrols is not a specificity of the southern West Bank Palestinians. Suad Amiry (2010) has provided rich descriptions of this phenomenon in the region of Qalqilya where Palestinian workers cross by foot. The Israeli NGO, B'tselem, has posted a series of videos of these daily events. See e.g. *Catch me*, 2007, URL: http://www.btselem.org/video-channel/movement (Accessed 29.5.2012).

employed by smugglers. Payment was sometimes in kind: for example, Sâlim Abu Jaffal[12] who worked in the Ramadhin/Eshkolot region in 2010, received prepaid SIM cards as payment for calling drivers from his lookout.

Smugglers also relied on help from local peasants and their excavating equipment. They regularly needed to maintain and open up new routes to avoid Israeli surveillance, and to remove earth-mounds or refill trenches made by the army to block roads. As a result, these activities reshaped the local landscape by regularly readjusting the network of dirt roads along the Wall (see Photo 1).

Last but not least, smugglers made use of local shopkeepers in towns along the routes taken by undocumented workers. In Dhahriyya, restaurants and hotels provided food, accommodation, and staging places where workers would gather before crossing. Local garages provided services and storage for unlicensed cars used for travel between the town and the Barrier. In addition, similar forms of cooperation were established on the other side of the Barrier.

Business cooperation across borders

Smugglers needed tight coordination for their activities across the separation line between Israel and the Occupied Territories. Nevertheless, allocation of territory for their activities did not lead to a fragmentation of the border economy, but rather resulted in a high level of rational and calculated integration.

In 2010, in the area between the Southern West Bank and the North-East Negev, Palestinians and Bedouins maintained constant contact in order to agree on specific times and places where they could pick up and drop off workers along the Fence. Moreover, Bedouins needed to coordinate with other transporters (such as Israeli Arab or Jewish taxis and minibuses) who would then take Palestinian workers from local Bedouin towns to work in southern, western and northern Israel.

In some regions, for example Dhahriyya/Ramadhin, smugglers on both sides worked together to force their way through Israeli patrols. In summer 2010, Palestinian drivers would lie in wait with their Mitsubishi truckloads of workers on the hill dominating the Barrier. Once informed by watchers that Israeli jeeps blocking the road had moved, they would rush downhill as fast as possible towards a hole in the Fence (Photo 2). On the other side, Bedouin

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[12] All names in this article have been changed to protect the privacy of interviewees.

drivers would drive down to the Barrier and pick up the workers. By the time the Israeli jeeps hurried back, both sets of drivers had already disappeared.

Coordination of drivers involved not only well-timed simultaneous operations but also the right number of cars on each side: Palestinian trucks could carry up to a dozen workers, but Bedouins drive cars that take only 5 to 7 people, doubling the number of cars required.

These manoeuvres also involved coordinated financial transactions since workers only paid drivers when they reached their destination. A worker traveling from Dhahriyya to a Bedouin township in the Negev paid a fee (NIS 150[13]) to the Bedouin driver. Conversely, a Palestinian returning to Dhahriyya paid the Palestinian driver. These earnings had to be redistributed among the drivers on both sides of the border.

Overall, these groups function as 'entrepreneurs without borders', not just because they are involved in business cooperation across the barrier, but also because their activities and practices are regulated by informal contracts which apply to local groups operating on both sides in order to avoid sources of conflict. Coordination of their activities was particularly important, because the very lucrative nature of their business has attracted many newcomers and generated fierce competition among smugglers. In 2010, local Bedouin elders in Israel decided to force the various extended families involved to come to an agreement. The objective was twofold: fix the rules for people entering this lucrative market, and punish certain recurrent behaviour, including denunciation of competitors to the Israeli police.

RAMIFICATIONS OF THE INFORMAL BORDER ECONOMY

Over the last ten years, despite the small number of workers involved, informal crossings have not merely generated well-integrated business activities and partnerships, they have also had profound ramifications for the local business and social environment on both sides of the barrier, and in communities living near the Fence and further inside the West Bank. The impact of these ramifications is all the more impressive when we take into account the number of people who have tried to capitalize on these networks and crossing activities for their own purposes.

Smugglers' partners

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[13] In 2010, approximately €30, the equivalent of one day's salary in Israel for an unskilled Palestinian construction worker.

Border entrepreneurs are very dependent on their contacts and acquaintances for obtaining essential information and this generates widespread and varied information networks involving both Palestinians and Israelis. In addition to watchers and lookouts along West Bank roads and at checkpoints, smugglers also rely on their contacts within the Israeli administration.

Bedouin drivers involved in smuggling Palestinian workers often belong to extended families which have Israeli police officers, border guards and soldiers among their relatives. As a result, they have opportunities for obtaining useful information on the movement of Israeli patrols and the location of random checkpoints and allows them to adjust their plans accordingly.

Israeli settlers in the West Bank can sometimes play an important role as informers. They have greater ability to travel freely and this gives them very precise information on routes, obstacles and patrol movements. They often have developed good contacts in the army, because they have soldiers and officers defending the settlements billeted in their homes or, since the mid-1980s, they are sometimes recruited as 'territorial defence auxiliaries' (Gordon 2008). In order to keep their precious cheap manpower, those who employ Palestinian workers illegally do not hesitate to warn them and their drivers about the whereabouts of Israeli patrols. Furthermore, some take advantage of their privileges to smuggle Palestinians through Israeli check points. In autumn 2008, a 63 year-old settler from South Hebron Hill was arrested at a check point with two Palestinians hidden in the trunk of his car.

After crossing into Israel, these networks are critical. They help to give undocumented workers some protection by providing them accommodation and hiding places. Their assistance is also crucial for gaining access to worksites; in 2008, a security guard responsible for employment procedures near Jerusalem received regular bribes from contractors to allow the entry of workers without proper permits (Glickman 2008). They also prevent arrests of undocumented teams on work sites. Between 2007 and 2010, thanks to his contacts, Ahmad Gaʿûd, a Palestinian contractor, was able to hold on to his team of undocumented Palestinian workers in a major meat factory a Negev industrial area. Because the mother of his Israeli partner was a local policewoman and because the owner of the factory had contacts in the Israeli administration, Ahmed Gaʿûd was confident that there would be few police patrols on his worksite. In 2008, he even managed to keep his team working on Yom Kippur when everybody stops working in Israel!

Retribution, extortion and the informal tax system

Exchanging information and good practices comes at a cost, whether social or financial. Bilâl Abu Kammûne, a 30 year old Bedouin contractor from Rahat, became friendly with Israeli soldiers stationed at the Meitar/Wadi al-Khalil checkpoint before it was handed over to a private company, by inviting them several times to bars and local restaurants in Beer Sheva. He managed to win their confidence while convincing them that he needed to employ undocumented Palestinian workers. As a result, he received a pass for the Meitar check point. In return for their generosity, he delivered cigarette cartons. After 2006, when the army and police officers were gradually replaced by private security guards on most West Bank checkpoints (Havkin 2011), these forms of corruption continued: for example, in 2008, with help from local private guards, several merchants from Hebron were able to smuggle their goods through southern checkpoints.

In some instances, Israeli civil servants extort kickbacks from Palestinian workers. Taking advantage of their acquaintances among Palestinian workers and their ability to provide passes, they obtain useful services for free or a very low fee. In 2005, workers from Samu' were summoned by a Bedouin border guard living in Beer Sheva to repaint his house. He went to fetch them from the West Bank and took them across the checkpoint in his police car. After they finished, he asked them to leave immediately without payment and threatened to arrest them for entering Israel illegally!

Israeli soldiers, civil servants and private guards are not the only people to capitalize on their power and position. In 2009, a Bethlehem worker described how West Bank Palestinians in contact with smugglers were regularly paid for providing critical information or making contact with undocumented workers. Some even exploited Palestinian workers. In 2008, Palestinians living in Qatanna (north-east of Jerusalem) and working in the Israeli village of Nattaf were regularly forced to provide information on the whereabouts of their employers to a group of Palestinian thieves so that they could plan and time their robberies during their absence.

These forms of extortion are neither exceptional, nor arbitrary; they are part of a system created by an informal border economy. As in many other border contexts, such payments are in fact an informal tax for passage (Andreas 2001): it is now almost obligatory and workers must be prepared to see this as part of the cost of crossing the border. This is a clear sign that the market is both dynamic and lucrative and that it attracts a multitude of actors, including

State authorities. By assisting Palestinian workers and contractors to cross into Israel and extorting taxes and/or services from them, a whole range of 'regulatory authorities' – smugglers, private guards, Israeli civil servants and others individuals – have become part of this power mechanism (*dispositive de pouvoir*). Depending on their personal interests, they are in a position to open and close access to Israel and its job market.

Informal regulatory authorities under State control

The emergence of these informal controls has not weakened Israel's control of borders; rather, we can see that it has the capacity to redeploy its controls via informal systems.

Contrary to official political positions with regard to Israeli and international public opinion, which emphasize the mobilization of State authorities in the fight against Palestinian 'infiltrators' (*mistanenim* [in Hebrew]), Israeli civil servants have shown a certain degree of tolerance for the crossing of undocumented Palestinian workers, not least because they know that they do not have sufficient resources or manpower to stop smugglers. In 2008, in the region north of Jerusalem, an Israeli border patrol officer stated that 1,500 Palestinians, on average, jumped the Fence each week, but that he and his colleagues caught no more than 10% of them, due to their lack of resources. Moreover, because the lack of cells and staff at local police stations, border guards could not afford to charge the Palestinian workers they arrested. In addition, Israel does not have enough magistrates to judge or enough jails to incarcerate the Palestinian workers crossing without a permit (B'tselem 2007b). Finally, Israeli authorities know that they cannot arrest all the smugglers. The business is so lucrative that dismantled networks will immediately be replaced by new groups.

For a long time, the General Security Services (*Shabak*), the police and the army have opted for infiltration of smuggling networks because they provide crucial information on Palestinian activities. This has high priority as a way to prevent suicide bombings and weapons trafficking. Smugglers already have good connections with police officers, soldiers and private security guards whom they attempt to corrupt in order to obtain crucial information for avoiding Israeli surveillance. In addition, the intelligence services often force these officers to play a double game while, at the same time, they recruit Palestinian workers, contractors and smugglers (B'tselem 2007b). With the large number of interconnections in such a vast network, a few key well-positioned collaborators can obtain information on the arrival of unidentified participants. If arrested, undocumented workers and smugglers can face several

years of imprisonment and very high fines. Police, *shabak* and army officers are often in a position to force smugglers and workers to collaborate in return for their freedom.

Instrumentation of smuggling networks gives the Israeli authorities more resources for curbing suicide attacks inside Israel as it allows them to monitor the networks used by Palestinian factions during the second Intifada. Besides, this system of informal controls has proved to be very efficient. Because they know they are under surveillance, smugglers are very careful in choosing their clients. Besides they often require newcomers to submit to intrusive interviews and thorough checks in order to be sure that they are not suicide bombers. Finally, by tolerating and controlling crossings by undocumented Palestinian workers and the informal economy that this has generated, Israeli authorities have managed to maintain and reinforce their control over border zones, Palestinian enclaves and Israeli territory.

CONCLUSION

Since the 1990s, the escalation of security measures and movement restrictions in the border zones separating Israel from the Occupied West Bank has reduced, but not stopped, the passage of Palestinian workers entering Israel. It has merely changed the way they cross the divide, not only by making the passage harder, but also by fostering the emergence of an informal border crossing economy.

This economy has deep ramifications because of its impact on the local population, over and beyond workers and smugglers involved. There are now highly inventive entrepreneurs who have taken advantage of the opportunities created by the system of constraints imposed by Israel over the last 20 years. Their business relies on collaboration with a variety of local actors: watchers, drivers, building labourers, car mechanics, restaurant owners, etc. Outside the border zones, the sector functions thanks to the complicity of certain Israeli civil servants and private entrepreneurs. For an informal market, it is particularly well-integrated and regulated with a pragmatic and calculated distribution of spheres of influence and division of labour that requires a high level of coordination across borders, both in circumventing Israeli systems of surveillance and in managing financial issues. Finally, the participants have negotiated a structured framework governing competition and entry into the market, with assistance from recognized local authorities.

Over this period, this informal economy has evolved into a mechanism of movement regulation alongside governmental structures. Not only does it facilitate the movement of

undocumented workers, but it also fixes prices and collects informal taxes. Furthermore, it has led to a reorganization of roads and staging places on the routes taken by Palestinians travelling between home and work. However, the State continues to maintain a certain level of control over the system: many smuggling networks are known and utilized by Israeli intelligence services and play a key role in the mechanisms for regulating Palestinian mobility. We must therefore reconsider how the system of border controls imposed by Israel on West Bank Palestinians operates as a heterogeneous power mechanism (*dispositive de pouvoir*) covering public and private, and formal and informal, actors whose activities are not necessarily coordinated, but highly synchronized.

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