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## Archiving Governance in Palestine

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# Archiving Governance in Palestine

## **Cover Page Footnote**

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## ARCHIVING GOVERNANCE IN PALESTINE

During the 1980s, a historical turn within the discipline of anthropology fueled an “archival imaginary” that encouraged scholars to enter archival spaces, study their documents, and collect the historical “context” that had been missing from previous ethnographic texts. The archive, in other words, became a repository, a site for the extraction of information about a particular topic. In the historiography of Palestine, these activities have proved fruitful; “new” historians have mined military and state archives in ways that have illuminated the nefarious details regarding the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.<sup>1</sup> Fewer scholars, however, have positioned “the archive” as a *subject* (not a *source*), as a site of knowledge *production* (not *retrieval*), as an object of ethnography (not *for* ethnography). This paper provides a preliminary investigation of the material-semiotics of archives in Palestine, exploring the peculiar ways in which the form and content of archival documents, architectures, and circulatory networks actually help to engender—not just reflect—some new realities of governance.

### Finding an Archive to Mine: Historiography in Israel and Palestine

The incorporation of historical perspectives into ethnography<sup>2</sup> arose, in part, as a critique of the static, isolationist, and idealist tendencies of structuralist, culturalist, and interpretivist anthropologies.<sup>3</sup> This interdisciplinary fusion of history with anthropology became an integral component of subaltern and (post)colonial scholarship.<sup>4</sup> Anthropological engagements with history helped to create a space for scholars to (re)examine colonial histories, treating them as the inflections of specific political agendas—agendas that make “some stories eligible for historical rehearsal and others not.”<sup>5</sup> The goal of this scholarship has been to intervene and comment on the content of historical texts, solidifying the distinction between “the historical world and what we say or write about it.”<sup>6</sup> These projects might, for example, question entrenched versions of American history that have focused “too narrowly on ‘great men’ and elites, and ignored the works and lives of the vast majority of the American population.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, rather than (re)producing historical accounts that celebrate the status quo, this analytic approach is adept at investigating how certain kinds of historical narratives have been produced by particular people with particular interests at particular moments in time. As such, these projects of historical revision (i.e., these efforts to rewrite or salvage the [subaltern] histories that have been erased or forgotten) appear to have a counter-hegemonic potential, often taking on the form of an act of resistance against contemporary structures of power.

This is noticeably manifest in the historiography of Israel/Palestine, where Palestinian (e.g., Rashid Khalidi, Salim Tamari) and “new” Israeli historians (e.g., Ilan Pappé, Benny Morris) have produced counter-narratives about Palestine and the 418 villages that were destroyed in 1948 during al-Nakba (also known as the Israeli War of Independence). Just as many of these

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<sup>1</sup> Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*.

<sup>2</sup> Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*; Sahlin, *Islands of History*; Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*.

<sup>3</sup> Kalb, Marks, and Tak, “Historical Anthropology and Anthropological History.”

<sup>4</sup> Sivaramakrishnan, “Situating the Subaltern.”

<sup>5</sup> Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” 91.

<sup>6</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 4.

villages have been erased from the physical landscape, the diversity of their histories and the brutality of their destructions have also been textually expunged from the historical record. This erasure, according to these critical historians, has been a crucial force sustaining contemporary violence against Palestinian communities. As Meron Benvenisti states, “One need only read Israeli textbooks or see the albums with ‘before and after’ photos—the Land before 1948 and today—to realize how close we are to the point when the vanished Arab landscape will be considered just a piece of Arab propaganda, a fabrication aimed at the destruction of Israel through incitement of ‘The Return’.”<sup>8</sup> One goal, then, has been to return to the archive, to “redraw the historical picture of Palestine” in order to “disseminate a more expanded narrative of what happened in [the] country.”<sup>9</sup> A second—yet related—goal has been to illuminate the absences built into official archives and locate alternative sources (i.e., personal accounts, letters, diaries, oral histories) that could provide “scholars and historians with more extensive and inclusive knowledge” about the peoples and topics “often excluded from official histories.”<sup>10</sup> The ensuing narratives would include content that had been considered extraneous to the seemingly unified nationalist histories of Israel and Palestine, both of which have sidelined Palestinians and their localized experiences of everyday life.

The proliferation of published Palestinian memoirs in recent decades has been heralded as an opportunity for engaging in this historical (re)construction of marginalized Palestinian pasts. The ubiquitous presence of Palestinian memoirs on library shelves began in the second half of the twentieth century, after a period in which many Palestinian historical documents had been lost, destroyed by the Israeli military, confiscated by Israeli archives, or otherwise left “inaccessible to Palestinian or Arab historians.”<sup>11</sup> This erasure of (access to) the Palestinian historical record has also been compounded by the fact that whenever Palestinian archives or research institutions are created, they are often “denied the stability, continuity, and possibilities for long-term planning necessary to provide the requisite support for sustained research and scholarship.”<sup>12</sup> (To illustrate: the Palestine Research Center located in Beirut had been amassing substantial library and documentary collections since the mid-1960s, only to be stopped after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, when occupying Israeli forces seized its archives.) The resultant dearth of archival materials thus makes Palestinian memoirs a productive site for studying the multiple and overlapping “historical,” “political,” and “social” dimensions of Palestinian life.

In the remainder of this paper, I want to enter the archive, but not to insert new sources or create new narratives about the Palestinian past. I am not—at least in this paper—interested in examining or participating in a moment of fact-retrieval, in the construction of a “new” historical narrative. Put differently, this is not an attempt to contribute to the productively challenging work of the new Israeli historians (HaHistoryonim HaHadashim), those historians who have framed the relationships among (1) Palestinians, (2) Zionist and Israeli (settler) colonialisms, and (3) the historical disciplines as a matter requiring serious revision. As a result, I refrain from treating the archive as an “inert [site] of storage and conservation.”<sup>13</sup> Instead, I want to

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<sup>8</sup> Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, xx.

<sup>10</sup> Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*, 115.

<sup>11</sup> Hofreiter, “The Arab-Israeli Conflict,” 6.

<sup>12</sup> Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 89.

<sup>13</sup> Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” 91.

investigate the ways in which the archive operates as a technology of governance. By examining the form and content of archives (their documents, architectures, and networks), this paper not only illuminates something about those moments of fact creation, assembly, and distribution that occur within—and through—the archive; it also identifies the ways in which archives are complex technologies of rule, participating in the production of the nation-state and its power to govern. I begin with a tentative analysis of the small and mundane, offering more questions than answers.

### Starting Small: The Archive and Its Documents

In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), Michel-Rolph Trouillot describes the power of the archive to assemble, prepare, and organize facts for historical intelligibility. He identifies the ways in which this assembly process is “not limited to a more or less passive act of collecting,” as the libraries and depositories of states, municipalities, and private institutions actively select and sort “sources to organize facts, according to themes or periods, into documents to be used and monuments to be explored.”<sup>14</sup> This work is perhaps more entailing than presupposing, facilitating the creation—not just the recognition—of new kinds of realities.

Finished historical texts often presume that the past is filled with discrete entities, each of which stands independent of, and in opposition to, other entities. But how does a world filled with dynamically fluid, interconnected phenomena become one filled with static, disconnected things? In this section, I want to explore the ways in which archival practices might participate in the production of a reality filled with “things.” Once this analytic framework is established, we can begin to ask: How do archivists help to (re)endow nations, organizations, or individuals with the qualities of things, with the qualities of “internally homogeneous and externally distinctive and bounded objects”?<sup>15</sup> How do archivists participate in the ongoing construction of the nation, the organization, or the individual as empirical objects in such a way that they appear “unconstructed by anyone”?<sup>16</sup>

This is a subject of ontology, the study of “the most general kinds that exist in the universe.”<sup>17</sup> But it is ontology with a twist. The emphasis of ontological studies is usually placed on demarcation, on identifying which candidates for existence *really do exist*. My goal, in contrast, is not to determine if objects *really* exist; it is to articulate a “historical ontology,” a study of the *coming into being* of objects—of whatever it is “we individuate and allow ourselves to talk about.”<sup>18</sup> Hence, in this section, I rely heavily on Ian Hacking’s articulation of dynamic nominalism, a perspective that illuminates the connections between “what comes into existence with the historical dynamics of naming.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 52–53.

<sup>15</sup> Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life*, 240.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, 26.

In *Europe and the People without History* (2010), Eric Wolf confronts these questions by describing the role of academia in the production of national entities. He recounts the work of early sociologists whose methodological practices severed “the field of social relations from political economy,” taking these relations to be “the subject matter of their intensive concern.” This was a project of abstraction; it was a project of configuring certain kinds of relations as “national” and *sui generis*, detached from “the economic, political, or ideological context in which they are found.” This makes it easy, he argues, to “conceive of the nation-state as a structure of social ties informed by moral consensus rather than as a nexus of economic, political, and ideological relationships connected to other nexuses.”<sup>20</sup> I argue that archival practices do a similar kind of work.

The power of archives and their records has long been recognized. It is commonplace to acknowledge that archives “wield power over the shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity, over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies.”<sup>21</sup> It is less commonplace to articulate *how*. As sites of safekeeping, archives may be read as skewed or biased sources; they are spaces where unconventional documents (e.g., oral testimony, vernacular artifacts) often encounter a rough and resistant terrain. After all, only certain individuals are in a position of power wherein their recollections or documentations of events can be recorded and stored within a public space. These readings, however, configure archives as sites of extraction—as tools for converting a selective range of social facts into qualified knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

But perhaps we need to turn our analytic kaleidoscope, ethnographically focusing on archiving (the process) rather than archives (the place). Archivists, consciously or not, actively shape the empirical data of historical research as they pursue their professional responsibilities: they actively manage records before they enter the archive; they produce descriptions of archival documents; and they engage in acts of assembly, organization, and storage. It is these practices of selection, description, and organization that allow archives to become “dynamic technologies of rule which actually *create* the histories and social realities they ostensibly only *describe*.”<sup>23</sup> Our focus, then, needs to move to “the moments of filing itself, exploring the writing, compilation, and storage of [archival] files.”<sup>24</sup>

Each archival file or box is a compilation of documents that are inserted into a larger network of other files and boxes. The generative effects of this may be illustrated through one example. In *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917–1967* (2008), Ilana Feldman demonstrates how the compilation practices of archival filing during the British Mandate of Palestine have worked “to distinguish and define categories of people and place.” She describes how the municipality and local government files organized budget estimates, election regulations, citizen complaints, and municipal ordinances in ways that “contributed to the consolidation of Gaza as an administrative category.” The accumulation of “Gaza” files

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<sup>20</sup> Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, 8, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Schwartz and Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power,” 2.

<sup>22</sup> Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Schwartz and Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power,” 6–7.

<sup>24</sup> Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 33.

within the section labeled “Municipalities and Local Government” “participated in distinguishing Gaza as a locale,” helping to make not just a document but a place.<sup>25</sup>

Archival technologies have the potential to play a significant role in these filing practices, shaping how documents are assembled, organized, and catalogued. The shifting terrain of archival architecture in the United States during the twentieth century provides a case in point. At the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago, Melville Dewey’s Library Bureau introduced the file cabinet. This device enabled vertical filing, a system where “manila tabbed folders could be marked with a range of categorizations such as personal names, organizations, places, dates, and activities.”<sup>26</sup> One advantage of this technology was the fact that new folders could easily be inserted. Another advantage included the flexibility to (re)group file indices within a larger hierarchy of drawer labels.

Steel rationing requirements during World War II, however, shifted the archival landscape in the United States. Archivists began to replace their steel file cabinets with cardboard boxes, a technology that rendered the rearrangement of archival materials a little more difficult. (It is common practice to position paper documents horizontally within archival boxes, stacking them in a manner that prevents any slumping.) This replacement accompanied the National Archives’ search for a new organizational scheme; it eventually adopted a system (inspired by French archives) where records are organized by their provenance. As Matthew Kurtz describes,

Near the top of this archival system of divisions were a limited number of “record groups,” as archival scholars stressed the need for small and easily surveyed lists at each level of a cataloging system. Yet there were usually far too many authors in an archival collection for record groups to be sorted and cataloged by writer. The organizations [or social groups] with which such authors were affiliated were usually far fewer. . . . Archivists have thus assigned the provenance of record groups quite frequently to organizational entities.<sup>27</sup>

I admit that it is possible to interpret these micro-practices as an illustration of the discursive power a grid of organizations has over the activities of archivists; they can suggest that “the organization” is an *a priori* matrix through which to create an ordered set of documents. After all, organizations have been known to exist before the introduction of archival boxes. Still, we should take seriously the relations between human beings and material objects and think critically about the ways in which new (albeit mundane) technological devices can “play a profound role in what we do, how we perceive and interpret the world, and what choices and decisions we make.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, I argue that the idea of “the organization” might also be understood as a *product* of this particular, historically constituted, and continuously (re)produced filing system. This filing system, in other words, helped to create a new set of associations between various (non)human actors, associations that have allowed “the organization” to acquire its size and power—its obviousness. For, as Ian Hacking reminds us, the world does not come “quietly

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>26</sup> Kurtz, “Situating Practices,” 30.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 30–31.

<sup>28</sup> Verbeek, *What Things Do*, vii.

wrapped up in [social] facts.”<sup>29</sup> Social facts, such as the organization, are a consequence of the—at times contingent and haphazard—ways in which we organize the world.

This brief analysis of archival practices frames “things” as the effect of patterned, heterogeneous networks linking various institutions, objects, and actors. The (re)construction of the idea of the organization, in other words, is a process that involves the black boxing of certain technological devices, which, unfortunately, renders all traces of production extremely difficult to detect. The grouping of bits and pieces of archival material into specific boxes is a process of abstraction and detachment wherein (certain) similarities of the authors of documents are highlighted while their differences are erased. When affixed with a label, the boxes can function in ways that materialize a kind of entity we have come to identify as “the organization.” They facilitate the transformation of “the organization” into what Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar have identified as a “split entity”; labels such as “Jewish Agency,” “Jewish National Fund,” or “Israel Defense Forces” on archival boxes represent statements that have taken

on a life of [their] own. It is as if the original statement [i.e., the box label] had projected a virtual image of itself which exists outside the statement (Latour, 1978). Previously, scientists [i.e., archivists] were dealing with statements. At the point of stabilisation, however, there appears to be both objects *and* statements about these objects. Before long, more and more reality is attributed to the object and less and less to the statement *about* the object. Consequently, an inversion takes place: the object becomes the reason why the statement was formulated in the first place.<sup>30</sup>

### **A Technology of Rule: The Materiality of the Village Files**

The previous section suggests that archival materials can be analytically productive, not because of what they can say but because of what they can *do*. In this section, I want to continue this discussion, traveling into Israeli archives in order to account for the dynamics of governance that are made possible by the materiality of the documents themselves. By starting small, I hope to speak to “the import of the mundane,” to the power that is enacted “in the most apparently ordinary of interactions” between individuals and documents.<sup>31</sup>

In 1940, the Haganah, a Jewish paramilitary organization established during the British Mandate, founded Sherut Yedi’ot (Information Service) as its intelligence and counter-espionage branch. The Sherut Yedi’ot was initially tasked with screening (potential) Haganah members; monitoring Arab agents, the British police, and Jewish political parties; and “planting agents in customs, police, postal services and transport.”<sup>32</sup> However, three years after its establishment, the Sherut Yedi’ot instituted a data-gathering program called Operation Arab Village. This project produced what have been dubbed the Village Files, a comprehensive list of approximately six hundred Palestinian villages, replete with meticulously gathered information about their topography, demography, and level of militarization.

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<sup>29</sup> Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* 3.

<sup>30</sup> Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life*, 176–177.

<sup>31</sup> Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Adelman, *The Rise of Israel*, 154.



The members of the Sherut Yedi'ot often collected the data for the Village Files under the guise of tourism, nature lessons, or *tiyulim* (hikes). In fact, an instructional manual for its scouts advises members to hide the act of reconnaissance “by taking pictures of your friends or of the local people. In the former case, ensure that your friends do not appear [in focus] in the photo, not even from the back [in order to avoid their identification lest the file be seized].”<sup>33</sup> Throughout the decade the quantity of information in each file expanded to include other kinds of data, such as aerial photographs and maps; information about village buildings, roads, and water resources; and details regarding village wealth, leaders, and tribal rivalries. As former Haganah member Moshe Pasternak explained, these intelligence-gathering efforts were unreservedly militaristic; the Village Files were designed to serve as a database of intelligence information that could be used to coordinate paramilitary operations against Palestinian targets: “We had to study the basic structure of the Arab village. This means the structure and how best to attack it. . . . The Arab village, unlike the European ones, was built topographically on hills. That meant we had to find out how best to approach the village from above or enter it from below.”<sup>34</sup>

However, I am less interested in the content of the Village Files than I am in their particular form. In “British and Zionist Data Gathering on Palestinian Landownership and Population during the Mandate” (2010), Michael R. Fischbach describes these files as an “index-card system” composed of “large green cards on which SHAI [Sherut Yedi'ot] agents recorded details about each Palestinian village.”<sup>35</sup> Although the scope and technology of these files broadened significantly during the 1940s, I suggest that their initial format as a series of green index cards shaped their content and possible mobilities. Index cards, as a technology of inscription, are designed for recording and storing small amounts of discrete data, which necessarily places certain constraints on the kind of information they can contain. Despite these constraints, index-card systems have the benefit of expandability; it is not uncommon to keep data on individual sheets, adding new sheets when necessary. This expandability, combined with the relative ease with which they can be stored and transported, may have created an intelligence network conducive to paramilitary ends. I imagine their size and durability gave these files the potential to move from one location to another, to be taken into the field or hidden if necessary. This archive of information, then, may have done more than simply communicate information about Palestinian villages and village life; it may have also played a significant role in their transformation, destruction, and ongoing occupation.

But this analysis remains largely tentative and speculative. Many of the Village Files were lost or destroyed after the establishment of the State of Israel. From my understanding, most of what remains are the reconnaissance surveys—not the index cards. Quoting an interview with Shimri Salomon, deputy director of the Haganah Archives in Tel Aviv, Rona Sela contextualizes the eradication of these documents as part and parcel of the contentious relationship between British Mandate authorities and Jewish paramilitary organizations. As Salomon states, some of the Village Files were apparently hidden or “destroyed in connection with ‘Black Shabbat’ [June

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<sup>33</sup> Sela, “Scouting Palestinian Territory.”

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Fischbach, “British and Zionist Data Gathering,” 306.

1946, when the British arrested many Jewish leaders], for fear they would fall into the hands of the British.”<sup>36</sup>

And what of the files that survived the Israeli War of Independence? According to Hilik Labal, an intelligence soldier in the IDF Central Command, the Haganah Village Files that were under his authority were subjected to the demands of an austerity regime. During the late 1950s, there was “a shortage of everything, including cardboard cartons that were used to prepare intelligence files. So I took old cartons that the Haganah had used for the Village Files before the state’s establishment and used them for the new intelligence files. As for the rest of the material that was in the old Village Files—maps, photographs, sketches and so forth—I burned it.”<sup>37</sup> It is thus difficult to make any definitive generalizations about the materiality of the Village Files vis-à-vis their deployment in Zionist paramilitary operations. It is even unclear to what extent they were useful during the war of 1948. As Salomon explains, “testimonies exist, particularly of commanders and soldiers who were involved in the Village Files project before the War of Independence, stating that in general the files were used and proved useful in the war . . . but I found only a few references to the use of specific files in the war. . . . In my estimation, the files were used primarily to plan limited operations against villages, whether for deterrence or for punitive purposes.”<sup>38</sup>

What these interview snippets do suggest is that there was a strategic need to create a dense, highly mobile filing system. These files needed to be collected and stored in secret bases, in the cellars of buildings disguised as everyday offices: the British Mandate authorities were aware of these reconnaissance projects and actively sought to locate and dismantle the (quite literal) underground intelligence network of which they were a part. In this way, the materiality of these files may have mattered as much as their contents. Regardless, the point of this section is not to offer any definitive answers. It is simply to serve as an exercise in attuning our attention to the materials and materiality of the archives, as well as their possible ramifications on the creation of new forms of Jewish-Israeli governance in Palestine.

### **Creating the Public: The Architecture of Archives**

The preceding analysis of the potential role played by the Village Files in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine during the late 1940s positions archives and archival documents as instruments of power, wielded by discrete actors in order to complete a predetermined agenda. The archive, however, participates in the production of governing authority in other, more subtle ways. This section addresses the manner in which archives assist in stabilizing the demarcation of “the government” as a discursive object, as a distinct and separate realm of activity. More specifically, I ruminate on the architectural layouts and procedures of archives, highlighting the moments in which the space—and thus the authority—of government is produced. Please note: I am not necessarily arguing that these architectural layouts, in and of themselves, generated (or continue to generate) specific governmental realities. Rather, these layouts operate (sometimes purposefully, other times unwittingly and haphazardly) in conjunction with the mundane

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<sup>36</sup> Sela, “Scouting Palestinian Territory,” 45.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 45–46.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

processes of document accumulation, the repetitive procedures of filing, and the quotidian practices of civil servants to enact “government.”<sup>39</sup>

Archival practices of accumulation, compilation, and organization give weight and significance to seemingly insignificant documents.<sup>40</sup> They place files within—and link files to—networks of knowledge and practice that are populated with and given meaning by other files. But even the archive has limitations on its acceptance of the mundane. Procedures of inclusion and exclusion guide all archival activities, restricting access to archival space to certain people and certain kinds of materials. In this section, I limit my analysis to the techniques regulating the kinds of bodies that can come into contact with governmental archival materials. After all, an important concern of archival practitioners is the “pragmatics of managing file circulation and accessibility,” which include “regulations governing availability of files, procedures guiding the circulation of files, and layouts organizing offices to control exposure of files.”<sup>41</sup> Archives, in other words, are guided by a principle of publicity; they must identify and categorize documents on a sliding scale of “public” to “secret” (i.e., documents for the general population and documents for governmental civil servants only), generating an accumulation strategy that articulates—but also shapes and manages—the relations between and among different participants inside and outside of the government.

The publicity of files is intimately intertwined with practices of file storage. The organization of office architecture of governmental archives can create—just as much as it can uphold—the differentiation between a public and a secret domain. Archival space, in other words, is laid out according to practices and regulations that serve “in part to define these two categories, both in themselves and in relation to each other.”<sup>42</sup> The physical permanency of architecture perhaps even grants this separation an added level of stability, shaping the ways in which archival services are rendered by setting the terms of the relationship between civil servants and the public. The architecture of archives, therefore, does not merely assist civil servants in their effort to maintain control over access to secret government files; it also helps to produce the secret.

My analysis of the significance of the spatial layout of archives is inspired by the historical data collected by Ilana Feldman in *Governing Gaza* (2008). As Feldman recounts, when a British Mandate land registry office moved into a new government building in 1941, a government official expressed serious concerns about the layout of the office:

Room No. 2, the archives rooms, is completely filled, as will be seen from the plan, and cupboards containing valuable and irreplaceable documents, the property of private individuals, are scattered all over the office. An additional archives room is essential, as in any case it is impossible to place any more cupboards in the general office. . . . It is equally unsatisfactory to perpetuate the practice of placing such archives in the corridor and in the hall in which the public collect.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The relationship between archival furniture and practices of state governmentality has been examined in a number of texts. See, for example, Joyce, “The Politics of the Liberal Archive,” and Hull, *Government of Paper*.

<sup>40</sup> Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 47.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

I interpret these comments as evincing a concern with the protection of “private” documents from any accidental exposure to a milling-about public. They illuminate the importance of office architecture to British Mandate authorities, a technology that could distinguish—and manage the boundaries between—members of the public and civil servants. By dividing and regulating access between public and secret spaces, the architectural layout of governmental archives could contribute to the (ontological and phenomenological) enactment of “the government” as a discrete unit, separate from the individual members of “the public.” These practices, in other words, can participate in the production of a governmental reality; they allow “the government” to take on the form of a bounded entity to which only certain individuals have direct, unmediated access.

However, the archival production of the government requires constant reenactment. Following the advice of actor-network theorists, I propose discarding understandings of the government (the idea, the object) that appeal to its inertia, as if “there existed somewhere a stock of connections whose capital could be eroded only over a long time.”<sup>44</sup> These understandings envision *the stability* of government as the norm; the role of the sociologist, then, is to explain its decay, its change, or its sudden manifestation. But what happens when we treat the government as something that requires constant (re)making, as something whose stability (not instability) requires sociological explanation? In the remainder of this section, I confront these questions, illustrating the ways in which the architecture of the Jerusalem Municipality Archives participates in the (re)production of (local) governance.

Founded in 1965, the archive of the Jerusalem Municipality wandered itinerantly for almost three decades, finding shelter in various buildings before arriving at its permanent home: the new Jerusalem City Hall. Situated in Safra Square, just outside the northwestern walls of the Old City, the Jerusalem City Hall complex was completed in the early 1990s. The municipality constructed this complex as a replacement for the older, British-built municipal building. Erected in 1930 when the city of Jerusalem was a tenth of its current size, the old Jerusalem Municipality building was unable to contain the administrative demands of a swiftly growing city. Municipal offices began multiplying rapidly throughout the city, creating a need for the containment of all municipal activities within a single site. The solution? After extensive deliberation, a new city hall complex was built adjacent to the original municipal building, a structure that pales in comparison to the complex’s two newly constructed blocks and ten renovated buildings. Jerusalem City Hall, thus, continues the practice of giving a visibly material “exterior” to the invisible “inner structure” of the municipality of Jerusalem, rendering it easy to think of Jerusalem as an administrative entity by simply thinking of the building that contains and represents its activities.<sup>45</sup>

During the summer of 2015, I ventured to Jerusalem City Hall in order to conduct archival research on British Mandate historic preservation activities in the Old City of Jerusalem. I had a few days of free time and was interested in perusing many of the historic documents I had so often seen cited. With citations and reference numbers in hand, my friend and I caught the bus near our apartment in Abu Tor, disembarking near Jaffa Street, not too far from the eastern edge

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<sup>44</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 35.

<sup>45</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*.

of Safra Square. We climbed the palm-tree lined steps leading up from Jaffa Street and encountered a spacious stone plaza with an imposing six-story building flanking its northern border. This was the new City Hall about which I had read so much. Composed of stone, glass, and steel, the rigidity of its architectural form fused postmodern and orientalist elements, an attempt perhaps to symbolize its location on the boundary between east and west Jerusalem.

We quickly joined the dozens of residents waiting in line to enter the building, and, after a brief security check, we arrived in its cool, air-conditioned atrium. This climate-controlled comfort, however, contrasted starkly with the hectic activity surrounding us; the building was bustling, filled with hordes of people waiting in long lines for assistance from municipal clerks. Inquiring at the Information Desk about the location of the archive, we soon entered an elevator and descended to the basement of the building. A labyrinth of quiet, clean hallways and offices, the basement was difficult to navigate for the inexperienced visitor. There was little signage, making it hard to know the purposes of each of the suites of offices. Eventually, however, we stumbled upon a door with the Hebrew word for “archive,” convinced we had finally found the room for which we were looking. The room was small, with two or three individuals sitting at large tables and studying what looked like maps and architectural plans of residential buildings (fig. 1). We walked to the counter and asked the clerk about the documents we were trying to locate. Standing behind a counter in a separate room filled with rows and rows of neatly arranged white binders, the clerk looked at me with utter confusion when I presented the reference number of a document cited in my book. He stated plainly and simply, “We do not have those numbers here. Try somewhere else.”

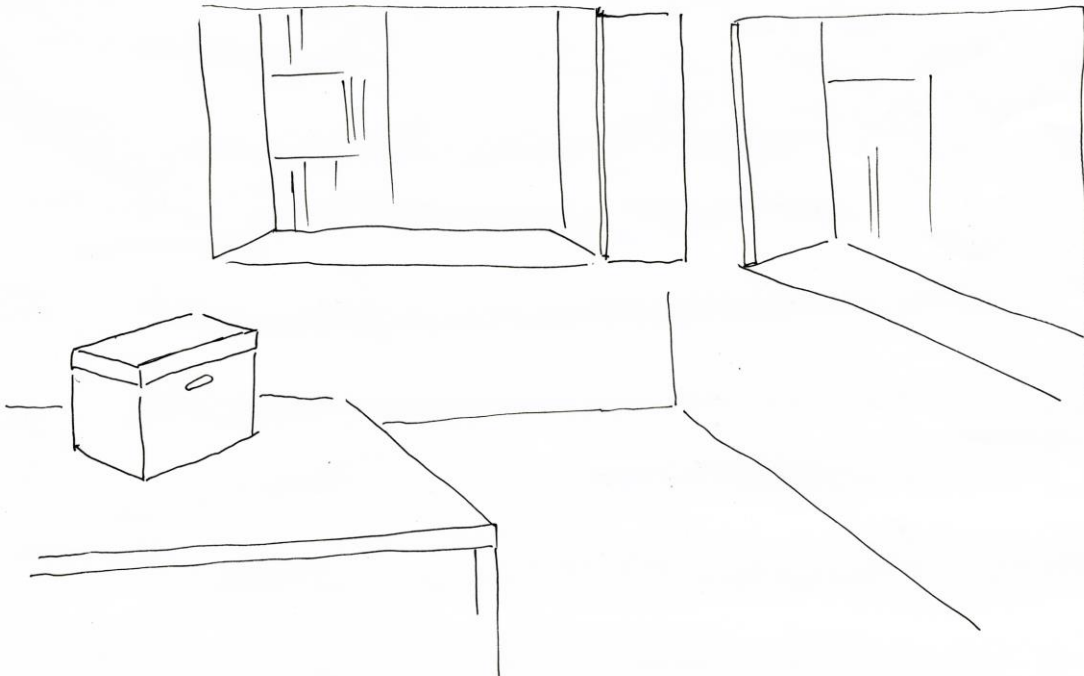


Figure 1. Jerusalem Municipal Archives, July 2015. Sketch by Michelle Paterok

After wandering through every nook and cranny of the basement, we returned to the elevators intent on ending our search. However, just behind the elevator, in a darkened section of the basement, was a heavy steel door with the placard “City Archive” (fig. 2). We entered the room and found two clerks sitting behind a partition. They eagerly assisted us in our search for the British Mandate document, and, after much ado, we gained access to its contents. While I was initially frustrated (and somewhat embarrassed) by my inability to locate the historical archive of the Jerusalem Municipality, it afforded me an opportunity to consider the extent to which the architecture of the Jerusalem Municipal Archives remains remarkably consistent throughout each department. The frustration turned into a useful analytic exercise. Each archival space we entered had the same basic layout: a clear division between “inside” and “outside” demarcated through the use of counters (fig. 1) and signs (fig. 3). These architectural features, combined with other aspects of the interaction (i.e., my reliance on municipal clerks to serve as intermediaries between the archival database and the archival storage room), helped to (re)create and (re)materialize “the Jerusalem Municipality” as an effect—as a discursive reality that is distinct, separate, and ever so out of reach.



Figure 2. Jerusalem Municipal Archives Entrance, July 2015. Sketch by Michelle Paterok

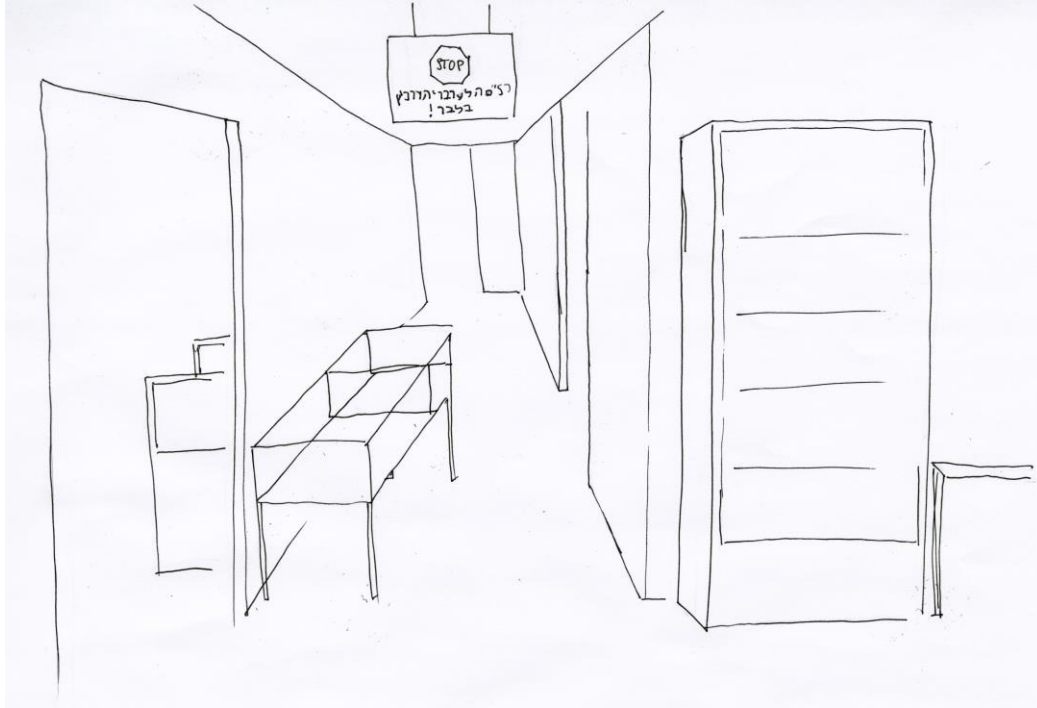


Figure 3. Jerusalem Municipal Archives (Historical), July 2015. Sketch by Michelle Paterok

The preceding analysis of archival architecture frames archival furniture as a mediator, imbued with the power to transform, translate, distort, or otherwise modify social reality.<sup>46</sup> However, this furniture should not be read through a prism of technological determinism; I am not advocating an analysis that predicates the existence of local government (as an object, as an idea, as a discourse) on the minute material conditions of a single building. Nor does archival architecture have to be read as the context in which events take place, as a stable “state of affairs” that “may be mobilized to account for some other phenomenon.”<sup>47</sup> This architecture is, rather, an actor. It is an instantiation of something that has already been assembled together, an assembly that leaves new traces and creates new associations. The Jerusalem Municipality is one effect of such associations, an aggregate that (re)acquires its size, organization, and power through the multiplicity of associations with other human and nonhuman actors.

### Creating an Israeli Place: The Connectivity of Archival Networks

The reach of archival files can extend beyond the four walls of city hall. These files operate as actors within a multiplicity of networks, the power of which resides in their generality and ubiquity. This is a flexible strength that allows archives to produce new enactments of government, the contours of which are not necessarily predicated on any *a priori* temporal or spatial boundaries of any specific regime. In fact, archival files are “part of a broader governing dynamic,” generating interactions among objects, individuals, and institutions in ways that may actually *consolidate* governmental authority over temporal and territorial space. Archives, in

<sup>46</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 39.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

other words, help to *create* place, not just reflect it. They help to generate governmental authority by “defining a space and style of interaction among people, whether civil servants or members of the public.”<sup>48</sup>

Skillful documenters, British Mandate civil servants adopted the scaffolding of Ottoman archival projects and built “an expansive system of paperwork.”<sup>49</sup> After the termination of the British Mandate in 1948, many of these files remained in Palestine, redistributed into the Israel State Archives or one of the country’s many municipal archives. Any expansion of archival services by these institutions (i.e., lengthening the number of public visitation hours, declassifying documentary materials) may be interpreted as a sign of better (i.e., more efficient, more organized, more transparent) government. However, I argue these publication practices are also part and parcel of a more general process that binds individuals, governmental space, and governmental institutions.

For example, when conservation architects with the Israel Antiquities Authority document a historic building, they often enter municipal and state archives in order to acquire any relevant materials that might illuminate something about the history of the site. The end result of these activities is a written document, which is itself catalogued and archived by the Israel Antiquities Authority. These practices participate in the creation of a dense, self-referential network of documents that links diverse geographic localities, materialities, and individuals to state-sponsored institutions—institutions that, as the previous section demonstrated, cooperate in the ontological and phenomenological (re)creation of government itself. But, in the end, these practices also (re)produce (ever so quietly) the effect of a punctualized Israeli space; they connect different historical sites located throughout “Israel” within a single archival network, reproducing the geographic contours of the British Mandate (now Israel/Palestine) via the “established skein of journeys through which each state [gets] experienced by its functionaries.”<sup>50</sup>

### Some Concluding Thoughts

This paper began in the 1980s, charting the interdisciplinary impact of anthropology’s historical turn. The effect, I argue, was the solidification of an archival imaginary, which accompanies students of (post)colonial and subaltern studies as they wander through archival spaces, collecting documents, files, and anything else that can illuminate something previously hidden about the historical “context” of a colonial encounter. I also comment on the fruitfulness of these activities for the historiography of Palestine, highlighting the manner in which Palestinian and Israeli historians have deployed old and new archival materials to rewrite the history of the land in ways that have undermined conventional Zionist and Israeli state narratives about the past. The purpose of this paper, however, is to focus less on what archives can *say* than on what archives can *do*. It explores the analytical possibilities of treating the archive as an actor who participates in the production of governmental authority. The shape of archival files, the layout of archival space, and the form of archival networks operate in ways that actually help to generate the effect of government and governmental authority.

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<sup>48</sup> Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 61, 32.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>50</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 117.



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