

Civilian consciousness of the mutable nature of borders: The power of appearance along a fragmented border in Israel/Palestine

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A B S T R A C T

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What is the role of citizenship in a protest? How are civilian rights used as a source of power to craft socio-spatial strategies of dissent? I argue that the growing civilian consciousness of the “power to” (i.e. capacity to act) and of the border as public space is enhancing civil participation and new dissent strategies through which participants consciously and sophisticatedly use their citizenship as a tool, offering different conceptualizations of borders. This paper examines the role of citizenship in the design and performance of dissent focusing on two groups of Israeli activists, Machsom Watch and Anarchists against the Wall. Using their Israeli citizenship as a source of power, these groups apply different strategies of dissent while challenging the discriminating practices of control in occupied Palestinian territories. These case studies demonstrate a growing civilian consciousness of the mutable nature of borders as designed by state power. Analyzing the ways actors consciously and sophisticatedly use citizenship as a tool in their dissent, which is aimed at supporting indigenous noncitizens, I argue that Machsom Watch and Anarchists against the Wall enact and promote different models of citizenship and understandings of borders, in Israel/Palestine.

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Although citizenship can be understood in many different ways, it is generally seen as a dynamic concept that frames inhabitants' sets of rights in a particular place. New rights can make the possession and wielding of previous rights more effective, and the accession of such rights can either remove or build new fences between groups. Thus, as a form of ongoing contract between a state and an individual, citizenship expresses inclusionary and exclusionary practices. Furthermore, tied directly to place, citizenship is associated with a spatial array of borders, which have a crucial effect on the control of resources and socio-cultural relations (Parker et al., 2009). Borders often drive struggles among individuals, communities, and nations over territory, with new spatial orders constantly generated. Thus, borders, like citizenship, are tools that express inclusionary and exclusionary practices by defining the pattern and direction of movement, to establish connections and intersections between people (Newman, 2006; Paasi, 1996, 2009). These patterns of movement are vulnerable to manipulation by the state and other institutions through maps, physical demarcation, signage and technology—all means used to regulate populations through “biopower” (Foucault, 2007). As a whole, both citizenship and borders are social-spatial concepts that limit and allow the physical and legal actions of individuals,

playing a significant cultural–ideological role in which geo-policy and culture intersect to establish a national identity (Agnew, 1994; Amin, 2004; Rumford, 2006).

Exploring these relationships between citizenship and borders, Étienne Balibar (2002) argued that the human rights become unprotected at the very point when it becomes impossible to categorize them as the rights of the citizen of the state. And thus, in our contemporary reality of “biometric borders” (Amoore, 2006), and “insecure world” (Ericson, 2007), the border zone has become the place where the expelled reside: “Not only is it an obstacle which is very difficult to surmount, but it is a place he runs up against repeatedly, passing and repassing through it as and when he is expelled or allowed to rejoin his family, so that it becomes, in the end, a place where he resides” (Balibar, 2002: 83). This daily bordering practices contribute to the construction of the border as public venue, and political–public space (Balibar, 2009). In other words, a political space becomes a public space when (or ‘sphere’) (and inasmuch as) it is not only ‘mapped’ by sovereign powers (including supranational organizations), or imposed by economic forces (the ‘automatic domination of the market’), “but also ‘used’ and ‘instituted’ (or constituted) by civic practices, debates, forms of representations, and social conflicts, hence ideological antagonisms over culture, religion, and secularism, etc.” (Balibar, 2009: 201). Thus, every public space is, by definition, a political space, but not every political space is (already) public space (Balibar, 2009: 201).

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The idea of the border as a public space and in particular as a performative space, has been addressed by scholars who have pointed to its contemporary ritualistic practices (Hatuka, 2010). “The assemblage of technologies and calculations that form the sequences of the securitized border” argue Louis Amoore and Alexandra Hall, “serves to authorize its actions – to differentiate the bodies that must wait, stop, pass or turn back. The border’s scopic regime construes as ‘correct’ or ‘normal’ its apparatus, checks and inspections, rendering as necessary the multiple processes of verification” (Amoore & Hall, 2010: 302). Sophie Nield, further suggests that appearance, identity and space work together in the encounter at the border similarly to the way it works in a theater (Nield, 2006: 64). These conceptualizations of the border as public and theatrical space are the departure point of this paper, in which I analyze the way citizens address and challenge bordering practices and the “power over” (i.e. control). I argue that the growing civilian consciousness of the “power to” (i.e. capacity to act) and of the border as public space is enhancing civil participation and, in some cases, new dissent strategies through which participants consciously and sophisticatedly use their citizenship as a tool, offering different conceptualizations of borders. Border surveillance empowered by modern technology is clearly the most effective means to achieve what Foucault has named “docile bodies” (Foucault, 1975). However, one must be careful when using these terms; enforced order can be challenged through socio-political agencies (Hatuka, 2010, 2011), and it is anticipated that the phenomenon of dissent, though more visible along contested borders, is expected to spread to other venues with the growing civilian consciousness of its mutable nature.

In illuminating this idea empirically, I focus on the interrelationship between citizens and borders by analyzing actions of dissent taking place along the Green Line in Israel/Palestine – the armistice line agreed upon by Israel and the Arab states in 1949. After the 1967 war, this line was internationally accepted and came to be the border between Israel’s sovereign territory and the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel. Similar to international borders, this line has multiple roles – territorial, physical and social – all of which are embedded in socio-political power relations. Still, in this case, Israel, as the occupier of Palestinian lands, has a dominant position in affecting the character and manifestation of the line. This dominant position has been particularly apparent in the last decade, with daily actions along the Green Line and within the territories characterized by an unequal use of control practices for different ethnic groups (Allegra, 2009; Arieli & Sfar, 2008; Parsons & Salter, 2008; Shafir & Peled, 2002; Yiftachel & Ghanem, 2004; Zureik, 2001). These discriminating control practices have resulted in various spatial trajectories, regulated by checkpoints and a separation wall (Arieli & Sfar, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2010; Weizman, 2007). As a result, the state’s separation tactics have created multiple distinct sets of “borders” for the Israelis and for the Palestinians of the West Bank. Consequently, while Palestinians are legally limited in their movements and actions, the citizens of Israel can cross the Green Line and move within a large part of the occupied territories without limitations. This privilege is used mostly by Israeli settlers in the West Bank, Israeli activists, and the army who controls and limits the movement of people. Exaggerated by the controversial layout of the separation wall and the expropriation of Palestinian lands, this complicit condition transforms the territories into a contested zone.¹

Taking the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a point of departure, this research concentrates on a spatial view of a border, seen as a line separating national communities. In that, it seems to differ from contemporary discussions about borders, which conceptualize borders beyond a territorialist modern perspective, responding to the various changes in the world and especially in regards to

European borders (Balibar, 2009; Parker et al., 2009: 586, 583; Rumford, 2008). Yet, addressing Israel/Palestine, where ethno-territorial conflicts continue to dominate the political agenda, this paper perceives borders as “the places where ‘our’ territory begins and ends” (Newman, 2010: 775), specifically analyzing the way different actors negotiate, construct and sustain the geopolitical territorialist thinking of borders. In so doing, I follow Ó Tuathail’s (2005) arguments, stressing the need to rethink notions of borders and citizenship while not leaving behind the geopolitical frame of thinking.

Focusing on borders and citizenship relationships along the Green Line, the separation wall, and along an array of checkpoints, I scrutinize the actions of two Israeli groups: *Machsom Watch* (*Machsom*, in Hebrew, means “checkpoint”), which monitors checkpoints in the West Bank as well as military courts where Palestinians are being tried, and *Anarchists against the Wall*, which primarily protests along the separation wall, joining Palestinian protests in their villages. The analysis shows how each group crafts distinct socio-spatial strategies of dissent, and how activists, as privileged actors, are using their citizenship status to protect and enhance the appearance of the underprivileged. In that sense *both borders and citizenship are seen as dynamic and negotiable manifestation of power*. My argument is twofold: first, we witness an awareness of the mutable nature of borders, with actors challenging the state’s orders by negotiating directly with its representatives (i.e. army, border operators) and by initiating dynamic forms of dissent that respond to the political reality. Second, and particularly in the absence of an agreed-upon border, these actions are tools of civilian negotiation over the spatial array of borders as well as over competing concepts of citizenship. More specifically, given that each of these groups opposes the fragmented sovereignty of Israel in the West Bank (Gazit, 2009), I show how each group establishes a distinct civilian consciousness and advocates a different model of citizenship that corresponds to a different conceptualization of borders: *Machsom Watch* fosters a national model, stressing national consciousness and common heritage, while *Anarchists against the Wall* advocates a more cosmopolitan-global approach that calls for acknowledging the absence of both the legal and spatial rights of the under-privileged and oppressed. These different perceptions also correspond to their differing views of the state’s politics and the way each perceives the future border between the two people in Israel/Palestine.

Based on attending and watching the groups in action (i.e., joining the ride with MW and the protest with ATTW), followed by personal interviews with key actors in their homes, as well as a review of internal archival documents supplied by activists and newspaper reports, this paper begins by framing the idea of civilian consciousness and proceeds to document and interpret the strategies and tactics used by *Machsom Watch* and *Anarchists against the Wall*. Findings show that the groups’ tactics of action indicate an awareness of the mutable nature of bordering practices as performed by the state. While these actions may not have an immediate effect on the reality of the borders, they have a discursive effect, as well as the capacity to challenge the state’s model of citizenship.

The power of civilian consciousness

Many scholars often view citizenship as an extension of democratic theory, which focuses on political institutions and procedures, while others focus on the attributes of individual participants (Kymlicka, 2007). Contemporary discourse of citizenship is highly debated, and thinkers suggest different positions regarding the liberal, communitarian, social democratic, immigrant and multicultural, nationalistic and feminist models (Shafir, 1998). Each of these positions differs in its views of the relationships

between citizenship, rights, practice, and the idea of common “good,” consequently resulting in diverse definitions. Examples are John Rawls’ (1993) proposal of identifying justice with the idea of “fairness” and giving priority to rights over goods, the call for reforming social institutions in a way that will allow accommodation of cultural distinctiveness of multiple ethnic groups in a single state (Kymlicka, 2007), and Iris Marion Young’s proposal to shift the focus from the search for commonality (and, as a result, bypassing diversity) to make the public sphere truly representative of individuals as well as groups (Young, 2000). These examples portray the scope of citizenship in providing a common status for individuals, helping to integrate members of society, on the one hand, and excluding non-members, on the other (Young, 1990) (See Fig. 1). Yet while citizenship and territorial borders both function in relation to the sovereign state, territorial borders do not always mark the borders of citizenship (Allegra, 2009). Contemporary concepts such as “being political” (Isin, 2002) cosmopolitanism (Archibugi, 2008; Beck, 2006; Nussbaum, 2008), and denationalized citizenship (Sassen, 2009) suggest new venues to address the relationships between borders and citizenship (Rumford, 2008; Ó Tuathail, 2005).

Taking a socio-cultural perspective on these ideas, I suggest looking at borders and citizenships as interrelated concepts within active ongoing practices of performance and materialization (Nield, 2006). True, citizenship and borders tie people to a place in different ways, but they are tools used to frame civil society in a particular space, fixing the conditions and the basic rules of all associational activity (including political activity) and daily life (Walzer, 1983). Yet they also have a temporal dimension and are undergoing constant modification (Balibar, 2002; Paasi, 1998; Sassen, 2009). It is also the understanding of the border as an exception – a space where, in Agamben’s terms, the rule of law and emergency procedure merge into indistinction (Agamben, 2005) – that contributes to the perception of the border as a place where the unexpected, chaotic and unruly is compressed (Amoore & Hall, 2010). This double character of *change and fixity* and its effects on daily life does not imply a change on a daily basis; rather, it suggests that both borders and citizenship are performative (Butler, 1990, 1992; Goffman, 1959; Salter, 2011) or even theatrical (Nield, 2006) concepts, crafted by humans and thus adaptable and challengeable (Fig. 2).

In the study of border/citizenship performativity, three interrelated dimensions are crucial for the analysis of citizens’ participation in the process of borders’ place-making: tactics, context and identity (Fig. 3). First, *tactics*, or the way actions are displayed and dramatized (Goffman, 1959), define the degree of an act’s publicness in a place and its impact on the public at large (and asks the question of where and how to act along borders). The particular physicality of the border (which is bounding but in itself is not a bounded place) and

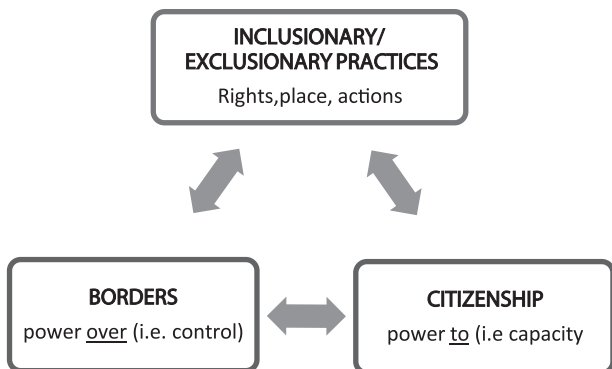


Fig. 1. Borders and citizenship as providers of socio-spatial common status.

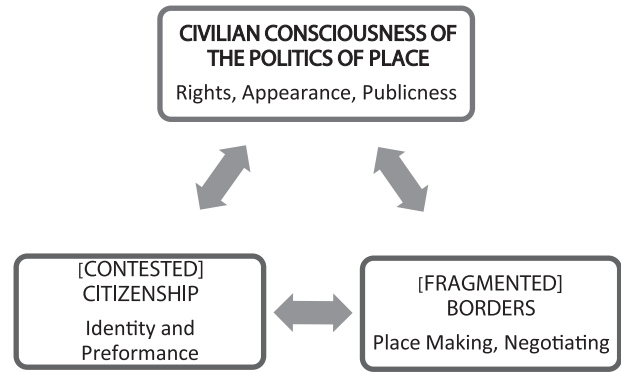


Fig. 2. Borders and citizenship as means in the process of place-making.

the way the actors perceive their scope of power are the two factors that highly influence the tactics of an action. Second, the particularity of the border as a space comes into play in the way actors define the context of power (what is the lens through which we see the state/borders/civil rights?), and the way actors do or do not challenge current state apparatuses, “inside/outside division” (Salter, 2011), and address the included/excluded binary. Defining these tasks requires in-depth knowledge regarding rights and law, both local and international. The third dimension, *identity* (how do we see ourselves?) is a crucial factor in the case of borders – where appearance is a key component in the securitization rituals – the way actors appear, communicate and define their identity vis-a-vis the appearance of the sovereign (i.e., new identities, disassociating themselves from national identity, etc.) is crucial. This does not mean a counter-hegemonic definition of identity, but rather being conscious of actors’ appearances in projecting messages, and not taking appearance for granted. It is important to note that these rather flexible dimensions, tactics, context and identity, allow citizens to initiate informal dynamic frameworks vis-a-vis the rather formal definitions of both citizenship and borders. In this respect, then, borders provide heterogeneous sites through which citizenship, as a social–political manifestation, excludes the other, but this exclusion also increases counter-social informal “borderwork” (Rumford, 2008), which obliges authorities to respond. In the following section we introduce a note on the eastern borders in Israel/Palestine (addressing the West Bank and excluding Gaza), and then examine the dissent experiences of *Machsom Watch* and *Anarchists against the Wall*.

Borders in Israel/Palestine: an introductory note

The borders of the Israeli state were set out in the 1949 armistice agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors. These borders, which came to be known as the Green Line, stopped functioning as a border between two sovereign entities (Israel and Jordan) after the 1967 war and occupation of the West Bank by Israel. Historically, the character and manifestation of the Green Line has been dynamic, at least from the Israeli point of view, shifting from an approach of separation (1937–1967), to an approach that advocated territorial inclusion with no political rights for the occupied Palestinian population (1967–mid 1990s), to an approach that again fosters separation (since the Oslo agreements signed in 1993) (Arieli & Sfard, 2008: 21–50). After the violent escalation of the conflict in October 2000, with the Second Intifada (the second Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation), and the repressive Israeli response to it, the conception of a physical border emerged in the form of a separation wall (Arieli & Sfard, 2008: 21). The wall’s construction, begun in April 2003, was first initiated by

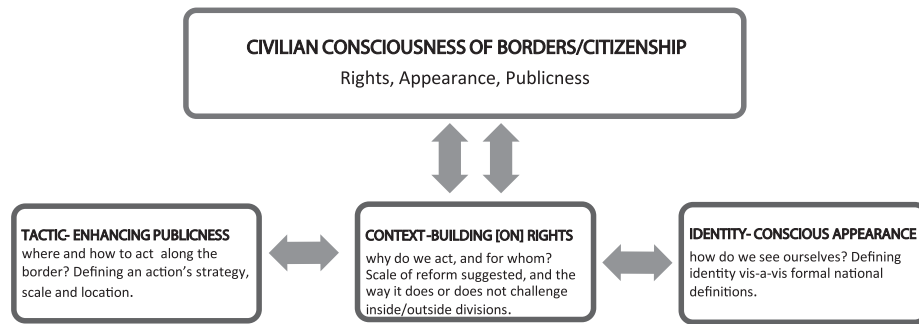


Fig. 3. Borders and citizenship: framework for assessing dissent along borders.

the Israeli politicians from the Left, who advocated separation as means to promote later withdrawal from the occupied territories, while maintaining Israeli security. The initiative was later adopted by parts of the nationalistic right, who also re-designed its location eastward beyond the Green Line, seeing it as a solution to the “demographic” problem (i.e., keeping a Jewish majority in Israel), while annexing many of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank (Yiftachel & Yacobi, 2005: 144).

Creating a “new political geography,” the wall further contributed to the unjust conditions in which the majority of the West Bank territory and resources are controlled by Israeli citizens, and Palestinians, lacking real sovereignty, have only limited self-governance in restricted areas (Yiftachel & Yacobi, 2005: 154–155). Furthermore, the Israeli practices of control along the wall, separating the movement of Palestinians and Israelis who reside in the West Bank, have constituted ‘bio-political’ control of the occupied Palestinian population (Parsons & Salter, 2008). Among these surveillance practices, the wall and the checkpoints significantly influence the Palestinians’ daily life and civil rights and stand as physical embodiments of the socio-political Israeli control supported by the creation of a system of identity management (Weizman, 2002; Zureik, 2001). This has created multidimensional practices of closure (both macro and micro), enhancing the fragmentation of territory and territoriality and the sophistication of a “closure regime” (Parsons & Salter, 2008).

Most studies of the Israeli surveillance practices focus on control and closure from within the context of colonization (Parsons & Salter, 2008; Zureik, 2001). Addressing the relations between the border (as the effort of the state for closure) and citizenship (as the – often limited – power of the agent), allows us to reflect on new possible constructions of both, through practices of negotiation and a growing awareness of the public at large. Examining the experiences of *Machsom Watch* and *Anarchists against the Wall*, we can see that though similar in their criticism of the occupation and its discriminating practices, each offers a different mode of action. Analyzing their tactics, accessibility to and awareness of power, as well as the way they perceive their Israeli identity, provides the ground for elaborating on the dynamic of civilians negotiating bordering practices, while also supporting the cause of indigenous non-civilians (i.e. Palestinians) (Fig. 4).

Negotiating bordering practices (1): Machsom Watch, “being a group of women, Israeli”

Triggered by the Second Intifada, *Machsom Watch* (MW), was established as a volunteer organization of Israeli women who monitor Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank as well as Palestinian trials in military courts (MachsomWatch, 2011a). Starting in February 2001 as an initiative of a few women from Jerusalem who

decided to observe the happenings at the Bethlehem checkpoint, this organization responds to the violation of human rights at checkpoints located either near the Green Line or within the West Bank, which serve to restrict Palestinian movement within the West Bank (Gazit, 2009; HRW, 2010: 14).² With the growth of the organization, monitoring of checkpoints now takes place across the West Bank and, at the height of its activity, included approximately 400 activists. MW members operate in shifts of small teams of two or three activists, seven days a week (MachsomWatch, 2011b). During shifts, they wear identification badges that make them recognizable as MW members (Participant observation A, 2009) and at the end of each shift, they produce a summary report of activities to be published on their website (Interview A, 2009) (Figs. 5 and 6).

Tactics: acting as mediators

As a whole, MW’s tactics includes three interrelated practices: watching (monitoring), intervening in favor of the Palestinians in situations of human rights violation, and producing reports (in Hebrew and English) (Amir, 2009; Mansbach, 2007). In addition to watching, activists communicate with the Palestinians and with the soldiers or checkpoint’s civil operators, tracking the control regulations in the place. Communication with officials takes place on the personal level and on the basis of specific requests from the Israeli women. Upon approaching checkpoint operators/soldiers, activists attempt not to confront, but rather to critique and educate them in a soothing manner.³ Moreover, they may even develop collaborative relationships with civil administration officers who, in part, control the checkpoint’s management (i.e., an Israeli Defense Force [IDF] body). With the Palestinians, activists form personal communications, based, at least in part, on their ability to help them:

Relationship with the Palestinians is more on the personal level. I mean, very quickly our phone number became known to people all over the West Bank. And then, I can receive a phone call from someone in Wadi Nar, that’s between Beit Lehem and Abu Dis, also – between Palestine to Palestine, and he would tell me he’s being delayed and ask me to do something (Interview A, 2009).

This differentiation in power between Palestinians (non-citizens being controlled) and operators/soldier (controlling) situates the activists (Israeli women/mothers) as mediators (using the “power to” to negotiate the “power over”). Practically, since MW gain the trust of both sides, this position assists them in advocating Palestinians’ demands to the Israeli state representatives. Symbolically, through their practice of dissent, activists remain separate from both groups that actually inhabit the checkpoint.

Driving themselves to checkpoints, activists navigate along multiple borders with a spirit of adventure, unaccompanied by

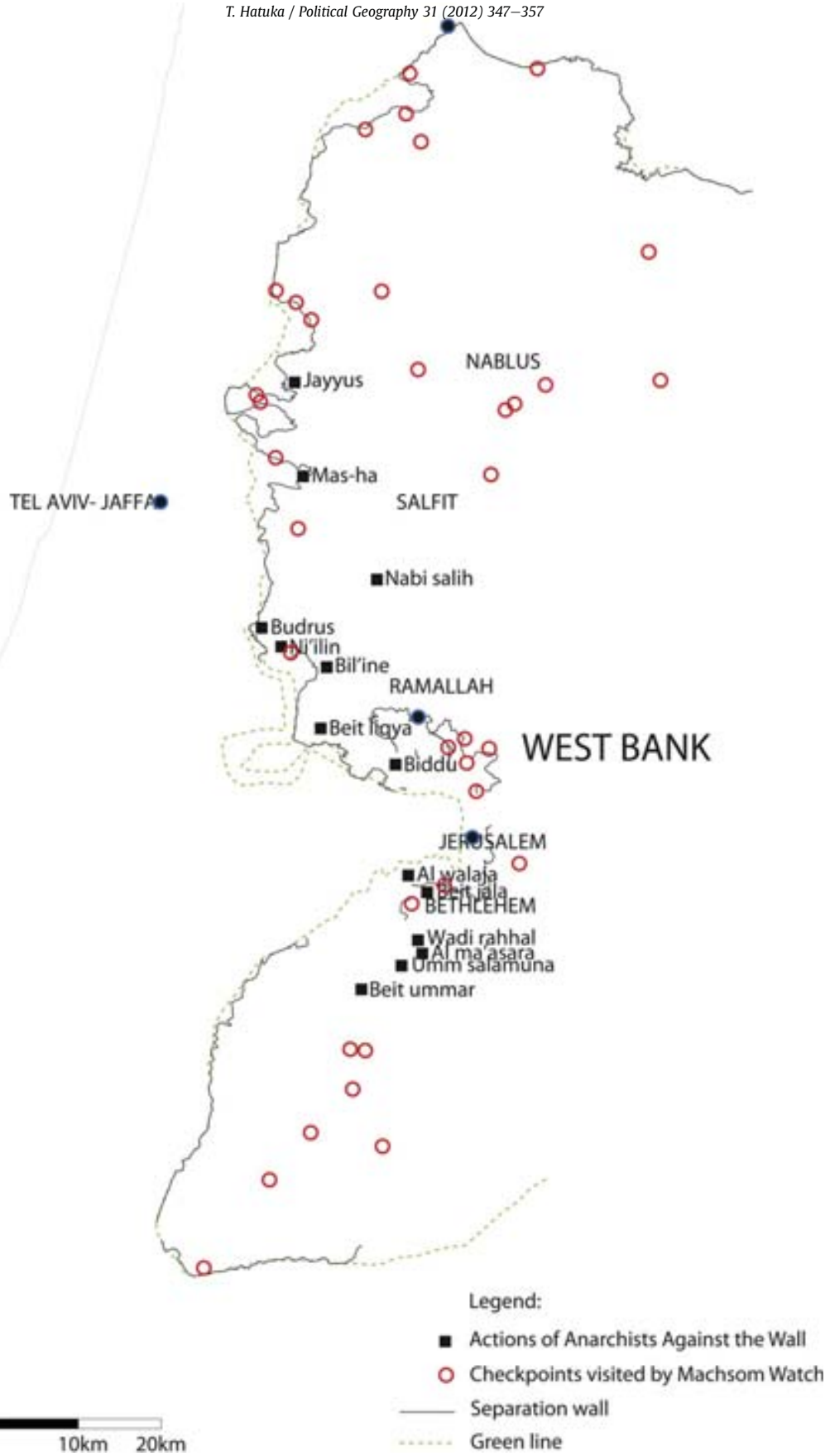


Fig. 4. Green Line (in green), Checkpoints visited by *Machsom Watch* (in red), [based on a map sent by the group that represents general activity during the years 2001–2010. Changes of activity are influenced by day-to-day events and political decisions. Oct 2010] Map of actions of *Anarchists against the Wall* based on data from AATW website, Oct, 2010 (in black) (Drawing: Yair Gutterman).



Fig. 5. *Machsom Watch*, 2010 (Photo: Author).



Fig. 6. *Machsom Watch*, 2010 (Photo: Author).

officials or men, as if exploring unknown territory (Participant Observation B, 2010). In this act of independence, they “take over” the territory that has been left to the rule of the settlers, “making sure human rights are being kept” (Participant Observation B, 2010). Yet, MW activists usually do not enter the Palestinian cities in the West Bank, which are legally off limits to Israeli citizens, or large settlements, instead remaining near the checkpoints areas, experiencing the scattered area of bordering zones. From their point of view, the West Bank belongs to the Palestinians, and the Israeli presence is temporary. This position raises a constant dilemma among members as to whether their acts and presence at checkpoints actually maintains or negates the occupation (Interview A, 2009).

Given the fact that the occupation is a dynamic situation, performing dissent at checkpoints forces the activists to be reflexive and attentive to political changes, having relative freedom to choose their trajectories during shifts. Thus as a whole, the mediation role of MW is dynamic and has drastically changed since the beginning of the movement’s activity. In part this is due to the restructuring of the checkpoints, with new buildings hosting the processes of control and rendering them unobservable. This has lowered the level of communication among parties and pushed the women more and more to the position of mere viewers of a situation.⁴ Thus, to date, while activists choose which checkpoints to attend, their ability to mediate is influenced by the checkpoints’ physicality. Like the whereabouts of the checkpoints, this physicality is decided by the state. In this manner, the state decisions and policy structures MW’s actions.

Context: enhancing the visibility of coercive power

MW’s choice of acting at checkpoints could be seen as a will to act where the occupation is visible. As one of the activists, Yehudit Elkana, explained, “Three women...decided to go and see what is going on at the checkpoints...because in the press of those...months...the reports on what is going on in the IDF’s checkpoints were terrifying” (Interview A, 2009). The observation and reporting practices, aimed at informing the public and changing policy, is considered the core mission of the group, and the one by which they evaluate their success. As Elkana says,

Go to the Israeli society, ninety nine [percent]...– and it doesn’t matter what their political views are – are not interested in what is going on, most don’t have a clue regarding what goes on in the West Bank, and I think ninety-nine percent don’t even cross the Green Line. They live in Israel and aren’t interested, so maybe

some have heard of *Machsom Watch*. But...I don’t think we had any influence...small influences do exist, so we managed to help a women giving birth pass, and helped someone get to the hospital, and someone who needed to go back to Gaza, or that sort of things, and we still do it. But did we have any influence on policy makers? [quietly] Absolutely not. (Interview A, 2009)

This aim of influencing the Israeli public and the frustration of not being successful should be seen in the context of the atmosphere in Israel, where most Israelis accept the 1967 lines as a practical border (though not necessarily as a final one). The exposure of the reports through various means, mostly over the internet but also in meetings with army officials and Knesset members,⁵ is aimed at influencing the target group of the MW activity: the Israeli public residing on the western side of the Green Line who accept the separation as a given without actively questioning the concrete implications of the occupation. Through their actions, MW wishes to “protect” the national community with which they identify themselves from the immoral practices associated with the occupation.

Identity: being an Israeli woman

The activists’ dynamic program of actions also characterizes their structural organization. MW works as a network with diffused power relations. Assisted by a secretarial body (with no power to make decisions), a regional coordinator of shifts, and a website manager, MW’s decisions are taken in general meetings held approximately every three months, by the vote of those who choose to attend. Daily connection among activists is kept via a mailing list. Activists are generally welcome to initiate activities independently, and frequently do so (Interview A, 2009; Participant Observation A, 2009; Participant Observation B, 2010). This relative “openness” allows volunteers to hold varied political views and at the same time to come together under their general resistance to the Israeli occupation, as stated on their website’s main page (MW, undated C).

Yet to become a member, one must fit two eligibility criteria: gender and nationality/civilian identity. The female identity of the activists is seen as critical. Some members view women as capable of approaching the checkpoint without creating antagonism, which helps them to keep the act non-violent, while others stress a political feminist agenda; all agree that female identity is imperative (Interview A, 2009). Moreover, the group defines itself as a group of *Israeli* women, and does not accept international activists within its lines. This national definition appears on the mission statement on their website: “*Machsom Watch*, in existence since 2001, is an

organization of peace activist Israeli women” (MW, 2011c). At least for some of the activists, this choice also relates to the understanding of the movement’s role in maintaining the morality of the “Israeli society”, their own society. While activists interviewed offered different versions of identity, they all referred back to the responsibility of the Israeli society. Thus, for example, Elkana says,

There is no argument about us being a group of women, Israeli. And this has been a very very important point...They [foreign volunteers] can accompany us and watch; they are not MW members. It is important, also because... Israel is important to us, very important to us, and what we wanted was a group of Israelis...because we saw the struggle against occupation...as a role of the Israeli society, since what is important for us is the Israeli society and what happens to it, and what happens to these soldiers. (Interview A, 2009)

The twofold nature of MW’s structure, which promotes openness among members and at the same time defines a rigid set of eligibility criteria, maintaining clear limits regarding the identity of its activists.

In reviewing the three criteria: *tactics*, *context* and *identity*, clearly MW acts within the current framework of both citizenship and borders, fostering a nation-state ideal model that corresponds to the traditional geopolitical form of thought in regards to borders. According to this model, membership should be egalitarian, national, democratic and unique. This model is animated by the desire to homogenize the state’s population by overlapping nationals and citizens. Homogenization of population is conducted by creating an imagined identity based on a shared language, culture and character.

Their *tactics* situates MW members as mediators between state representatives and Palestinians, and the location of their actions is guided by state activity and policies; their aim is to change Israeli public opinion and policy; and their *identity* is limited by gender and nationality. MW’s stand against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and, more concretely, against the control practices embedded in checkpoints, seeks to replace this system with a model of two national communities existing side by side. While they oppose Israeli policy and may be described as promoting an alternative political discourse within it (Amir, 2009), MW activists do not question the character of its community members. However, when comparing their actions and views with the reality of multiple asymmetric bordering, they are actually promoting the national model against current State policy.

Negotiating bordering practices (2): anarchists against the wall, “Palestinians initiate resistance and we join”

Anarchists Against the Wall (AATW) is an Israeli group whose activism was initiated by the establishment of the separation wall (2003). The main activity of the group is joining local demonstrations of Palestinian communities against the separation wall and other Israeli activities that expropriate Palestinian lands. The group also facilitates the involvement of activists who may not necessarily see themselves as part of it in the protests. During their seven years of activity, AATW has participated in hundreds of Palestinian demonstrations in villages in the West Bank and in Israel. While activists joined demonstrations on an almost daily basis during the first year, most activity now takes place on Fridays, with activists regularly joining demonstrations at four to five locations simultaneously (Interview B, 2010) (Figs. 7 and 8).

Tactics: expressing solidarity with the other

Participating in weekly demonstrations, also referred to as “Friday demonstrations”, activists protest the separation wall both at sites where it has been built and at sites where it is “under construction”, as well as other acts of expropriation of Palestinian land.⁶ Demonstrations take place along the separation wall, which is perceived as a massive physical enactment of force carried out unilaterally without the agreement of the Palestinians. With some 80% of the wall built east of the Green Line (Bimkom, 2006), it has become a point of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. This conflict takes place on the ground, with Palestinians protesting the expropriation of their lands, and on a broader level, with Palestinian leadership expressing their discontent and the violation of their rights. Both sides (Israeli and Palestinian) use their own concrete terminology when describing the contested project (Rogers & Ben-David, 2010).

The location of the demonstrations is associated with a concrete act of expropriation, which often starts with bulldozers uprooting trees. The protests are led primarily by the Palestinian villages’ local popular committees, who are physically accompanied by Israeli and international solidarity activists in varying proportions in different places and times (Participant Observation C, 2009; and Participant Observation D, 2010). Israeli activists arrive mostly from Tel Aviv, joining noontime demonstrations in villages after the Friday prayer. Demonstrators walk anywhere from one to three kilometers from the village center, likely to be



Fig. 7. *Anarchists against the Wall*, Bil’in, 18.11.10 (Photo: Chen Misgav).



Fig. 8. *Anarchists against the Wall*, Bil’in, 18.11.10 (Photo: Chen Misgav).

near the mosque, toward the separation wall or the IDF blockade. At this point, activists confront the army and demand to continue forward. This dynamic is influenced by the geography of the place, by the IDF's decisions, and by the leadership of local community. In many cases, Palestinians throw stones and soldiers bring an end to the demonstrations with methods that include tear gas, arrests, and rubber bullets. Reports to the media and alternative social networks are then promoted by both the Palestinian and Israeli activists (Interview B, 2010).

AATW is responding to the dynamic reality on the ground as designed by the national policy. But unlike MW, AATW's actions are also guided by Palestinian communities' response to this reality. As one of the activists says, "what they [i.e. MACHSOM WATCH] do, they do in checkpoints...what we do...we do in protest acts which Palestinians initiate and we join" (Interview B, 2010). While the specific nature of the action may change from one location to the other (i.e., protesting against a built wall, in front of bulldozers, and in places where the army does not allow demonstrators to reach the area of the wall), all demonstrations create a temporary border definition between the Israeli army and the demonstrators, whose movement will be limited by it. Such a border may disappear after the demonstration, only to reappear again a week later in the following Friday demonstration.

Context: Confronting corrupt power on the ground

Seeing their role as showing solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, AATW Israeli activists not only confront their government (which they could also do in Tel Aviv), but also present a statement against the separation policy. Putting themselves in the position of actual physical danger, the Israeli demonstrators lose, to some extent, their affiliation with the Israeli soldiers, instead forming an alliance with Palestinian and international activists (Interview B, 2010).

Unlike MW activists, who attribute equal importance to presence at checkpoints and to their practice of reporting, AATW do not see reporting and demonstrating as necessarily interrelated. The significance of their actions, from their point of view, is solidarity during demonstrations where they use their privileged civilian status to support, and possibly protect, their Palestinian partners. Media reports are secondary, though reports to international media have higher value than local media, due to growing skepticism that Israeli society will change its policies without international pressure (Interview B, 2010).

Identity: the frustration and power of being Israeli

In terms of citizenship, AATW activists – like those in MW – are Israelis using their civilian privileges in favor of Palestinians, seeing their citizenship as an important asset in their struggle (AATW, 2009). Their status is especially important in softening the reaction of the soldiers toward the Palestinians. According to the activists' testimony, soldiers act differently when Israeli citizens are present, which provides a significant reason for being there (Interview B, 2010).⁷ As one of the activists says:

You can get arrested with a Palestinian and you're being taken to be judged in one legal system and he's been taken to another. Even though you were at exactly the same place, and did the same things, it's all about your ethnic origin. The army, with no shame, says that the rules of opening fire on demonstrations are set in light of the participant's ethnic origin. Not according to the way people behave. I mean, if Israelis and international activists are present at a demonstration, rules of engagement are different than if it merely includes Palestinians' presence (Interview B, 2010).

This awareness of the power of being an Israeli citizen both "protects" Palestinians and also assists in communicating with

soldiers in their effort to prevent arrests,⁸ while also influencing soldiers' actions. Moreover, activists may try to convince soldiers to refuse orders by using their common cultural origins; for example, by using phrases between Jews, such as, "what are you doing here? Don't you want to be at home for Shabbat?"

This relationship between Israeli soldiers and activists is complex and contradictory, with activists both rejecting and accepting their Israeli identity. This is expressed clearly by Dr. Kobi Snitz, who has been active since 2003: "[I]n a way, it's liberating to have some kind of outlet for the frustration of being Israeli. Being arrested is a relief. It frees you from a kind of burden" (Palestinian News Network, 2010). Snitz's perspective illuminates how his Israeli citizenship forces him to feel complicit in an unjust system, and his activism allows him to come out against the policy and symbols of his state while allying himself with those who are hurt by this policy.

AATW does not define itself as a formal organization nor does it function as one; rather, it is a dynamic group. Activists take decisions in a non-hierarchical manner during periodical meetings. Membership is dynamic and in constant change, though some of the founders of the group are still active (Palestine News Network, 2010). Thus, roles like organizing transportation from the center of Israel to the demonstrations as well as sorting out the communication with the media are taken on a voluntarily basis and might change from time to time. Furthermore, activists are welcome to initiate new forms of protest (AATW, 2009; Interview B, 2010). Above all, AATW does not define a strict ideological agenda but sticks to actions, protesting directly against what they perceive as an intolerable reality (Interview B, 2010). This, as well as the structure of its activities, enables the group to encourage participation of activists who are not necessarily identified with it.

In sum, in assessing AATW's activities in light of the criteria offered, I conclude that it has a multiple character. In terms of *tactics*, they demonstrate against Israeli authorities in solidarity with Palestinians, and choose their places of action where asymmetric bordering is being enacted; in terms of context, they first concentrate on the concrete act of resistance and only then aim at the international community; and their relation to *identity* is complicated and cannot be understood only in terms of their relation to a national/territorial or ethnic community.

This description portrays AATW as a group performing a concept of citizenship and borders that provides an alternative to the one promoted by the state. This implies that they are conscious of the possibilities and limits of their socio-spatial context as framed by the state, and they choose to confront authority in their wish for reforms. While the state applies a policy of separation between Israelis and Palestinians, AATW chooses to join Palestinians and protest against what they understand as the violation of their rights. That being said, AATW chooses to support Palestinians (as exemplified by the many Palestinian flags carried during the protests) and as such they are also embedded in a national/territorial rationale.

Competing civil participation experiences along borders in Israel/Palestine

Though MW and AATW experiences along the borders are significantly different, they both raise issues of identity, citizenship and political territorial attachment. In both cases, bordering and control practices are seen by the groups as negotiable, either through direct talks, reports, performative acts, or application to the courts, with states (representatives) as active actors. Thus, as Chris Rumford has argued rightly, borders are not merely a business of the state; rather, people (both citizens and non-citizens) are involved in "borderwork" (2008) either by accepting or challenging

Table 1
Competing civil participation experiences along borders in Israel/Palestine.

	Machsom Watch	Anarchists against the wall
Profile of participants in main action	- Volunteers, and members of the organization. All members are Israeli women.	- Local Palestinian activists and Israeli and international activists.
Tactics	- Watching – use their freedom of movement - Reporting - use their reliability as reporters - Intervening – use civil power to criticize state mechanisms, especially in cases of rights violation. *some of the privileges are a result not only of the civil status of activists, but also of other social characters such as gender or socio-economic class.	- “Protecting” Palestinians by participating in the protests. (Being conscious of the Army’s different attitude when Israelis are present, including in cases of arrests, where duration of detention is shorter, and trial is taking place in a civil court rather than in a military court).
Context	- Where human rights are being jeopardized, activists react to restrictions set by the Israeli army.	- Where Palestinians initiate acts of resistance, activists respond to land expropriation and violation of rights.
Identity	- National identity is central to the group’s worldview, used as a justification for their action. The group seeks to influence Israeli society.	- National identity is not central to the group’s worldview, though civilian rights are used as a departure point to fight the enemy (i.e. the state and army).

bordering practices. Yet while both organizations oppose state policy, each group presents a different approach to the political aspects of border regimes and control. In terms of strategy, MW adopts negotiation practices through tactics basically limited to mediation and passive protest at existing checkpoints, while AATW promotes more confrontational situations, presenting opposition on the ground. Secondly, in terms of impact, each group targets different audiences. MW aims at exposing the data gathered on their watch to the Israeli public, while the dissemination of information does not stand at the core of AATW’s activities. Indeed, it is perceived as carrying lesser importance than the actual presence of activists on the ground (Interview B, 2010). Thirdly, the role of the body and the location of dissent are significantly different. MW guards and observes the Palestinians’ body control checks by the soldiers. They inquire of both Palestinians and operators about the duration of the checks and the conditions inside the facility, and they interfere if needed, but they accept the biopolitics of the checkpoints system. AATW activists create joint action with local Palestinians and international activists, and experience with their bodies the struggle against IDF soldiers. Furthermore, MW observes Palestinians being subject to control practices, seeing their role as that of maintaining the human rights of non-civilians, where AATW participates in practices of Palestinians’ confrontations, seeing their role as challenging current civil and border definitions.

Table 1 summarizes the differences between the two groups, and also clearly shows the relationships between the *tactics*, *context*, *identity* and perception of citizenship. In the absence of an agreed-upon border, both groups negotiate the spatial array of borders as well as competing concepts of citizenship. Their different perceptions also correspond to their diverse views of the future border between the two people in Israel/Palestine. As a whole I can say MW is driven by a national perspective that sees participants of the national community as a homogenous ethnic and cultural group; as one activist said, “it has to do what my father taught me – as Jews, we must keep a moral stand” (Participant Observation B, 2010). AATW actions are driven by the quest for justice, as Yonatan Polack, one of the founders of AATW said: “I don’t think my national identity is strong... I’m Israeli in terms of rights, but this is more a matter of fact than identity” (Kots-Bar, 2011). Dr. Kobi Snitz, another long-time activist said: “The strongest reason for being here is struggle...I could live comfortably somewhere else. The state is mostly an enemy, though I don’t want to say the same about Israeli society” (Palestinian News Network, 2010).

After years of struggle and activism, Israelis’ activists and Palestinians have developed social connections based on trust. And yet, in the case of MW, these relations are mostly based on the activists’ ability to act as mediators to the Israeli authorities, while in the case of AATW, joint experience of resistance to the same

“enemy” often results in friendship. Nevertheless, in both cases, social relations among groups are embedded in the political context of the actions. Thus, in periods of political tension, meetings are limited to joint struggle. In that sense, national identity is inescapable, and this fact is accepted by the activists. In other words, in times of tensions, national identity and boundaries remain cohesive affiliations for both sides, limiting agency and social communications between groups.

Conclusions: the spatiality of dissent along borders

By analyzing the interrelationships between borders and citizenship, this paper has explored civilian consciousness of the politics of place and in particular of the mutable nature of borders. As has been shown, citizens do not take for granted their capacity to act (the power *to*), nor do they conceive of the control practices (the power *over*) as primary; rather, they see them as two sides of the same coin. That is, they see themselves as having the power to modify and negotiate the power over, thus redefining their power to. This cyclical process of negotiation is what stands at the core of readjustments to the definition of both borders and citizenship. Thus, approaching borders and citizenship from the angle of civilian consciousness of power assists in our understanding of how individuals perceive and use a set of legal rights and physical boundaries as a means of suggesting alternative definitions.

Reading the two models of civilian action presented here reveals the flexibility of the interrelations between citizenship and borders. While both MW and AATW criticize the existence of what they perceive as unequal bordering, their activities reveal varying possibilities for a new form of connection between the border, community and civil action. One group (MW) advocates the strengthening of the bond between the national community of civilians who share an ethnic and cultural origin and the space defined by its border; the other (AATW) suggests a different relation by identifying themselves with the non-civilian other in his act of protest against the state which he does not perceive as his own. Their civil action uses their legal rights as civilians to form another kind of political partnership, which does not necessarily correspond to an agreed imagination of future borders.

Yet arguing for growing civilian consciousness does not imply a deterministic approach or an analysis of collectives; rather, it provides a path for tracking the dynamics of activists’ worldviews and decision-making regarding the changes they advocate in a particular socio-political context. Using this framework, it is important to note three things: first, civilian consciousness refers to the state as an agent seen through the deployment of resources, the exercise of disciplinary tactics, or manifestations of territorial array (Allen, 2009); second, civilian consciousness of the mutable nature

of power does not necessarily entail struggle, but rather an active participation in negotiating power; and third, though nurtured by national ideas, civilian consciousness is a dynamic concept that evolves constantly through the individual's critical assessment of his or her boundaries and rights, influenced by ongoing exposure to new information.

Empirically exploring acts of dissent along borders, I have argued for the growing awareness of their mutable nature, with actors challenging the state's order by negotiating directly with its representatives. In seeking the specific cause that drives both groups of activists to action, I found they both locate their main activity in concrete sites of such uneven bordering. These dissent acts are not masses spilling to the zone of borders, but rather organized groups that initiate defined spatial strategies to challenge control. Thus the growing awareness of power dynamics is also spatial, with actors choosing places of dissent carefully and strategically. In their ongoing actions, activists deconstruct control structures "from within," using their entitled rights of protesting, negotiation and appealing to authorities in advocating for change.

In addition, I have aimed to show that civilian consciousness entails practices of imagination; that is, the perception of one's real interests and the capacity to connect them to an imagined future (Dovey, 1999: 13). In the imagination of bordering practices, citizenship and borders are seen as spatial-temporal framework that focuses on the dynamic between rights, place and action. Yet, as have been shown, even when addressing and opposing the same ideology (in this case, occupation) and control practices, different groups may imagine different strategies and citizenship concepts.

Going beyond the Israeli–Palestinian case, the key question is a question of scale and publicness; that is, how vast is this phenomena and what are its possible spatial and social implications? If what I have been examining is a local and episodic phenomena with limited impact, insignificant in global scale, then we should give up the study of borders/citizenship interrelationships. Yet if this is a global phenomena, then we should respond to Balibar's call when he argued that the question of 'borders' is central when we reflect about citizenship and political association more generally. Moreover, this is a way to introduce citizenship into a spatial and territorial context (Balibar, 2009: 190).

Thus, comprehending the interrelationships between citizens and borders, it is important to explore activists' perceptions and use of legal rights and physical boundaries, both social-spatial human concepts that limit and allow the actions of individuals. This is particularly crucial in the xenophobic and exclusionary categorization of the present era, which brings the importance of investigating bounding processes and opposition into sharp focus (Jones, 2009). Negotiating these bounding processes is the expression of civilian consciousness.

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Endnotes

¹ In part, this "condition" is due to fact that most Israelis accept the 1967 lines as an international border. Evidence of this can be seen in the construction of the separation wall, which was supported by politicians from the left. Shafir and Peled (2002) mark the first Sharon (2007) as the event through which the Green Line has been re-perceived as a border among the Israeli public. For more on the impact of the Barrier on West Bank Communities, (see UN report 2004).

² According to Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, in October 2010, there were 99 fixed checkpoints in the West Bank. Sixty-two are internal checkpoints situated well within the West Bank (B'Tselem, 2011). HRW's report concentrates on East Jerusalem and Area C, as defined in an agreement signed between Israel and the PLO in 1995 (HRW, 2010).

³ This statement is based on observations. However, the interviewee (Interview A, 2009) emphasized the fact that MW activists hold very different views on this subject of communication with the army. Some members completely refuse such communication.

⁴ The "mere viewer" position was evident in observations held in the Sha'ar Ephraim/Irtach checkpoint which was reconstructed as a closed structure, preventing the activists from being present during most of the crossing process (Participant Observation B, 2010).

⁵ YE reported on the meetings, and noted the fact that not all MW members support this sort of connection with the army (Interview A, 2009). For a view against such meetings with the army, see Kaniuk and Goldschmidt (2011).

⁶ During the interview with an AATW activist, he talked about two modes of demonstration during the early years of activity: direct action (such as a group of people tying themselves to a tree) and Friday demonstrations, which will be discussed here as the main form of activity (Interview B, 2010).

⁷ While we could not validate this statement in regards to current reality on the ground, it is in line with news report from 2007 (Sharon, 2007).

⁸ If soldiers concentrate on Palestinians, activists are likely to step in shouting and physically trying to prevent arrests or other forms of threat, thus also putting themselves in danger of arrest (participant observations).

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