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**DOI**

[10.1177/00113921221086824](https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921221086824)

**Publication date**

2023

**Document Version**

Final published version

**Published in**

Current sociology

**License**

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**Citation for published version (APA):**

Gazit, N., & Grassiani, E. (2023). Securitized volunteerism and neo-nationalism in Israel's rural periphery. *Current sociology*, 71(2), 299-321.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921221086824>

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# Securitized volunteerism and neo-nationalism in Israel's rural periphery

Current Sociology Monograph  
2023, Vol. 71(2) 299–321  
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DOI: 10.1177/00113921221086824  
journals.sagepub.com/home/csi



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## Abstract

Contemporary volunteering is often considered a neoliberal phenomenon that has become prevalent in an era of post-national sentiments and individualism. Although it is frequently depicted as non-political, it may serve the promotion of political agendas, such as neo-nationalism, outside the traditional frame of the state and its institutions. This becomes particularly salient when non-governmental organizations practice volunteering in ways that undermine the state's monopoly in the realms of security and public order. We conceptualize this tendency as securitized volunteering – instances of volunteering work that is promoted by, in this case non-state, organizations who are involved in voluntary security activities that are violent (or potentially violent). Drawing on an ethnographic study of the Israeli organization HaShomer HaChadash (The New Guard), this article demonstrates how agricultural and security volunteering is used to advance a neo-nationalist agenda that circumvents the state, and at the same time maintains an apolitical stance. This is achieved through the implementation of two corresponding forms of securitized volunteering – civilianization of security volunteerism and securitization of civilian volunteerism. Blurring the distinction between both forms enables the organization to attract supporters and volunteers that come from various social sectors and to reinforce its seemingly apolitical position and nationalist agenda.

## Keywords

Agriculture, Israel, neo-nationalism, securitization, social movements, volunteering

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## Introduction

Last *TuBishvat*, the Jewish holiday celebrating the connection of the Jewish people to the land and nature, thousands of soldiers and students flocked across Israel to farms and fields to volunteer in agricultural activities. Early Zionist institutions have transformed this religious Jewish holiday into a day that celebrates the connection of the Jewish people to the land and nature by planting trees (often provided by the Jewish National Fund<sup>1</sup>). The Israeli organization HaShomer HaChadash (The New Guard (TNG)) chose this day to organize volunteering activities for soldiers and youth around the country. As the organization writes on its English Facebook page: ‘In honor of Tu B’shvat, the New Year of the Trees, *HaShomer* hosted the entire *Ezra* Youth Movement [a religious group], spreading across farms in northern Israel and volunteering, helping farmers, maintaining and connecting to the land’.

Such activities – assisting farmers to cultivate their land, and protecting them – are the focal points of TNG. For example, one Israeli farmer in the Arava area had been suffering from cattle thefts and violent attacks for years, and was about to give up his existence as a farmer. But then volunteers from all over the country came to guard his land and kept him from leaving.<sup>2</sup> Incidents like these, taking place in Israel’s periphery, spurred the creation of TNG in 2007. Its volunteers come to the aid of farmers and cattle shepherds in need; they carry out nightly patrols and help with other work that needs to be done. In TNG’s words, they ‘give the farmer a good night’s rest’ and carry out a ‘national mission’ of protecting farmers and their land.<sup>3</sup>

TNG is one of the most prominent and larger civil society organizations in Israel. It is an organization that sees helping people ‘[re]-connect to the land’ as one of its main goals.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it revives the ethos of civilian securitization through volunteer guarding activities. In this article, we use the case of TNG to ask how volunteering, and especially the combination of civilian volunteering and securitized practices, may serve as a vehicle for advancing a neo-nationalist agenda.

We conceptualize this combination as ‘securitized volunteering’. This addresses instances in which volunteering work is promoted by (non)state organizations that are involved in military and/or security activities and which can (potentially) use violence. TNG interweaves such securitized activities with civilian volunteering activities, especially those related to agriculture. We will show that this combination serves to depoliticize the activities of the organization; this is in line with much of the framing of contemporary volunteerism as taking place beyond politics (Eliasoph, 1998). We argue, however, that the opposite is in fact the case; the organization uses agricultural and securitized activities to push a political agenda that promotes a renewed Zionist ideology through voluntary civic engagement. This differentiates TNG from other voluntary civic organizations in Israel operating in the realm of security, such as the Civil Guard (*Mishmar Ezrachi*) and Neighbourhood Watch groups, whose activities are much smaller in scale, are local, and are not as ideologically charged.

The ideological agenda of TNG invigorates traditional national sentiments and Zionist ideas in civil society, beyond the symbolic boundaries of the nation state. The encouragement of civilian engagement in both agricultural and security volunteering work enables the organization to maintain a (seemingly) neutral stance and, at the same time, to

promote the idea of becoming a good citizen and member of the community through participating in activities that fall outside of the state's realm. While these activities focus on the Jewish connection to the land, the organization attempts to present them under an apolitical guise that softens social boundaries between rival social sectors. It even challenges external social boundaries in ways that allow non-Jews to participate, albeit in a limited way.

Two interchangeable and corresponding dynamics of weaponized volunteering characterize TNG – the *civilianization of security volunteerism* and the *securitization of agricultural volunteerism*. Both dynamics are deeply rooted in the legacy of classic Zionism and in the dominant Israeli political culture that still highly values the ideal of voluntarism. They are, furthermore, rooted in what Kimmerling (1998) calls 'Israeli civil militarism', which indicates a daily, non-formal form of militarism. The two dynamics serve to introduce a 'new' Zionism, as TNG activists call it. While the organization does return to and reanimate classic Zionist themes, it also refashions them by replanting them in present day civil society, colouring them as apolitical and dimming their exclusive ethno-national features. We read this as a new form of neo-nationalism, or Neo-Zionism, which is not solely grounded in ethno-nationalism – as, for example, Uri Ram (2008) has described it – but is developed and promoted as a non-partisan, civic ideology that may encompass non-Jewish citizens of Israel.

In order to make our arguments, we begin, after introducing our methods, with a short overview of the theoretical debates and historical context through which we analyse TNG and its mission. We then discuss the organization's main traits. Subsequently, we analyse the dynamics of securitized volunteering in TNG – the civilianization of security volunteerism and the securitization of agricultural volunteerism – and discuss its meaning with regard to the organization's production of a neo-nationalist ideology.

## Methodology

The analysis derives from an ongoing ethnographic project that began in 2018. Our main research methods include participant observation during TNG events and activities, interviews, and the analysis of secondary materials, such as online footage of the organization's activities, its social media outlets, and news items. We participated in public TNG events, such as the 'Guard Day' that honours the organization's volunteers, its Independence Day celebrations, and fundraising events. We and our research assistants also joined agricultural volunteering and guarding activities. We used these participant observations to gather data about TNG's practices, organizational culture and ideology.

In addition, we conducted in-depth open-ended interviews alongside casual chats with the organization's senior and ground-level personnel and volunteers. The interviews were conducted in Hebrew and took place in informants' homes, in cafés and at TNG locations (e.g. farms, schools and communes) and events. They ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours and occasionally continued over multiple sessions. Respondents were identified using snowball sampling and during on-site observations. Interviews were transcribed in full and analysed using the method of coding and comparison. Their purpose was to obtain qualitative data on patterns in the organization's activities and ideology, and on the personal experiences of its members and volunteers.

We also reviewed the country's major news outlets (Ha'aretz, Yedioth Ahronoth and Makor Rishon), news websites (Ha'aretz, Walla News and Ynet), and Israel's three major television channels (Kan, Channel 12 and Channel 13) for reports on TNG activities and media interviews with the organization's personnel and volunteers. Since the organization is very active in social media (such as Facebook and Instagram) and has its own website, we also reviewed these platforms. Finally, we analysed collective and personal artefacts related to TNG, such as flags, logos, t-shirts and personal memoirs. All these materials were coded and thematically analysed along with the interviews and our fieldnotes.

## Nationalist volunteering

Contemporary volunteering is often considered a civilian gesture of doing good outside of state institutions. It has been interpreted as a neoliberal phenomenon that has become prevalent in an era of post-nationalist sentiments and individualism (Muehlebach, 2012; Shachar, 2014). Moreover, the legitimacy of volunteering often relies on its popular perception as a 'pure' engagement that is altruistic and autonomous, especially from the political sphere (Shachar et al., 2019). As described by Eliasoph (1998), volunteering is often distanced from other civic engagements that are associated with the state, such as membership of political parties or trade unions, and which are identified and degraded as 'politics'.

Contemporary volunteering can, however, also serve as a vehicle for the promotion of political agendas, such as neo-nationalism. Julie Hemment (2009, 2015), for example, provides a fresh perspective on the controversial nationalist youth projects that have proliferated in Russia in the Putin era. The case of the Nashi movement, and its predecessor *Idushchiye Vmyesty* (Moving Together), illustrates how the engagement of youth in the provision of voluntary services to vulnerable populations has been used as an efficient vehicle for neo-nationalism in contemporary Russia. Interestingly, its organizers frame the activities of Nashi simultaneously as expressions of patriotism and devotion to the fatherland *and* as acts of entrepreneurship and self-development; hence, they interweave a nationalist agenda with a neoliberal discourse. Similarly, Bee and Kaya (2017) focus on the emergence of different strategies of civic and political participation and the relationships between nationalism and civilian activism in present-day Turkey. They ask how young activists within Turkish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) use their volunteering to construct a new notion of citizenship and show how volunteers strive to advance emancipation from the state and its institutions, without breaking their links with it.

Although rooted in different political contexts, these studies demonstrate that contemporary volunteerism, which is often depicted as non-political, may in fact serve as a platform for the advancement of neo-nationalist sentiments and political involvement in civil society, outside of the traditional frame of the state and its institutions. Harnessing volunteerism to such political endeavours opens up a set of questions about the character of civic engagement being nurtured. On one hand, such endeavours resonate with the republican discourse of citizenship that contends that the moral community should be based on self-sacrifice and the active contribution of individuals to the collective (Shafir and Peled, 2002: 5). On the other hand, constructing civic (and national) affiliations through volunteering outside of the state may potentially advance new interpretations of nationalism

that are restricted neither to formal statist institutions nor to traditional nationalist ideologies. Furthermore, these affiliations problematize the relations and boundaries between civil society and the state, as nationalized volunteering may be interpreted as undermining the state as the default political realm of civic expression and affiliation.

Things become even more complicated when volunteering involves security and (potentially) violent practices. The involvement of civil society organizations in security potentially undermines the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Traditionally, the domain of security has been associated with the common good of the collective, and thus any engagement in security activities, even when it is mandatory (e.g. in military service) or if conducted in a civilian context (e.g. in a Neighbourhood Watch group), can be considered a virtue of good citizenship (e.g. Krahmann, 2008). Given the state's claim to have the monopoly on the exercise of violent means in society, however, such privatized civilian security activities, especially if politically framed, may raise a conflict vis-à-vis the state. Legitimizing and 'softening' such activities through volunteerism, and framing them in terms of civic virtue, almost by definition challenge the state's monopoly in the field of law and order (e.g. Avant, 2000). As we shall demonstrate, a way to mitigate these tensions is to combine security volunteering with civilian volunteering.

The connection between volunteering and nationalism invites attention to the nationalist activities of non-statist social organizations. Other scholars have already acknowledged that contemporary nationalism is not restricted to political state structures, as is commonly suggested by classical theorists of nationalism (e.g. Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1991). Danny Kaplan (2018), for example, demonstrates how interactions in shared social institutions (such as schools, and military or youth organizations), which he calls 'social clubs', initiate a cognitive process of national identification through the feelings of solidarity they create. An important feature of this process is the way participants of these social clubs 'learn how to transform strangers into friends while alienating others' (Kaplan, 2018: 2). By the same token, Hizky Shoham (2017) suggests that it is important to acknowledge the existence of unofficial nationalism (see also Bellah, 1967) and to focus on the nationalist meanings of traditions and customs that are common to broad strata of the population, but which involve almost no state intervention. These studies emphasize the magnitude of 'everyday nationalism' (e.g. Edensor, 2002; Fox and Miller-Driss, 2008) and nationalism from the bottom up. Although unofficial nationalism, often expressed in everyday practices, is important for creating a sense of belonging to the political unit (Shoham, 2017), it may also advance new interpretations of the meaning of nationalism and its boundaries.

Expressions of everyday nationalism are particularly significant in ethno-national societies, such as Israel, where the affiliation between state, citizenship and nations is so central, and where there is an inextricable link between ethnic descent, civilian status and social dominancy. In Israel, we see how the social status of the dominant ethnic group of Ashkenazi Jews is intimately connected to the mythico-history of the creation of the state and their unique contribution within it (Malkki, 1995). However, while nationalized volunteering, as conducted by TNG, may reproduce such ethno-national hierarchies in civil society, we found that it can also mitigate social boundaries. Indeed, transcending statist national frameworks through inclusionary volunteering based on civic solidarity may in fact advance new social alliances. Hence, relocating nationalist practices to within civil

society potentially unravels the national-state nexus, opening up the possibilities for what nationalism means to people, and even challenging traditional social affiliations. As we describe below, this becomes particularly salient when previously exclusive political practices are carried out by civilian volunteers.

The exploration of such tendencies requires placing the contemporary phenomenon of securitized voluntarism in both its historical and wider political and cultural context. In the case of TNG, it is important to locate the organization in relation to the dominant discourses of citizenship in Israel, and to the apparent transformation of Israeli society from being (militarily) mobilized to a more civil society with greater space for social movements.

### **Volunteerism, security and agriculture in Zionism**

The ethos of collectivism and voluntarism has deep roots in Zionism. This should not come as a surprise, as the subjection of individuals' personal interests to those of the collective is part and parcel of any national endeavour, especially in revolutionary anti-colonial national movements and as part of state-building projects. Even before independence is gained, members of the national community are expected to actively express their political attachment in terms of self-sacrifice and devotion to the group.

Starting already in the pre-state days, the Zionist revolutionary ideology has nurtured the value of the deliberate action of individuals and groups who pursue the collective goal of establishing a Jewish independent state in *Eretz Yisrael* (Palestine) (Almog, 2000). As Ilan Pappé (2000) explains, this ethos of 'pioneering' (*chalutzut*) was encapsulated in the ideal of 'fulfilment' (*hagshama*), which meant 'social and personal sacrifice' (Eisenstadt, 1968: 17). This ethos was most dominant among a particular segment of the Zionist movement – the national labour sector, composed of Ashkenazi Jews (Shafir and Peled, 2002) – who perceived themselves as society's elite. Framing their activities of 'settling and securing the land' as their unique contribution to the nation enabled them to become hegemonic in Israeli society, a position that lasted until the late 20th century (Kimmerling, 1998). The agricultural settlement and security apparatus involved have been important means for the Jews in Palestine to expropriate land and engage in territorial expansion as part of their overall national campaign vis-à-vis the local Arabs. It is therefore unsurprising that establishing agricultural settlements has traditionally been referred to in Zionist discourse in terms of the creation of national security (Kellerman, 1996; Kemp, 1999; Kimmerling, 2004).

The original *HaShomer* militia (The Guard), a Jewish defence organization founded in Palestine in 1909 to guard the Jewish settlement lands and communities against Arab hostility, encapsulated this connection between agricultural settlement, security and self-sacrifice. But also later, after the establishment of the State of Israel, this connection between security and agriculture lingered, together with the continued dominance of the republican tradition within Zionism. Correspondingly, all activities, and especially voluntary activities in these domains, were appraised and rewarded, both symbolically and materially, especially with regard to the prominence of military service in Israeli society.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the agricultural sector was highly prized. The Ashkenazi Jews who occupied the upper strata of Israeli society emphasized their

exceptional contribution to the nation-building project (in the pre-state days and later). Other groups who were excluded from these endeavours – mainly Mizrahi Jews (of Middle Eastern and North African origin), Ultra-Orthodox Jews and Palestinian citizens of Israel (after the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948) – were marginalized (Shafir and Peled, 2002; Svirsky and Bernstein, 1980).

This ethno-national social order, which was partly based on the level of social and national contribution, has gradually been eroded since the mid-1980s (Kimmerling, 2001; Shachar, 2014; Shafir and Peled, 2002). Due to the neoliberal regime shift in Israel, the centralized economy has given way to a de-regulated and privatized one. Exposed to global forces of competition, the agricultural sector in Israel, which once symbolized the triumph of Zionism and was one of the country's major economic sectors, was thrown into a state of continuous crisis. The lack of water (Beyth, 2006) and diminishing governmental and public support (Shani, 2018) has fed a state of emergency among farmers, who increasingly struggle to keep their heads above water in the face of rising costs and declining exports. Working the land, which was once prestigious *Avoda Ivrit* (Jewish Labour (lit. Hebrew Labour)), is now carried out for low pay by foreign workers from South East Asia (Kaminer, 2019).

In addition, the decline of national and collective sentiments among members of the past elite has been associated with a growing withdrawal from the military of youngsters from the upper echelons of the Ashkenazi middle class. As this group has gradually come to see military service as a disruptive factor, rather than an effective avenue for social mobility, the motivation to join these combat and elite units has declined (Levy, 1998, 2007). This group's withdrawal from the field of security has come with a price, namely the erosion of the prestige of this sector within Israeli political culture.

Some scholars have described this tendency for economic, cultural and political liberalization in terms of a transformation of Israel, from a militarily-mobilized society to a civil society (Peled, 2005; Peled and Ophir, 2001). A notable expression of this development is the flourishing of public voluntary activities, partly in response to the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the state (Ben-Eliezer, 2005) and the growing involvement of individuals in civilian volunteering activities initiated by different organizations. This phenomenon can be interpreted as a reaction by the mostly Ashkenazi elite to its decreasing social and political dominance. Itamar Shachar (2014), for example, studied the *Ruach Tova*<sup>6</sup> ('Good Spirit' in Hebrew) volunteering initiative in Israel, which focuses on doing good deeds. He shows that by constituting volunteering as an all-inclusive national project that transcends political, class, and ethnic differences, and by constantly attempting to promote and expand this notion, *Ruach Tova*'s Ashkenazi staff members strive to reclaim a managerial and aristocratic position for themselves in the national field. Shachar demonstrates how, in the context of their eroding position through the neoliberal transition in Israel, members of this sector use professionalism and organized volunteering to regain social dominance.

In many ways, TNG is also a response to this erosion of power. The organization strives to revive the prestigious status of the agricultural sector in Israeli society and offers a new version of Zionism based on volunteerism that is simultaneously civilianized and securitized. At the same time, the organization does not present itself as either sectoral or partisan.



## HaShomer HaChadash

TNG was established in 2007 to deal with what was framed as ‘agricultural terrorism’ – the theft of flocks and the desecration and destruction of orchards and fields belonging to Jewish farmers, mainly in the country’s periphery, namely in the Galilee, Negev and Jordan Valleys.<sup>7</sup> Today, more than a decade after its establishment, the organization has a few hundred permanent workers and tens of thousands of ‘episodic volunteers’<sup>8</sup> (Macduff, 1990) that come from various social and political sectors in Israeli society, and who volunteer irregularly (from only once, to monthly shifts). These include youth from kibbutzim (home to Israel’s past national and political elite), volunteers from the urban sector, religious Zionist activists (Israel’s Neo-Zionist elite), young and middle-aged volunteers from development towns, men and women, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, and even activists from Druze and Arab villages and towns. In 2018, even some Ultra-Orthodox Jews joined the volunteering activities.

The organization is funded mostly by donors from the Jewish diaspora, such as private family foundations and federations from the United States, and partly by state organs such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Defence, and *Mishmar HaGvul* (the Israeli Border Police).<sup>9</sup> Within a decade, it has become one of the largest and most active civil society organizations in Israel. The organization’s budget is more than NIS 75 million (about US\$22,000,000) a year<sup>10</sup> and it claims to serve 775,428 *dunam*<sup>11</sup> of land in Israel. Its vision for 2022 is to reach 300,000 volunteers a year, and to safeguard three million *dunam* of agricultural land.<sup>12</sup> This amount might be somewhat optimistic, as it implicates almost all of the agricultural land recognized by the Israeli state.

The name of the organization and its logo symbolize its historical and ideological affiliations. TNG positions itself as a contemporary incarnation of the historical Hashomer militia. The logo features the famous monument of Alexander Zaïd (1886–1938), one of the founders and heroic figures of the original Hashomer. By relating itself to these pre-state militaristic Zionist symbols, TNG does not only position itself as an organization that continues and commemorates this legacy, but it also sets an agenda of returning to and reviving this pre-state period; when the security of the nation and the land was based on volunteerism and individual sacrifice rather than on (failed) statist institutions.

At the same time, TNG frames itself as apolitical. In Israeli terminology, ‘non-political’ is often conflated with not being associated with a political party, and the organization indeed claims that it is there ‘for all’ and that it is non-partisan. Still, this does not mean that TNG does not deal with deeply political issues or that it is not connected with important political actors. On the contrary, the organization’s *raison d’être* is to provide security and to nurture agriculture within the framework of Zionism; as such, the discourse of volunteerism that it cultivates is definitely politically charged. Furthermore, different politicians are known to support the organization actively and even come from its ranks.<sup>13</sup> This makes TNG’s insistence on a non-partisan civic discourse so important and, as we shall demonstrate below, fundamental to its neo-nationalist ideology.

TNG is a conglomerate that operates dozens of programmes for youth and adults, school and post-secondary students, soldiers, Israeli businessmen and Jews from the diaspora. All of these programmes revolve around three intersecting themes: agriculture,

security and education, and involve mainly volunteering activities. Examples are, providing security services, such as nightly patrols and stakeouts (mainly to private farms); conducting cultural activities in collaboration with schools and private companies, such as picking fruit and planting trees; and operating a youth movement, a summer camp and a pre-military training programme. TNG also organizes public festivals that include civilian agricultural volunteering (tree planting, fruit picking and harvesting). In recent years, the organization has established three high school programmes in the Israeli Arava (in the Negev Desert), the Golan Heights and in the east of the country.

People of various ages participate in TNG's volunteering activities. The youngest volunteers, aged 12–18 years, can join the organization's youth movement ('The New Movement')<sup>14</sup> or the TNG high-school programme. TNG also runs a pre-military educational programme for youth who want to delay their military service for a year and instead volunteer on farms. Another TNG programme is for discharged soldiers, usually aged 20–21 years, who join communes and volunteer in guarding activities and agriculture. Most of the volunteers in the other programmes are older adults between 30 and 70 years of age.

In the next section, we elaborate on the duality of the voluntarism advanced by TNG and the blurred boundaries between the two domains of security and civilian volunteering. We will then use this analysis to demonstrate how weaponized volunteering is used by TNG to advance a Neo-Zionist agenda.

## **Civilianization of security volunteering**

Much of the volunteering work done by TNG, which also lies at the heart of its organizational ethos, symbols, and establishment, is guarding work. The ethos of voluntary guarding is rooted in the organization's founding story, which is told during practically every TNG event and carries almost mythical significance. More importantly, it roots the virtue of guarding in the civilian sphere, after the rural periphery was abandoned by the state. As the story goes, TNG was founded when Yoel Zilberman, a young farmer, decided to set up a tent on his family's land after his father announced that he was going to quit farming because of all the thefts he had endured. Young Yoel, then still a soldier, took a flag and some equipment, returned to his father's land, planted the flag on the hill and stayed to protect it together with some of his comrades. The story symbolizes the ethos of Zionist realization through the practice of securitized volunteering, which the organization is trying to create and nurture. Young and old, village or city dwellers, all are invited to come and volunteer to protect farmers, like Yoel's father, and their lands from threats.

The fact that the guarding activities are carried out by ordinary civilians who come from various sectors of Israeli society, and who receive no professional training, softens this practice and colours it as a civilian act of 'doing good', thus differentiating it from the sort of martial security provided by the state authorities. TNG does not apply any strict criteria when recruiting new volunteers. When a new volunteer contacts the organization and wishes to join, he or she is only required to give his or her full name, age, identification number and place of residence. Occasionally, volunteers are invited to participate in a half-day training session consisting of instructions and an introduction to

the organization, though this is not mandatory; if a volunteer cannot attend the training, he or she can still join the organization and start to volunteer. The message propagated by TNG is that volunteering is for *all*.

Although the practice of guarding is potentially dangerous, as the volunteers may engage with armed criminals, it is framed by TNG as casual and safe. Volunteers are not supplied with arms (although some of them do bring personal arms) and are instructed to 'demonstrate their presence' and remain passive in any encounter with 'hostiles' or 'cousins' (military slang that often refers to Arabs (Palestinians)). These instructions situate volunteers in a liminal position: they are civilians with no formal jurisdiction, who provide security services that fall within the realm of the state's responsibilities.

Through these voluntary guarding activities, TNG puts itself on the map as a protective entity that goes into action where the state fails. The language used and the actions taken also blur the meaning of voluntary protection offered by the organization. Using the term 'agricultural terror' frames the acts of protection as anti-terror activities, and they are thus very similar to those conducted by state authorities such as the military and the police. At the same time, it is clear that in many cases we are not talking about actual terrorism, and the threats to which the organization responds (including field and forest fires near the Gaza Strip or the theft of fruit) require a relatively non-violent approach, and can thus be handled by volunteers.

This ambivalence is also evident in TNG's security apparatus and its different levels of institutionalization. Its security activities range from nightly guarding and foot patrols by occasional volunteers to more organized groups of volunteers who ride motorcycles and jeeps, while a more securitized form of volunteering with a higher level of institutionalization is carried out by a unit of volunteers that cooperates with the Israeli Border Police. Nevertheless, the idea that resonates remains the same throughout all of these activities: civilians doing what should be the job of the government.

The civilianization of security volunteering becomes further apparent in the ways in which volunteers interpret the nature of the threat, their relations with farmers, and the meaning of security. In order to promote security and guarding activities, after all, one needs to first identify a clear and legitimate threat. As already mentioned, the biggest threat identified by TNG is so-called 'agricultural terrorism'. It is important to dwell briefly on the use of the term 'terrorism' – a term that is frequently used in Israeli public discourse concerning politically-motivated or 'nationalist' (*leu'mani*) attacks carried out by Palestinians against Israelis. In the context of TNG, 'terrorism' is discursively positioned in the civilian sphere and criminalized. While TNG is very hesitant to directly identify those behind the crimes it encounters, by using vague terms such as 'the guys' (*ha'chevre*), it is clear that the organization is likely pointing to the Bedouins who dwell in the peripheral areas, as well as 'illegal Palestinian infiltrators' from the West Bank.<sup>15</sup>

In this way, the difference between what is framed as a 'criminal' act and what is done with 'nationalist' motivations becomes blurred, and the two are grouped together simply as 'terrorism'; though in a 'subtle' sense, since it is a terrorist threat that can be dealt with by laypeople. This enables TNG volunteers to hold the stick at both ends: it colours their volunteering with national meaning and, at the same time, detaches it from what should remain under the jurisdiction of the state. Moreover, TNG also frames the practice of guarding and security volunteering as an altruistic gesture between civilians – volunteers

and farmers – who share the same land. This is a dyadic relation that serves both parties, and at the same time is also interpreted as a national gesture. One volunteer, for example, writes:

To volunteer in TNG is to ‘do Zionism’ with *your hands*. It is to help and simply produce a mutual agreement. If the farmer sleeps well at night, then *I did my thing* . . . You can’t just sit and complain and write how bad it is, or hide behind the keyboard and complain. We need to act to make it better. (Guarding volunteer, TNG website, our translation and emphasis)<sup>16</sup>

Another volunteer writes the following about how his volunteering activities have contributed to his own life:

Once in a while, between reserve duty [military], recovery and running for money, you do something good. We came to guard on Friday so that the same farmer could celebrate a quiet Friday [*Shabbat*] with his family knowing that his area was guarded. And no more thefts, and no longer this harassment, and a livelihood – agriculture – which has also become a dirty word in the country, will be maintained. I wish for other Fridays and holidays like this, because here, in the field, with a *poike*<sup>17</sup> on the fire and black coffee on the fire, with the family, it could not be better. (Guarding volunteer, TNG website, our translation)<sup>18</sup>

Yaara, a young volunteer who joined the TNG post-military programme, told us:

You are in the open air and it is FUN! You are making a campfire and it is FUN! People bring their guitars and jam together. People join you [when you guard], you wouldn’t leave your buddies alone. I even wrote a short story about this experience – ‘Guarding and Friendships. It’s a different level of bonding’.

All of these practices are predominantly social and built upon familiar settings in Israeli popular culture. Guarding in couples or in small groups is not only framed as an act of contribution, but also an encounter of cool sociability between (newly made) friends – ‘we are all *chevre*’. The notion of *chevre*, which is used a pseudonym for the threatening Other, as mentioned above, is ironically, also used to enable bonding among volunteers. As explained by Almog (2000) and Kaplan (2006), the notion of *chevre* has deep roots in Zionist culture, starting in the pre-state era. It usually refers to male bonding between those who share a similar social background and ideological affiliation – namely that of secular Zionism. The ideal of *chevre* is manifested in informal practices that are very common in TNG’s activities, such as sitting together around a campfire all night, drinking bitter black coffee, singing patriotic songs, riding motorcycles and hiking together on weekends, and hanging out in the wild and enjoying the landscape of the motherland. By using these cultural frameworks, which are known to almost any Israeli Jew, the organization manages to trivialize the act of security by contextualizing it within a familiar, and civilian, scheme of informal collective bonding. When asked what they do during guarding, one of the young volunteers we interviewed explained to us: ‘We hang out together. We talk about the meaning of guarding . . . How we help the farmer protect his property. We drink coffee. A lot of coffee! Play the guitar and enjoy the scenery of our beautiful land. These are perfect times’. The importance of guarding thus goes beyond

mere protection. There is a strong ideological component that refers to knowing and being on the land, being in the open, and enjoying and helping others (e.g. Ben-David, 1997; Stein, 2009). In short, it is about doing good through security activities, without the state's presence.

Although most of the volunteers are unarmed, they find the practice of guarding similar to what they did (or will do) in their military service. Consequently, conducting militaristic practices such as basic military exercises, taking long and heavily-equipped treks, and memorizing tactical manoeuvres and navigation seem crucial to many volunteers. As one of the interviewees described it, 'all of this is doing Zionism'.

Security practices at times turn more active and even go beyond TNG's mandate, for instance when volunteers patrol Bedouin villages in search of stolen crops and herds. Occasionally, the volunteers also ambush potential suspects near villages and fields. Such practices are seldom spoken about in public nor are they published on the organization's outlets. Yet they carry much significance, as they also characterize TNG as a militia-in-creation, which challenges the state monopoly in the realm of security. Dan, a volunteer in a TNG unit that cooperates with the Israeli Border Police, explained to us:

We sometimes go on special operations, stuff we plan to do in advance. For example, during the avocado picking season there are a lot of thefts. We make an ambush. We place an observation post, we hide emergency patrol vehicles, and wait. We wait [for the thieves] and catch them red-handed. We also do special ops of catching illegal [Palestinian] infiltrators, illegal hunters, antiques thieves, etc.

We can identify these security activities as embedded in Israeli cultural militarism. As indicated by the sociologist Baruch Kimmerling (1993), cultural militarism in Israel has a unique character. It is a 'militarism of civilians' (Vagts, 1953 (1937): 451–483) in the sense that it is not based on a strict separation of the military sphere from society or on exclusive military traits (such as formality and ceremonial pomp), but is rather integrated into everyday civilian life. The familiarity of most (Jewish) Israelis with this culture makes it easier for TNG to incorporate these soft military themes in its activities. However, while such themes remain associated with the culture of the military, TNG expropriates and plants them in a civilian context outside of their institutional military origin.

## **Securitization of civilian volunteering**

As already mentioned, besides securitized volunteering through guarding, TNG orchestrates an enterprise of agricultural assistance services that are provided by an army of volunteers from all corners of society to any farmer in need. This work is done to help farmers who cannot find enough employees and/or cannot pay for this labour, and as such, TNG claims, have financial problems that could force them to give up farming. But the work – which consists of picking fruit, doing repairs, taking care of cattle, and planting trees and plants – is also done from an ideological perspective. TNG sees it as its core business to help people (Jews in particular) to connect to the land, and to keep it from being abandoned and falling into the hands of unnamed Others (although it is clear for

the volunteers that those Others are Arabs). This connection to the land is often framed as a reconnection, which emphasizes that there once was a connection (in early Zionism) that has since been lost. Here, the Zionist mission of seizing the land is not done through military means but rather by civilian voluntarism, and by strengthening the position of the farmers who live in the country's periphery.

One of TNG's more recent volunteering programmes is ironically called *Ha'Frayerim* (The Suckers). This programme involves dozens of teenagers who are on constant alert, ready to be called up when emergency agricultural volunteering is required – for example, when a farmer does not have enough manpower to harvest their field before the crop spoils. Not only does this state of continuous stand-by for cases of emergency resemble military alertness, but the name of the group also has a militaristic tone. In Israeli slang, *frayerim* is an epithet for the highly motivated youngsters who volunteer to serve in the Israeli military's elite units; they are antagonists of the *mishtamtim* (literally 'shirkers'), who avoid contributing to the national security effort (Livio, 2012). The message underlying this terminology is clear: agricultural volunteering is equally as important as contributions in the field of security.

Hence, although agricultural tasks are not security activities per se, they do belong within a narrative of securitization and they often take place within the context of security threats or events. The work on farms in Israel's periphery helps farmers to sustain their livelihoods, and therefore to remain on their land. This land can therefore remain part of what TNG calls 'the land [*adamot*] of Israel'.<sup>19</sup> Hence, even as the contextualization of agriculture is civilian, it is simultaneously nationalized and associated with the greater goal of protecting the country against external threats. An example of such ideological sentiments that go along with agricultural volunteerism is illustrated by a volunteer summer camp leader:

Last Sunday we came to Kibbutz Kfar HaNasi, a kibbutz that has suffered . . . in recent years from ongoing agricultural crime. So we came to give moral support, to help with agricultural missions, and most of all, I feel, to remind the kibbutz people and ourselves that the world is not a vacuum, and that none of us live alone.<sup>20</sup>

This quote shows how agricultural work is done with the ideological motive of preventing communities and farmers from giving up hope.

There is therefore something bigger at stake for TNG, namely the protection of Israel itself against what is framed as 'alien threats', that have existed since the early days of Zionism. Here TNG positions itself as another link in the everlasting mission to protect the Zionist enterprise; a mission that every Zionist is obliged to perform. As one volunteer put it: 'If I – albeit with my 66 years of age – can guard the land and cattle farms, anyone can. You do not need a weapon, just goodwill, a feeling of responsibility and a part in a shared destiny' (TNG volunteer, posted on TNG Facebook page).

Besides volunteers who guard and work in private farms, there are also TNG 'forest guards', a group of volunteers who work together with the Jewish National Fund (which owns much of Israel's public land). The volunteers act as observers and monitor the forests for the eruption of summer fires. This civilian volunteering force, which is aimed at protecting the environment, is, however, often securitized, as many volunteers believe that most of the fires are the result of intentional arson committed by Arabs. The intersection of

ecological, agricultural, and security discourses, encapsulated in the practice of forests and field protection, was most evident in the summer of 2019. Due to the growing damage inflicted to agricultural fields by balloons and kites loaded with incendiary material sent from Gaza into southern Israel, TNG deployed dozens of volunteers in the southern region surrounding the Gaza Strip to detect new fires and help control them. TNG also opened a 'War Room' to orchestrate the activities of the volunteers in the region, who apart from conducting observations also assisted local farmers to cultivate their fields. When one of the fires damaged a military memorial for a fallen Israeli soldier who had died in action in the mid-1990s, TNG raised donations and sent its volunteers to reconstruct the site.

Thus, the mostly agricultural volunteering within TNG goes hand-in-hand with a unique combination of civilian and more militaristic securitization. It strongly relies on the ethos of the pre-state Zionist militias of the 1920s–1940s, in the classical Sabra image (Almog, 2000): an ideal-type of the militaristic, brave, and independent 'New Jew' who knows how to protect the nation. This cultural model, which also found its way into the Israeli army, nurtures the ideal of strong solidarity, brotherhood and self-sacrifice. Its modern incarnation in TNG is expressed through symbolic features, such as the black shirts that the volunteers proudly wear during their activities, with the Biblical quote *Shomer Achi* ('I'm my brother's keeper') in bold letters. Any 'average Jewish Israeli' who has served in the army would easily identify this symbolism and jargon, which is part of the Israeli military habitus.

## Cultivating Neo-Zionism through volunteering

We will safeguard the land by ourselves through agricultural work and forestry, and strengthen the sense of belonging of Israeli society to its land through study and educational initiatives. We have been doing this for 10 years out of responsibility, civic courage and love of the land. (TNG website, our translation, accessed 22 September 2020)

In the sections above, we have tried to show how TNG employs a form of securitized volunteering by looking at two dynamics: the securitization of civilian activities and the civilianization of security activities. Here we will connect these dynamics to the ways in which TNG propagates Neo-Zionism.

As discussed above, TNG works to revive the ethos of security and agricultural volunteerism in civil society, outside of state institutions. While studies of volunteering often focus on the causes and consequences of the phenomenon (e.g. Wilson, 2012) and, more recently, its relation to the promotion of governmental agencies' and other institutions' agendas (Shachar, 2014; Shachar et al., 2019), we wish to stress volunteering as a cultural and social platform for political innovation that can undermine the state's monopoly in the field of security. A post on TNG's Facebook page, an important outlet for the organization, from July 2019, shows this clearly. As a reaction to the fires breaking out all over Israel in the summer months, TNG wrote:

For the past two months, our field coordinators have been running from fire to fire. The bottom line, the cattle farmers are receiving a huge blow and there is no response from the authorities. How many more territories will turn black before someone wakes up? (Our translation, accessed 22 September 2020)

TNG volunteers are sent out to secure and save agricultural lands – a responsibility that should belong to the state. As the organization claims, however, the state often stays silent and inactive.

It seems that both parties – TNG and the state – gain from this figuration (to use Norbert Elias's [1978] terminology).<sup>21</sup> As the state is and remains the dominant agent for security, it is willing to be criticized as long as its formal monopoly on the exertion of violence is not violated. The state enjoys the assistance of civilian volunteers that share the burden of security, and of course are committed to the national ideology, especially in areas and domains where it does not have the power (or the will) to invest its security resources. Hence, the state nurtures TNG's activists and volunteers as state-sponsored vigilantes, similar to settler groups in the Occupied West Bank who also undermine the state's monopoly in the field of security (Gazit, 2015). By the same token, the state is comfortable giving a civil society organization its support, even though this organization promotes a non-statist model of civics that challenges the exclusivity of the state as an organizing social and political framework for nationalism.

Here we can see TNG's neo-nationalist agenda: volunteering, in this case, is an expression of good civics, and at the same time an act that subverts the state's practical sovereignty. Uri Ram (1999) has defined Neo-Zionism as an 'exclusionary, nationalist and even racist, and anti-democratic political-cultural trend, striving to raise the fence enclosing Israeli identity' (p. 333). He posits this ideology in contrast to 'traditional' Zionism that had as its goal the creation of a Jewish state, as well as the existence of a post-Zionism that strives to transgress the nation's boundaries and which takes global human rights as its leading principle. Hilla Dayan (2019) claims that it is time to revise the definition somewhat, and analyses Neo-Zionism within a globalized and neo-liberalized world, where the main goal of Neo-Zionism is to keep Zionism as it is against threats and critiques from outside (e.g. the BDS movement).

Both approaches claim that Neo-Zionism is framed as exclusionary and politically right wing. What we see in the case of TNG is that contemporary Neo-Zionism may evolve into a more inclusionary ideology. The organization's neo-nationalist ideology presents itself as open to all and democratic in nature, and it does not put an emphasis on either ethno-nationalist or religious values. Eran, a TNG volunteer, explains this clearly:

I can say that we all seem to have a consensus about helping the farmer and keeping the lands and the laws in general, yes? . . . Volunteers have very different political views [ranging] from the extreme right to the extreme left. It does not prevent us from fulfilling our task, because we all feel the same about the farmer who has to cultivate the land, and it is very difficult for him because no one is helping him. Not only because of security issues and crime etc. It is also a matter of general policy. [The government] does not make life easy for them. . . . I have a natural connection to the land, maybe when I grow older I will also think about doing agriculture. When I retire. I do not know when. So for me, farming is not a profession. It has a much greater meaning. So it's a question of value. It is something that seems to me particularly unique to modern Zionism. I do not know whether I would do it if I were not a Zionist . . . in another country for example. [However] it does not matter to me if it is a Jewish farmer or not. . . . We are also helping farmers who are not Jewish. . . For me it is not an issue. The most important thing is protecting the farmer, to keep cultivating the land.



Although TNG is very careful to whitewash its nationalist discourse, and it attempts to present itself as apolitical, all of its activities are saturated in Zionist ideological themes. In fact, its activities contribute to positioning Zionist ideology above any political discussion, rendering political criticism of Zionism illegitimate.

What enables TNG to have it both ways is its polymorphous character, and especially the dual facets of voluntarism as promoted by the organization: its civilian dimension (providing agricultural assistance) and its more militaristic dimension (guarding the land against 'agricultural terror'). On the surface, the combination of the two portrays TNG in an ambiguous light, yet they work as the flip-side of one another. By blurring the distinction between civilian volunteering and securitized volunteering, TNG legitimizes its political acts by framing them as altruistic, and harnesses the philanthropic activities that it carries out to advance its ideological agenda without explicitly politicizing it.

We can see this, for example, during public events, when the militaristic discourse is tuned down in favour of a more civilian one, even as the ideal of civilian securitization remains in the background. The organizers then tell the story of the historic HaShomer and of The New Guard. They distribute stickers and hand out banners with the TNG logo and recruit new volunteers from the crowd by sharing uplifting personal experiences of farm guarding. The crowds at these public events are often very eclectic and come from various sectors of Israeli society: middle-class secular and national-religious families, Ashkenazim and Mizrachim, all mingle together. What enables the visitors to connect with the organization is the ethos of volunteering and, more importantly, its apolitical framing. The sole criterion for joining is love of the land and the desire to participate and become a good member of the community, beyond the state itself. Hence, even the original notion of Zionism is tuned down.

Many of our interviewees tended to refrain from expressing their political views – which might sound odd given the ongoing political crisis in Israel – and they explained to us that they also rarely discuss(ed) politics with their fellow volunteers. They further told us that they cherished the opportunity to volunteer for TNG as it gave them the chance to meet people from unfamiliar social sectors in a friendly and non-conflictual setting. For example, Nofar, a national-religious ideologist who volunteered for TNG after her national service, told us:

I often ask myself what brought me to join a commune of 20 people, I don't know, wake up every morning at 4–5am, work like crazy, and enjoy it! It is a big question . . . Even before I joined TNG, I wanted to be with people my age. I did not do military service because I lost my mother at a young age. There was something very attractive [in TNG], to meet young people. It was the first time I mingled with secular people. A first opportunity to mingle with people from a different background.

Another important feature we want to highlight here in relation to the sort of Neo-Zionism that TNG promotes is the way in which the organization positions itself towards Palestinian/Arab citizens of Israel and the national Other. On one hand, all citizens are welcome and there are efforts to include different communities, such as Druze and Bedouins, in TNG's activities. TNG initiated a programme, for instance, that connects Bedouin women and Jewish farmers seeking workers. Although

this programme reproduces the power relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel by offering cheap Arab labour to Jewish farmers, TNG is proud of the fact that the women are paid above minimum wage and considers it a project to reduce social gaps by building social solidarity between all Israeli civilians.

Yet, at the same time, Palestinians, Arabs and Bedouins are often portrayed as the ones causing the security problems that TNG is battling, and thus as 'the enemy'. As has already been shown, the language used to indicate them as the latter is sanitized; often there is talk about 'the guys' [*ha'chevre*] or a 'criminal family' who lives nearby. For those familiar with the Israeli political landscape, however, it is easy to connect the dots and understand whom is being discussed. During a hike with high school volunteers, one of the TNG coordinators told us that:

It's very, very tricky [including the Arab sector in TNG's activities]. Because on the one hand, you say, 'Hey, they are already living here, so I want them [the Arabs] to be connected, to develop [civilian] responsibility'. On the other hand, I have no desire to empower them . . . so . . . it's very complex . . . and it's also very problematic not to get into tricky [political] subjects.

As this TNG coordinator highlights, the organization faces a dilemma: it wants to be there for everyone, but among this 'everyone' are people with whom it is uncomfortable, as they are not part of the Jewish nation.

The ideology that TNG promotes is seemingly still a work in progress, but what we have been able to see is that its main traits evoke a Neo-Zionism that is framed as apolitical and inclusive. The dynamics of its volunteering activities, which we have labelled a form of 'securitized volunteering', make the promotion of this nationalist agenda possible, as they facilitate civil activism through a combination of agricultural and security activities in a way that blurs any political tendencies.

## Conclusion

Voluntary civil society organizations often strive to set themselves apart from politics and to construct their activities as a separate, autonomous realm of action (Shachar, 2014). Eliasoph (2011) suggests that the distancing of volunteering from the state is related to the distinction between 'volunteering' and the types of civic engagement that are degraded as 'politics'. This effort is part of the intention to purify volunteering (Shachar et al., 2019). Hence, in contrast to movements that base their activities on contentious politics and which do not refrain from positioning themselves in the political arena, the dominant perception of volunteering that guides most voluntary organizations abstains from politics and contention.

As described above, TNG invests much of its energy in positioning itself as an apolitical and asectorial organization that exists for all members of society. Although TNG deals with issues that are at the heart of Israeli political discourse – such as land ownership, Jewish-Arab relations, and security – the organization refrains from expressing a clear political stance regarding those issues in a way that could colour it as a partisan movement.

The coupling of security and civilian volunteering, however, turns the latter into a sophisticated political tool, as the discourse of volunteering softens the security activities

and their consequences, and thereby hides the militarized realities of Israeli society. Furthermore, it also facilitates unique relations between civil society and the state. Scholars of volunteering have already acknowledged the increasing involvement of 'third parties' (e.g. actors perceived as external to the third sector, namely, government agencies, corporations, and educational institutions) in facilitating volunteering (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010). Hence, it is clear that the realms of civil society and volunteering are neither isolated nor detached from the state. In the case of TNG, the Israeli government is one of its largest funders. Importantly, the twin processes of the civilianization of security volunteering and the securitization of civilian volunteering enable TNG to promote its ideological agenda, which we have analysed as a new form of Neo-Zionism.

More broadly, this case exemplifies how the phenomenon of weaponized volunteering is anchored in particular historical and political circumstances, and is correspondingly shaped by contemporary sociopolitical dynamics. While the ideological roots of TNG in Zionism and collectivism originated in the beginning of the 20th century, the volunteering promoted by TNG is very much in tune with present-day neoliberal discourses. It nevertheless still frames these ideals in a broader collective context of patriotism and a deep connection to the land and the country. What enables TNG to hold the stick at both ends is the unholy coupling of civilian volunteering and securitization in the realm of civil society, at the margins of the state.

## Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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## Notes

1. The Jewish National Fund was created in the early 1900s to buy and develop land to be settled by Jewish migrants. This non-profit organization was instrumental in the creation of the Jewish State.
2. From conversations with activists within the organization during fieldwork in 2018–2020.
3. From conversations with activists within the organization during fieldwork in 2018–2020.
4. See TNG website: <https://www.hashomer.org.il/המשימה-שלנו/>
5. According to Israeli law, all Jewish men and women at the age of 18 years are obliged to take part in military service. Most serve in the Israeli army, but some are recruited to the Israeli police, security services, and even to the prime minister's office. Upon their release, all Jewish Israeli men and some women are enlisted to a reserve service, which is the primary military component of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in times of national emergency (Ben-Dor et al., 2002; Horowitz and Kimmerling, 1974). At the same time, it is important to note that though military service is obligatory for both men and women in Israel, only 75% of men and 60% of women actually do military service (Levy, 2007).
6. Ruach Tova is one of the leading organizations in the field of volunteering in Israel, specializing in matching volunteers with non-profit organizations. They match interested volunteers to causes and organizations according to their preferences, skills, and geographical location. The receiving organizations are involved in countless projects in Israel, which include

- offering assistance to the elderly, immigrants, and the poor. See <https://www.ruachtova.org.il/en> accessed 9 January 2020.
7. It is important to note that the validity of this threat is controversial. While there are countless media reports of the theft and arson of agricultural products in Israel in the past decade (see, for example, Bigman, 2018; Chashmonai, 2016; Cohen, 2020; Kraus, 2018), some commentators (DeMalach, 2019; ) claim that it is a fabricated threat and that agricultural crime is blown out of proportion for the sake of a right-wing political agenda. The purpose of this article is not to evaluate the actual magnitude of the threat, but to explore the place of this discourse within the TNG phenomenon.
  8. <https://www.guidestar.org.il/organization/580492981> accessed 09-01-2020.
  9. <https://www.hashomer.org.il/%d7%aa%d7%95%d7%9e%d7%9b%d7%99%d7%9d/> accessed 25-09-2019.
  10. <https://www.guidestar.org.il/organization/580492981> accessed 07-09-2020.
  11. One dunam is 0.1 ha. This measurement, originally from the former Turkish Empire, is still used in Israel and other parts of the Middle East. On the English website of TNG, an acre is mistakenly used as equal to a dunam. We base our values on the numbers given on TNG's Hebrew website: <https://www.hashomer.org.il/> accessed 22 September 2020.
  12. This was said by the organization's founder Yoel Zilberman and was also stated in a volunteer manual that we received from the organization.
  13. See for example the visit of the Minister of Defence Moshe 'Bogie' Ya'alon to TNG (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2025350507498117> accessed 22 September 2020) and the involvement of Yoaz Hendel, the current Minister of Communication, who was a member of the TNG board ([http://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk\\_eng.asp?mk\\_individual\\_id\\_t=997](http://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=997)) accessed 22 September 2020.
  14. <http://tnua-hadasha.co.il/#> accessed 19 September 2020.
  15. From conversations with activists within the organization during fieldwork in 2018.
  16. [https://www.hashomer.org.il/featured\\_item/%d7%94%d7%aa%d7%a0%d7%93%d7%91%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%91%d7%a9%d7%9e%d7%99%d7%a8%d7%94-2/](https://www.hashomer.org.il/featured_item/%d7%94%d7%aa%d7%a0%d7%93%d7%91%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%91%d7%a9%d7%9e%d7%99%d7%a8%d7%94-2/) accessed 25-09-2019.
  17. A poike is a black pot in which food is cooked on an open fire. It finds its origins in South Africa, where it was adjusted from the Dutch oven that the Dutch settlers brought with them. In Israel, the poike symbolizes a rough, outdoor kind of life.
  18. [https://www.hashomer.org.il/featured\\_item/%d7%94%d7%aa%d7%a0%d7%93%d7%91%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%91%d7%a9%d7%9e%d7%99%d7%a8%d7%94-2/](https://www.hashomer.org.il/featured_item/%d7%94%d7%aa%d7%a0%d7%93%d7%91%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%91%d7%a9%d7%9e%d7%99%d7%a8%d7%94-2/) accessed 25 September 2020.
  19. See TNG website: <https://www.hashomer.org.il/המשימה שלנו/>
  20. <https://www.facebook.com/shomerisrael/posts/2279224502113824/> accessed 19 September 2020.
  21. Norbert Elias (1978) introduced the concept of 'figuration' to describe a network of interdependent human beings with shifting asymmetrical balances of power (p. 134). The concept of figuration offers us the possibility to reconstruct the shifting power differences between different sets of parties, and draws our attention to the transformative and dynamic-systemic aspects, as well as to the fluent and variable nature of the interdependency established between them.

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### Résumé

Le volontariat contemporain est souvent décrit comme un phénomène néolibéral devenu prédominant à une époque d'individualisme et de sentiment post-national. Bien qu'il soit généralement décrit comme apolitique, il peut servir à promouvoir des agendas politiques, tels que le néo-nationaliste, en dehors du cadre traditionnel de l'État et de ses institutions. Cela est particulièrement important lorsque le volontariat des organisations non gouvernementales amenuise le monopole de l'État dans les domaines de la sécurité et de l'ordre public. Nous conceptualisons cette tendance comme du *volontariat sécurisé*: des exemples de volontariat promus dans ce cas par des organisations non étatiques qui participent volontairement à des activités de sécurité violentes – ou potentiellement violentes. S'appuyant sur une étude ethnographique de l'organisation israélienne *HaShomer HaChadash* (The New Guardian), cet article montre comment le volontariat agricole et sécuritaire est utilisé pour promouvoir un agenda néo-nationaliste qui contourne l'État tout en maintenant une attitude apolitique. Cet objectif est atteint grâce à la mise en œuvre de deux formes de volontariat sécurisé: le volontariat de sécurité devient civique et le volontariat civil se militarise. En brouillant la distinction entre les deux, l'organisation réussit à attirer des soutiens et des bénévoles de divers secteurs sociaux, renforçant sa position apparemment apolitique et son programme nationaliste.

### Mots-clefs

Volontariat, sécurisation, mouvements sociaux, néo-nationalisme, Israël, agriculture.

## Resumen

A menudo se describe el voluntariado contemporáneo como un fenómeno neoliberal que se ha hecho predominante en una era de individualismo y sentimientos post-nacionales. Aunque se le suele calificar como apolítico, puede servir a la promoción de agendas políticas, como la neonacionalista, ajenas al marco tradicional del estado y sus instituciones. Esto cobra una importancia especial cuando el voluntariado practicado por las organizaciones no gubernamentales socava el monopolio del estado en los ámbitos de la seguridad y el orden público. Conceptualizamos esa tendencia como *voluntariado securitizado*: instancias de trabajo voluntario promovido en este caso por organizaciones no estatales que participan voluntariamente en actividades de seguridad violentas —o potencialmente violentas. Basándose en un estudio etnográfico de la organización israelí *HaShomer HaChadash* (El Nuevo Guardián), este artículo demuestra cómo se usa el voluntariado agrícola y de seguridad en la promoción de una agenda neonacionalista que elude al estado y, a la vez, mantiene una actitud apolítica. Esto se logra con la implementación de dos formas de voluntariado securitizado: el voluntariado de seguridad se hace cívico y el voluntariado civil se militariza. Borrando la distinción entre ambas, la organización consigue atraer simpatizantes y voluntarios llegados de varios sectores sociales, reforzar su posición aparentemente apolítica y su agenda nacionalista.

## Palabras clave

Voluntariado, securitización, movimientos sociales, neonacionalismo, Israel, agricultura.