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Caitlin M. Davis

*Candidate*

---

Anthropology

*Department*

---

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

*Approved by the Dissertation Committee:*

Dr. Les Field, Chairperson

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Dr. Ronda Brulotte

---

Dr. David Dinwoodie

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Dr. Lindsay Smith

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Dr. Khaldun Bshara

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**A NONCOHERENT GOVERNANCE:  
TINKERING WITH STONES IN THE OLD CITY OF ACRE**

**by**

**CAITLIN M. DAVIS**

B.A., Anthropology/Sociology, Guilford College, 2010

M.A., Anthropology, University of New Mexico, 2014

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy  
Anthropology**

The University of New Mexico  
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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation recounts a series of episodes in the architectural conservation of the Old City of Acre in Israel. It studies the stones and mortars, residents and inspectors, papers and computers involved in the conservation of historic buildings, highlighting the moments in which the technical details of architectural conservation entangle themselves with the administrative techniques of government authorities. I describe architectural conservation as a tentative process, one that requires the coordination of various actants into precarious associations. Here, description is important. The pages that follow experiment with an anthropological practice that writes *against* conclusion. This is an anthropology that refuses to privilege a knowing subject and a stable world. Instead, it opts to tinker with noncoherent forms of analysis, forms that can grapple with realities that can always be done differently.

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## INTRODUCTION

On 19 November 2013, the Municipal Engineer from the Acre Municipality informed the Economics Committee of the Knesset that there is no policy of expelling Palestinian residents from the Old City of Acre. “On the contrary,” she contended, “the Municipality’s policy is that the population remains and that it nurtures and takes care of it. That’s the policy.”<sup>1</sup> The political-military immediacy of architecture in ~~Palestine~~ Israel has rarely been questioned, creating a space for scholars, journalists, and politicians to treat the preservation or destruction of particular (historic) sites as a central component of Israeli nation-building and state-securing projects. The following dissertation exists within this space, the kind of space where it makes perfect sense for a municipal engineer to comment on the presence of hidden agendas, secret plans to demographically manage the population of Acre, to Judaize the landscape.

The pages that follow will recount specific episodes in the architectural conservation of the Old City of Acre. This is a small, Palestinian-Israeli town situated on a peninsula that forms the northern tip of Haifa Bay along Israel’s Mediterranean coast. Some say it is a historic Ottoman capital, others an ancient Crusader city. The above-ground buildings, constructed from local sandstone during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have buried the remnants of the thirteenth century, a subterranean metropolis that acts as the foundations for the structures above. This complex amalgamation of Crusader-era remnants and Ottoman-era constructions is what UNESCO has labelled a World Heritage Site, what the Israel Antiquities Authority has designed an antiquities site. But the Old City of Acre is also something else. It is a mixed city, a term coined by the British during their administration of the region, a way to reference those municipalities populated by both Jews and Arabs (Weiss 2011).

Each of these characterizations is thought to say just as much about its enunciator as it does about a specific point in Euclidean space. For example, referring to the Old City of Acre as ‘a mixed city’ conceals more than it reveals. It is a statement that skirts around the cataclysmic events of 1948, the demographic upheaval that transformed Acre into a mixed city, into a place where coexistence is a trademark (Torstrick 2000), a

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<sup>1</sup> Protocol number 115. Economics Committee. Nineteenth Knesset. 18 November 2013. Accessed from [https://www.nevo.co.il/law\\_html/Law103/2013-11-18-2.htm](https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/Law103/2013-11-18-2.htm).



commodity (Stein 2008). Of course, I will do my own skirting. The events I will describe about the entities that populate this town are unremarkably mundane. These are stories about the bureaucratic fingers that point at buildings and the measuring tapes that enact their boundaries. They are about the (in)visible agents that circulate through capillary pores, agents that conservation architects have only recently learned how to see, established how to control. These are stories about the architectural plans that allow historic structures to enter into conservation committee meetings, the sites where bureaucrats authorize new interventions into the built landscape. They are about the daily patrols of a conservation inspector and her ephemeral encounters with illegal renovations, encounters that she transforms into annoying interruptions, building citations, or expensive fines. These are, in short, stories about the small things (Goldfarb 2006).

This is still not quite right. Even though this dissertation is about architectural conservation, it is also about something else. By studying in detail *how* architectural conservation works in the Old City of Acre, I can also examine the strategies of coordination that help to perform the historic buildings, the conservation programs, and the local authorities that appear throughout these pages. This is important. It highlights the ways in which objects are “*realized* in the course of a certain practical activity,” crystallizing, if only provisionally, a particular reality through “the temporary action of a set of circumstances” (Woolgar and Lezaun 2013:324). But I must proceed slowly and carefully, for this emphasis on performance requires a refusal to adopt certain quick-and-ready explanatory tools.

Consider, for a moment, Simone Ricca and his thorough investigation of the reconstruction plan for the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem. Here, Ricca argues that the renovation of this neighborhood is “self-evident proof of the effectiveness of the Zionist project” (2007:xii). For him, the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter—as well as the rewriting of history that it entailed—is closely connected to the creation of a Jewish nation-state. But this was a special kind of connection, one in which “the aesthetic values embodied in the structures, patterns of land-ownership and changes in occupancy in what has become the Jewish Quarter are all the result of an exclusive ethno-nationalist ideology” (1). The Jewish Quarter, in other words, had been shaped by “ideological and political choices,” choices that were “meant to represent (and justify) the existence of the

state” (47–48). It is a perfect example of the ways in which the political leaders used their authority to seize urban land, wielding their power to reconstruct a historic cityscape—all to strengthen the neighborhood’s Jewish identity (69–70).

These are the kinds of stories that have already been written in the anthropology of Palestine. They are stories that treat the *power to govern*, the *power to colonize*, as the impetus *behind* the architectural conservation of the built landscape. I want to try something different instead. I think it has become too unproblematic to say that a Zionist project, an ethno-nationalist ideology, a cunning politician, or a state government *has* the power to do something (Law 1991; Star 1991). Statements such as these present power as a big reservoir of energy, an inner force just waiting in the wings, a possession that allows an entity to push its agenda onto others, to transmit its commands through time and space (Latour 1984:266). That is, as long as there is nothing to slow it down, no reactionary interest group brave enough, or strong enough, to challenge its force. As anthropologists, I fear assertions like this leave us without the need to do much anthropologizing. The invocation of *power* has done the brunt of the explanatory work for us, accounting for how someone or something has been able to exert their grip over a territory or a population. Is this enough? Is it enough to treat *power* as a shorthand, as a term that summarizes the consequences of collective action and yet leaves that collective action unexplored and unexamined?

While I welcome the politics of accountability out of which such conversations emerge, I am concerned about their simplifying effects (Stein 2008:99). One corollary is that it has been far too tempting to treat the entities that populate our accounts as pre-existing objects, all without sufficiently describing the extent to which these objects are also *events*. An entity acts. It does something. It makes a difference. But it does so in such a way where it never forms a starting point. It always involves others. It always is *an effect of others*. And so there is much to learn about the ways in which human and nonhuman actants *come together*, about the ways in which figures exist through the ways in which they *relate*. Investigating these associations requires following commands as they travel from one entity to another, chronicling the enrolments, the enlistments, the persuasions, and the tinkering such journeys entail. But this is where my own language has failed me, for these kinds of activities do not simply fasten together isolated objects,

entities, or figures. They also participate in their enactment. They participate in the performance of (dangerous) buildings and (illegal) renovations, municipal inspectors and conservation architects, (conservation) committees and (multiple) governments.

These are the kinds of details I will examine in this survey of architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. These details are quiet and they are ordinary. They are about desks and chairs, doors and offices, papers and computers. There are also the antiquities laws and the conservation guidelines, the coffees and the friendships. An endless list of heterogeneous elements, the coordination of which threads together new kinds of realities from one moment to the next. These are details that can show us how something like ‘the Israel Antiquities Authority’ is a *figuration*, an ensemble of agencies that becomes a very different thing with each alliance it forms. They can show us how its ordinary architects in their ordinary offices govern the building activities of local residents, a population that is far bigger than themselves. And, most importantly, they can show us how this governance comes into being—not as a repressive ‘tool’ yielded by discrete agents, but as a curious, halting, and vulnerable *effect* of their associations (Mathews 2011:4).

This brings me to the third thing this dissertation is about. How do networks of association ravel and unravel? How do they grow and solidify through translations and displacements? How do coordinating activities draw entities together—and how do they not? For, as I hope to show, architectural conservation is not always a perfectly coordinated program of action. It is filled with surprising fissures and unexpected contradictions, messily hanging together “here, in this instance, for this purpose, while it is also in tension, there, a little later, in relation to another issue” (Mol 2010:260). All sorts of frictions “persist even after linkages have been made” (264). Quite often, in fact, things come together *and* they do not. Things hang together—but not quite. And that is okay. The entities involved in architectural conservation do not always need to be perfectly skilled, expertly adept network builders. Sometimes, it is this sort of fractional coherence that actually allows architectural conservation and its associated forms of (settler) colonial governance to (partially) succeed, just as it allows it to (partially) flatline, to (partially) fail.

### *A Situated Analysis: The Literature Review*

In *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (2002), Annemarie Mol reminds readers that scholarly investigations relate to more than the events encountered and recounted. They also relate to a multiplicity of texts, texts that resonate and contradict, intersect and parallel. The following ethnographic study of architectural conservation is situated somewhere along a juncture between what has been dubbed the anthropology of Palestine and the anthropology of heritage, but also groupings of texts that have been more loosely organized under the banner of science and technology studies. But what does it mean to relate to these literatures? In this section, I will construct generalizations about ‘the literature(s)’, drawing “together disparate writings that have different souls, different concerns of their own” (2002:6). One goal of this exercise is to say something about the ‘originality’ of this study, to show how it simultaneously departs from other texts and yet is made possible by them and their authority.

During the early twentieth century, Jewish-Zionist settlers treated the landscape of Palestine as a place to build. This is a well-told story, one that recounts the ways in which Jewish-Zionist architects confronted an urgent task: how to endow their ‘national home’ with a suitable physical form? how to use architecture to anchor (Jewish) national identity into the built environment (LeVine 2005:153)? In “Contested Zionism—Alternative Modernist: Erich Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Chug in Mandate Palestine” (2004), Alona Nitzan-Shiftan reviews one response to these questions. According to Nitzan-Shiftan, the maturation of modern architecture during the 1920s promoted a style which advocated “technical progress, clean and bare aesthetics, functionalism and efficient means of production” (21). It was to be a universal architecture, one that could replace the more nationalist architectures of Western Europe. In Palestine, however, it did the opposite. Jewish-Zionist architects embraced modern architecture as “the appropriate expression of Zionism.” Not only did it exemplify the virtues of progress, but it also lacked an identity with any architectural forms associated with a European nation. It was, in other words, a kind of ‘blank slate’ around which diaspora Jews could unite, a ready-made template that could accommodate the technical characteristics of the landscape *and* the lifestyle needs of a typical Jewish-Zionist worker.

Just as Gwendolyn Wright observed (1991), readers learn that even the most seemingly apolitical design decisions can have profound political implications. The innocuous aesthetic choices made by Jewish-Zionist architects and urban planners helped to create, and then quickly close, the gap between the Jewish-Zionist project and the local Palestinian landscape. Consider, as an example, the architectural development of Tel Aviv and Jaffa. In *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880–1948* (2005), Mark LeVine recounts how the construction of Tel Aviv as a modernist city intertwined with other political considerations, acting as an alibi for the fragmentation, ethnicization, and colonization of region. The aesthetic design decisions of Jewish-Zionist architects came to reflect—and also to produce—an increasing interest in “defining ‘modern’ Tel Aviv against its (apparently non-modern Other [Jaffa]” (LeVine 2005:194). It was hoped that these acts of definition would create a symbolic—if not a literal—boundary between Jaffa and Tel Aviv, between Palestinian and Jewish space (Hatuka and Kallus 2006). The cultural and national independence of the Jewish *yishuv* was to be “revealed in the form of its houses and the character of its streets” (LeVine 2005:156).

These texts teach scholars about the extent to which the (settler) colonization of Palestine has imbued architectures and landscapes with political saliency, a saliency that now appears to be direct and unmediated, *a priori* and unquestionable (Hatuka 2010; Herscher 2010; Monk 2002). The same has been said about Palestinian nationalism(s). Beginning in the early twentieth century, Palestinian encounters with Jewish-Zionist settlement were often accompanied by articulations of a ‘rootedness’ to the land. In order to subvert Jewish-Zionist conceptualizations of Palestine as a barren and undeveloped wasteland, Palestinians transformed a few select objects of their agricultural practices into national symbols. The frictions that ensued became more than a struggle over territory. The landscape became a device for narrating Palestinian nation-ness, despite its conditions of exile, fragmentation, or isolation. Whether one studies the cactus, the orange, the olive tree, or the poppy, it is not difficult to document the ways in which the landscape has become a resource for symbolizing the Palestinian nation—its connection to the land (the cactus, the olive tree), its displacement from the land (the orange), and its commitment to returning to the land (the orange, the poppy). And so, the land remains a

primary object of content, yet there has also emerged a battle over ideas *about* the land—about the space that “land occupies in Palestinian cultural life: the way Palestinians relate to the land and places and how they embody belonging in their environment” (Abufarha 2008:343). But it is a certain kind of relating, one in which objects in the landscape become pictures of something else, placed into a system of signification where they become the signifier of an abstract signified.

And then the story changes. Analyses about the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after the Six Day War in 1967 tell scholars about the propagation of a new kind of landscape. The emphasis placed on architecture was no longer the politics of its aesthetic or symbolic qualities, but its performative properties—on the things it could *do* without any mediating signs. Eyal Weizman, for example, describes how Israeli architects began incorporating the research of military urban research institutes into their professional projects, collaborating with the Israel Defense Forces and municipal police departments in order to strategize how architecture might be used to constrain the movements of Palestinian bodies. Armed with reading lists filled with works by Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Guy Debord, and Michel Foucault, these architects were well-equipped to re-conceptualize the possibilities of architectural space, to exert power through architectural techniques rather than through over juridical practices. This, readers are told, is how Israel and (almost to a point of absurdity) the Occupied Palestinian Territories “splintered into a multitude of temporary, transportable, deployable and removable border[s]” (Weizman 2007:6), where even the most mundane elements of architecture could be deployed as a tactical tool for securing national or state objectives (Segal and Weizman 2003).

In *Security and Suspicion: An Ethnography of Everyday Life in Israel* (2011), Juliana Ochs presents a perfect example of these mundane architectural elements. She documents the ways in which private architectural firms re-designed public and private spaces in response to a surge of Palestinian suicide-bombings. These designs sought to simultaneously *reveal* order and *conceal* the need for order. This was achieved, as Ochs describes, through something as simple as the relocation of entrances and exits to public buildings. One café in Jerusalem, for example, eliminated all side entrances, adding a layered system of access, one which progressed from gates, to fences, to doors. This

enabled security guards to closely monitor the comings and goings of every single patron. A security guard, stationed by the gate, could regulate the movements of patrons entering and exiting the restaurant. The layered system of access meant the security guard could “inspect each patron, swing open the gate with an electronic release, and only then allow customers to walk along a fence through a glass door” (48–49).

The potential affordances of architectural technologies are magnified when considering their deployment throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories. After the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, the Israeli military gained control of “the interstices of an archipelago of about two hundred separate zones of Palestinian restricted autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza” (Weizman 2007:11). The Palestinian landscape became a horizontal and vertical patchwork of sealed islands, with Israel controlled the areas beneath, above, and around each city or village. During the Second Intifada (2000–2005), the lines of this archipelago solidified into a more permanent architecture, allowing the Israeli military to manage the flows of human bodies, to monitor the movements of private vehicles, to regulate the transport of goods. I am reminded, in particular, of Eyal Weizman’s description of how turnstiles and revolving gates have been able to slow down the crowds of Palestinians seeking to cross any given checkpoint. In reference to the architecture of one specific checkpoint, he explains how

the checkpoint had two sets of turnstiles with space between them. The first set was placed several tens of meters away from Israeli military positions so as to keep the congestion away from them. Soldiers regulate the pace of passage by using an electrical device that controls the turning of the gates. One person at a time passes through at a push of a button. Every few seconds soldiers stop the rotation of the turnstiles, so that several people remain caged between the gates. [Weizman 2007:151]

The interior furnitures of these checkpoints organized Palestinians into ordered lines, wherein only one individual at a time could encounter the soldier checking his or her permits and luggage.

This is just a small sampling of the kinds of accounts that appear throughout the anthropology of Palestine. They are accounts that share an important similarity. Each spotlights the architect(s) lying *behind* or fighting *against* Israeli (settler) colonialism, presenting domination and resistance as the effects of the creative efforts of specific individuals (Cuff 1992). Sometimes these individuals are depicted in great detail. Other

times they remain shadowy figures. Either way, as I read these texts, I am left with the impression that the events recounted represent or express a set of objective interests, a set of well-known intentions (Ferguson 1994:17). That the leaders of the State of Israel, or the managers of the Jewish *yishuv*, or the vanguard of the Palestinian resistance, actually *have* power that they *exercise* in order to achieve a particular *goal* (Migdal 2001). They create symbols. They refashion landscapes. They construct buildings. They constrain bodies and restrain movements. They are isolated trailblazers “engaged in a heroic struggle against overwhelming odds, fighting his or her own impulse to give up, to capitulate” (Newman 2011:53).

In many ways, this line of inquiry into the instrumentalist aspects of state-building and nation-formation has proven fruitful. It has, for instance, allowed scholars to learn about the administrative details surrounding 1948, all of the components of the State of Israel that were planned in advance. We have learned about how David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, assembled an interdisciplinary team of planning officials, assigning them the task of formulating the key components necessary for the creation of a new state (Weizman 2007). We learn about the nine scholars he summoned to form the Committee for the Designation of Place-Names in the Negev Region, each of whom worked tirelessly to assign Hebrew names to every single villages, road, mountain, and valley, all in order to ‘restore’ Jewish indigeneity to the land (Benvenisti 2000). We learn about the plans to destroy Palestinian villages and to displace their residents (Morris 1987; Pappé 2006; Slyomovics 1998). We learn about the comprehensive schemes to manage the Palestinian population of Israel, to turn their homes into tourist attractions, into artist colonies, into guest houses (Monterescu 2015; Stein 2008). This is how we learn about agency.

But what I encountered in the field was much messier than these stories might suggest. The conservation architects from the Israel Antiquities Authority with whom I worked expressed concerns about the Palestinian residents in the Old City of Acre. They spent their days advocating on behalf of these residents, with many being both cognizant *and* critical of their professional participation in the gentrification of the city. The structural engineer from the Acre Municipality with whom I spoke spent his days searching for dangerous buildings, structures that might endanger their inhabitants or the



public. He would promptly notify the civil engineers from the Development Authority, the institution that manages absentee property, to address these hazards. Each individual with whom I spoke expressed a desire to help the marginalized inhabitants of the Old City of Acre—to help them *stay* in buildings that are safe, that are dignified. They voiced their frustrations about the limits of their power, about the limits of their influence, about the limits of their ability to improve living conditions. And these engineers and these architects, they were not always Jewish.

Were my interlocutors telling lies? Maybe. Anthropology is no stranger to the study of mess. It has taught students to think critically about interests and intentions, for these may not be the only factors that shape an unfolding series of events. Anthropologists know that causes travel through convoluted routes. That there are multi-layered structures to consider, the deeply embedded frameworks that encompass individuals, that overtake their intentional actions, often in unexpected and contradictory ways. My initial approach to the study of mess has been to suggest that maybe Israeli (settler) colonialism does “what it does, not at the bidding of some knowing and powerful subject who is making it all happen, but behind the backs and against the wills of even the most powerful actors” (Ferguson 1990:18). Could there be some kind of apparatus operating behind the scenes, like an anti-politics machine that depoliticizes “everything it touches, everywhere whisking political realities out of sight, all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state power” (xv)?

It is possible to find this kind of apparatus in much of the literature on settler colonialism. There is an oft-quoted maxim in Patrick Wolfe’s seminal text, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” (2006). Here, Wolfe tells readers that settler colonial invasion is a structure—not an event. As settlers have colonized indigenous spaces, they have also instituted specific relationships, enduring systems wherein indigenous peoples “progressively disappear in a variety of ways: extermination, expulsion, incarceration, containment, and assimilation” (Veracini 2010:16–17). In such a system, the only thing that changes is the *content* of the details—not the *form* of the relationships. The Mabo decision in Australia from 1992 is a perfect example through which to witness these unfaltering logics. According to Wolfe (1994), this decision to

recognize native title for the first time cannot be read as a historical rupture, for it merely perpetuates the status quo, continuing the “deep structures” of an Australian colonial project of expropriation (93). This time, however, it is all under the guise of multicultural recognition. And so, it is true that there may be “empirical and moral differences between shooting people to clear the land of them and, in a much later period, requiring the production of proofs of authenticity in order to legitimate Aboriginal entitlement” (Merlan 1997:10–11). But these are not structural differences.

Structures. Logics. Systems. Epistemes. Some of which are deep. Some of which come in large blocks (Althusser 1971; Foucault 1970). These are the analytics that appear again and again in the writings of Patrick Wolfe and his students (Byrd 2011; Morgensen 2011; Goeman 2013). These are the analytics that allow scholars to acknowledge the underlying similarities between a multitude of idiosyncratic events, the “substratum to reality in which the true causal dynamic of world events resides” (Koch 2011:28). This has become a well-rehearsed script in critical indigenous studies, one filled with predictable plots and familiar stories. Recently, scholars have been testing its application to the study of settler colonialism in Palestine (e.g., Lloyd 2012; Morgensen 2012; Peteet 2005; Veracini 2013). For far too long, these scholars argue, those concerned with the question of Palestine have succeeded in documenting Jewish-Israeli offenses committed against Palestine and Palestinians, almost as if they formed a sequence of distinct—but interrelated—events. The goal, however, should be to do what Patrick Wolfe did. It should be to move to the center of these analyses the settler colonial structure that underpins these happenings (Robinson 2013; Salamanca et al. 2012).

This is because the stories so often recounted about the ethnic cleansing of Palestine are matched by just as many stories where elimination is *not* the norm. At one moment, Jewish-Israelis have used historic preservation to destroy the built heritage of Palestine. The bulldozers deployed in archaeological excavations have quite literally erased the (historical) presence of Palestinians, damaging and discarding anything and everything that sits above the layers of Israelite remains. But then, at another moment, the Acre Municipality, the Old Acre Development Company, and the Israel Antiquities Authority have preserved the historic buildings of the Old City of Acre, the historic Ottoman structures that serve as homes for its Palestinian residents. These inconsistencies

appear to undermine the scope—perhaps even the reality—of Israeli settler colonialism in Palestine.

Or do they? Scholars in critical indigenous studies have noted this paradox as it relates to settler colonialism in the United States (see O'Brien 2010), a paradox they have been able to explain away via the metaphor of 'structure'. These scholars have ascertained the convoluted ways in which the 'structure' of settler colonialism employs heritage preservation in such a way that "disappears indigeneity," only for it to be "recalled by modern *non-Natives*" (Morgensen 2011:2–3). The argument is that such maneuvers incontestably naturalize settler relationships to—and justify their appropriation of—native culture and native land (Rowe 2010; Slyomovics 1998; Stein 2008). When applied to the Old City of Acre, these explanations position the conservation architects responsible for its preservation as the (un)conscious pawns of 'the structure' of Israeli settler colonialism, a structure that enacts and normalizes Jewish-Israeli claims to the built heritage of the landscape. And it is a structure that has largely been successful. This is how I had come to understand the contradictions affiliated with (settler) colonialism in Israel. This is how I had come to explain away its messiness (Davis 2013).

In the anthropology of Palestine, there are agencies and there are structures. These are the two models anthropologists have learned to follow, models where "agency attaches exclusively to persons and where social structures 'act' only insofar as they *thwart* human agency" (Bennett 2005:451). Paraphrasing from Bruno Latour, all of this requires a kind of double-entry accounting, where whatever comes from the outside is deducted from the total sum of action allotted to the agents inside. "With this type of balance sheet," he continues,

the more threads you add in order to *make you act* from the outside, the *less* you *yourself* acted: the conclusion of this accounting procedure was inescapable. And if you wished, for some moral or political reason, to save the actor's intention, initiative, and creativity, the only way left was to increase the total sum of action coming from the inside by *cutting some of the threads*, thus denying the role of what is now seen as so many 'bondages', 'external constraints', 'limits to freedom'. [Latour 2005:215]

This type of analytic splits reality into two, performing a world wherein there are some fundamental differences between individuals and social structures, between micro-

sociological and macro-sociological levels. One consequence of this bifurcation of the world (Mitchell 1988) is that almost all of “the questions raised by social theory have been framed as the search for the *right pathway* that leads from one level to the other” (Latour et al. 2012:590–591). How is it that structures can sustain themselves without any kind of central dispatcher? How is it that we can identify the uniqueness of individuals given their immersion within systemic relations? How do individual decisions relate to collective actions? What is the best theory that can accommodate our movements from one level to another, from one scale to another? What is the best method that can facilitate a seamless connection between these two distinct realms?

But these are not the only questions that can be asked. There are also questions that do not presume the existence of two distinct levels, questions that do not position the structure(s) of settler colonialism so readily. These are questions that point to ordering processes, to the processes that generate a sense of pattern (Law 1994:50). After all, structures are made, in part, through the filing cards that we organize in our offices, through the charts that we draw in our notebooks, through the manuscript drafts that we compile on our computers, through the articles that we publish in academic journals. They are made again through the ordering of different materials, through the arrangement of offices and files, secretaries and telephones, skills and friendships. None of this is meant to imply there is something wrong with writing about ‘individuals’ or ‘structures’. It is merely to suggest that a structure and an individual are *figurations*, just like everything else. They are ways to provide a heterogeneous assemblage of agencies with a shape, with some features and some flesh. It only becomes problematic when we get into the habit of using these figures as a means to forgo further explanation, as a means to gloss over the difficult task of tracing the assortment of actants that are simultaneously at work in any given entity.

This difficult work requires a bit of ontological levelling, where “nothing is, by itself, either reducible *or irreducible to anything else*” (Latour 1988b:158). Once this is done, actors will begin to look different. And so will agency. A flat ontology insists that all entities be placed on the same ontological footing—that no entity, whether human or nonhuman, tangible or intangible, is inherently more real than any other. Every object is metaphysically equivalent, standing “by itself as a force to reckon with” (Harman

2009:13)—a potential actant. But why bother? Why abandon the analytics that are already at hand? It is because there was also another kind of mess in the Old City of Acre. I am reminded of all the moments when state-sponsored projects to commodify and gentrify, to conserve and develop the Old City of Acre failed to materialize. These include all of the moments when the civil servants tasked with enforcing building violations failed to effectively coordinate their activities. All of the moments when something as quiet as a historic view, an improper stamp, a predictable schedule, a soluble solution, an approved budget, or a locked door altered everyone's plans. How does one account for all of this messiness? How does one account for all of these failures—these failures to adequately manage, to regularly maintain, to effectively collaborate?

With a flat ontology, anthropologists can begin to recognize the nonhumans that populate the worlds they study, that participate in the events they investigate (Beauregard 2012:182). This is something through which Sandra Sufian (2007) has already started to think in the anthropology of Palestine. She has studied the ways in which the mosquitoes and malarial fevers that accompanied the marshy terrain of Palestine assisted (while simultaneously threatening) the creation of Jewish settlements in the region during the British Mandate. These settlements were scattered throughout the valley and coastal regions—areas with the highest instances of malaria. The disease kept these areas relatively sparsely populated, an enticing trait for settlers intent on isolating themselves from the local Palestinians and on acquiring large tracts of land with the least amount of resistance (99). With this, readers begin to see mosquitoes and swamps, viruses and quinine, not as backdrops that shaped the activities of humans, but as active agents in their own right.

I have noticed that this kind of attention to the activities of mosquitoes and other nonhuman actants can make readers uncomfortable. In the social sciences, it is not customary to ascribe agency to nonhumans, to say that agentic capacities are distributed amongst a variety of ontological types. For even if everyone agrees that ideas and objects, techniques and procedures, events and phenomena are the *causes* of some *effect*, should one really think of this as *agency*—a term many have been taught to restrict to intentional human acts? There are also ethical and moral commitments to uphold. Any attempt to

affirm the nonhuman dimensions of agency requires scholars to re-evaluate their notions of moral responsibility and political accountability. Such distributions of agency can jeopardize efforts “to hold individuals responsible for their actions or to hold officials accountable to the public” (Bennett 2005:452). Agency is the one place where scholars can condemn or praise ‘the individual’. This, some say, is why it is so important to talk about people instead of mosquitoes.

Except none of this ontological flattening was ever meant to suggest that objects do things *instead of* humans. It was only meant to illustrate the extent to which *all* action is “a surprise, a mediation, an event” (Latour 2005:45), something that is *always* under-determined and *always* dislocated, something about which an analyst can never quite be sure. This is because it is impossible to distinguish actors from the ensemble of allies which make them act. Actors, whether human or nonhuman, are not individual objects with fixed goals, *a priori* entities that interact with others in ways that, if rendered stable enough, could form robust actor-networks. The problem with such an interpretation is that it treats actor-networks holistically—as wholes composed of parts. It assumes that “there *first* exist simple individual agents, *then* interactions, *then* complex structures” (Latour et al. 2012:598). As readers will see, conservation architects must always collaborate with others, adjusting and re-adjusting their goals as projects unfold. I might say that it is a similar ideological background or a shared political commitment that allows these actors to overcome the everyday tensions of their work, but this misses something important about translation, about the transformations that happen when things are rendered equivalent.

Simone Ricca recounts a story about architectural conservation in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Acre. The Israel Antiquities Authority, he explains, preferred to protect the archaeological remains they had uncovered at a particular site by installing a roof, a preference that accepted “the principle of building new houses over the ruins” (Ricca 2007:72). Some actor, some medium of translation, was able to link together two of the most far-flung objects: archaeological conservation and Jewish-Zionist settlement. And, with this new alignment, everyone involved changed. The entirety of this dissertation is, in part, a meditation on the mechanics of these changes. For now, I simply want to propose that it might be useful for anthropologists to study actors as *actants*, as

entities with uncertain, shifting boundaries, boundaries that alter through the ways in which they associate with others. An association is no longer “what happens *after* individuals have been defined with few properties, but what characterizes entities in the first place” (Latour et al. 2012:598). An actant *is* its relations. Action *is* a relational event.

Agency, then, need not necessarily have anything to do with the intentions or the capabilities of an individual person, for nobody can do anything alone—not without other people, not without other materials, not without a few interderminacies. As I will show in the chapters that follow, there must be others *to move* an idea, a practice, or a thing. There must be someone (or something) “to fetch it, seize upon it for its own motives, move it, and often transform it” (Latour 1988b:16). This reformulation of agency treats action semiotically, as a property of associated entities, as a consequence of how entities are coordinated in practice. It is the role of the analyst to map these relations, for these are the relations through which different entities become different—different in size, in shape, in importance, in power. These are the relations through which something like (settler) colonialism acquires its actuality, its firmness and its stability. But these were rare events. Quite often, things failed to relate. Or, things related only partially. This is the messiness that needs to be described.

### ***A Field in which to Work***

In order to study the details of architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre, I needed to follow entities in action, tracing their movements through different kinds of spaces. But before I could do this, *I* needed to become a body that *could* move through space as well. This required passports, letters of introduction, and funding applications. It also required e-mail accounts and cell phones. I have no doubts that the young, white face that accompanied these materials helped. So, too, did my etymologically Welsh last name, which many of the Israeli agents I encountered at border crossings interpreted as a possible variation of the Hebrew name ‘David’. I moved through Israel easily. Most people assumed I was Jewish. Only rarely did they learn that I was not. Sometimes these revelations were met with contempt or skepticism. Usually, though, they were met with curiosity. I remember being asked repeatedly over the course of my fieldwork, “Why are you bothering yourself with this mess if you are not Jewish?”

“Because I know people here,” I often replied. For many years, the Director of the International Conservation Center in the Old City of Acre had been a mentor of mine in the field of heritage conservation. As such, this was a bureaucracy into which I could easily enter. A simple phone call from her rendered my ethnographic research intelligible to administrators, conservators, and bureaucrats. I suspect this amenability towards a researcher from the United States might have also had something to do with the prominence of conservation studies in the Old City of Acre itself. This is a place that has been colloquially described as a laboratory for the international study of architectural conservation. The offices of the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Old Acre Development Company, and the Acre Municipality have all become accustomed to accommodating (inter)national students, to answering their questions about conservation in this historic town.

But there is another reason to study the everyday details of architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. It is a quiet city. Especially when it is compared to a place like Jerusalem. For many, the Old City of Acre is “simply a beautiful tourist destination” (Ricca 2007:170). It can be difficult to spot the embittered controversies that have surrounded its preservation and its development, many of which have existed since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. These are battles that even the most casual observers can easily spot in and around the Old City of Jerusalem. Visitors do not have to wander the streets of Silwan for long before they encounter the nation- and state-making aspects of heritage conservation, the private-public partnerships tasked with locating archaeological sites, with identifying a timeless Jewish presence, with establishing facts on the ground.

Things are different in the Old City of Acre. There are few, if any, dramatic moments in the history of its preservation. There was no substantial reconstruction of an exclusively Jewish Quarter. There was no demolition of a Moroccan Quarter, a neighborhood completely levelled by the Israeli military, bulldozed with its inhabitants still inside. There was no Western Wall Tunnel, no underground route that weaves itself through disputed land, undermining the structural integrity of the streets and the houses above it. One would be hard pressed to find such marked moments of Israeli (settler) colonialism in the Old City of Acre. They exist, but they are different. Another approach



is needed, one that is attentive to the mundane, to what Ilana Feldman has described as life and government in the spaces between noteworthy events (2008:2). So, then, how does an investigation like this proceed?

My body had been emplaced in the Old City of Acre. I had received all of the necessary approvals from the Israel Antiquities Authority. What next? Where do I go to find ‘architectural conservation’? Where is it? In which building? In which office? In which meeting? Everything seemed obvious at first. Architectural conservation takes place in historic buildings, the messy construction sites filled with loud noises, hard hats, and wet plaster. I would soon come to learn that this was not the only place where the action was, that there are a number of sites where architectural conservation takes place, a number of conduits through which its heterogeneous materials are all brought together. Architectural conservation was no longer “a place, a thing, a domain, or a kind of stuff but a provisional movement of new associations” (238).

I spent one year in the Old City of Acre, from August 2016 to August 2017. But my field site was less a specific geographic space than it was a network of paper documents and computer screens, stone buildings and sewage pipes, bureaucrats and residents—all of whom were participants in the conservation of built heritage. I investigated this complex assemblage through a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus 1995), following—and sometimes working alongside—a variety of administrators and conservation professionals. I spent a majority of my time with the conservation architects affiliated with the Israel Antiquities Authority, particularly the conservation inspector of the Old City of Acre. Together, we moved through alleys and into offices, meetings, and historic structures. I accompanied her as she met with residents, advising them on their building applications. I watched as she processed these applications and prepared them for review by the conservation committee. I walked with her as she patrolled the streets of the Old City of Acre, as she monitored ongoing conservation projects and identified illegal building activities. I sat with her as she wrote reports to her supervisors, to residents, and to the Acre Municipality about building infractions, about application decisions, and about the status of projects.

She was not the only person I followed. I also joined a group of architectural researchers as they documented the Crusader-era crypt of St. Andrew’s Church. During

this project, I observed conservation architects as they transformed a physical structure into a sheet of paper, into a document that can move from office to office, from archive to archive. I helped them identify level points. I helped them measure walls and ceilings. I helped them diagram triangulation lines. Then, many months later, I joined another group. This one was tasked with conducting a survey of all the historic wooden ceilings in the Old City of Acre. I watched as they searched through archives, compiling lists of all the buildings that might have one of these ceilings. I shadowed them as they met with community representatives, as they tried to correlate buildings with building owners. I noted their frustrations at the unlikelihood that residents would allow them into their homes to document these artifacts. And, when not participating in these projects, I could usually be found attending the monthly meetings of the conservation committee, a group of architects and engineers from the Acre Municipality, the Old Acre Development Company, and the Israel Antiquities Authority. This was the place where building applications were approved and denied.

Embodied emplacement within the everyday practices of architectural conservation enabled me to collect data on the mundane decision-making and planning processes, to participate in the quiet techniques of bureaucratic assemblage, to undergo the sensory experiences directed on—and through—the human body. I sketched the architectural layouts of offices. I noted the inscription devices individuals deployed. I transcribed the controversies that arose. I directed my attention to the things that appeared small—to how civil servants point at buildings and plans; to how paper connects buildings with bureaucrats and with bodies; to how desks and chairs, doors and walls perform centers and peripheries; to how conservation professionals entice humans and nonhumans into participating in their projects. I watched. I observed. I listened. I touched.

There have been many pages written about the role of the senses in anthropological fieldwork, works that have “stressed the need for reflexive engagements with how ethnographic knowledge [is] produced and an acknowledgement of the importance of the body in human experience and in academic practice” (Pink 2009:14). There is, for example, Paul Stoller’s explorations into the corporeality of anthropological practice (Stoller 1989, 1997). There is also Sarah Pink’s foregrounding of the *emplaced*

ethnographer, an emphasis that attends to the relationships between bodies, minds, and environments (Pink 2009). These approaches, however, entrench a series of dualisms that counter my efforts to level things ontologically, as they bifurcate the world into subjects and objects, into things and ideas about those things (Whitehead 1920). When I speak, then, about my emplaced body, I want to be careful.

I do not want to begin this dissertation by presupposing a divided world, a world divvied up into all that is *really* real and all that is *really* social. Remember, the world I am presupposing is flat. This is an important clarification, for it shifts my concerns away from epistemology, from the inadequacy of statements—from the intermediaries that convey the connections, that reconcile the gaps, between word and world. It directs them, instead, towards articulations (Hall 1993), towards the ways in which different events elicit different behaviors from myself and from others. I ask, then, that you do not read my emplaced body as something that has learned something about the world, as something that has stood outside their subject-matter (Law 1994:19). Rather, I ask that you read it as a body that has learned “*to be affected by hitherto unregistrable differences*” (Latour 2004:209). Charcoal lines, cracked stones, building numbers, illegal additions—these are a few of the things by which I (as well as my interlocutors) had learned to be affected, things that began to elicit different behaviors from myself and from others. I started jotting notes, sketching drawings, starting conversations. These were the techniques that sensitized me to differences (Taussig 2011). These were the practices that helped me constitute myself as a specific kind of epistemic subject (Knorr Cetina 1999). This was how I learned to resonate with the entities I encountered.

Other days, I spent a lot of time asking questions. Over the course of the year, I conducted interviews with (conservation) architects, (conservation) engineers, and (conservation) scientists. I entered these interviews with specific questions about the technical details of the projects on which they had worked. What were the challenges they confronted? How did their project intersect with the expectations and requirements of different government authorities? of different residents? I also entered these interviews with questions about their specific working practices. In my interviews with conservation engineers, I wanted to know how they determined whether or not a building is dangerous. In my conversations with conservation scientists, I wanted to know how cement plasters

and mortars damaged historic masonry. In my meetings with conservation architects, I wanted to know how they navigated the bureaucracy of building approvals. These were not the only people with whom I spoke. I also arranged interviews with residents and municipal officials. The former recounted stories about their experiences living in historic buildings, about the challenges of coordinating with local authorities, about the consequences they might face if they failed to follow the stipulations of the Antiquities Law. The latter recounted their thoughts on the difficulties of collaborating with so many different government authorities, on the difficulties of realizing projects that could benefit the residents while simultaneously preserving the city and developing it for tourism.

And then, each evening, I sifted through archival materials. These included documents I had copied from the archives of the Israel Antiquities Authority. It also included electronic materials I had requested from the Israel State Archives and the archives of the magistrate courts. I compiled thousands of pages of materials relating to the conservation of the Old City of Acre—from the British Mandate to the present. Some of this included conservation documentations, engineering reports, dangerous building orders, and illegal building citations. Most, however, included correspondences between different local authorities about conservation activities in the Old City of Acre. The data I gathered from these archives have been particularly helpful in mapping the actor-networks of architectural conservation in a historic city, shedding light on how paper connects residents to buildings and buildings to bureaucrats.

This is what I collected. These are the trails left behind by various human and nonhuman actors. These are the things that fill my fieldnotes, things that I have read and reread in many different ways, arranged and rearranged into notecards that blanket my floor, into documents that fill my computer screen. Few anthropologists have commented on their own work of sorting and ordering the materials they collect. Bronislaw Malinowski is a notable exception. In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), he recommends tabulating ethnographic data into synoptic charts, for charts can be instruments of research *and* analysis. With a chart before him, Malinowski could “easily and conveniently go over one item after the other, and note down the relevant practices and beliefs contained in each of them” (15). He could identify patterns. He could sketch

the skeletal framework of a culture, the *real* substance of the social fabric that keeps together “the family, the clan, the village community, the tribe” (19).

I also created charts, but with an entirely different goal in mind. I confronted my fieldnotes with no expectations that these materials would illuminate something about the social fabric of the Old City of Acre, about the political dimensions of architectural conservation, about the economic limitations of municipal governance—as if ‘the social’, ‘the political’, or ‘the economic’ were discrete realms whose study was needed before any analysis could be deemed complete. It is easy to slip into these kinds of arguments. These are the arguments that have been modeled for ethnographers so extensively, especially in science and technology studies (Barnes 1982; Bloor 1983; Shapin 1982). There is Anique Hommels (2005), who, in a study of the obduracy of urban space, has experimented with analyses that emphasize the ways in which members of different social groups enter into projects constrained by certain ways of thinking, certain ways of acting. And then there is Wiebe Bijker (1997), who has sought to explain the development of technological artifacts by describing the context of their social construction. For Bijker, the meaning of a technological object never resides entirely in the object itself. Political and economic relationships can shape the form an object takes. So, too, can something like gender.

Some may say that actor-network theory is no different, that it simply replaces elements within the script while keeping “the two positions of what explains and what should be explained intact” (Latour 2005:238). This is not wrong. But it is also not quite right. The charts that I created in my notebooks were never designed to identify the ‘correct’ direction of causality, to determine *who* or *what* might *actually* be responsible for some state of affairs. They were never meant to *explain*. That is, if by explain, we mean the practice of generating two lists of elements, and then articulating how the elements of one list influence, shape, produce, or construct the elements of the second list (Latour 1988c). There is nothing wrong with this analytic practice. In the anthropology of Palestine, such explanations could be used to find the smoking guns that will demystify, once and for all, the relationships between the micro-practices of conservation architects and the structure(s) of (settler) colonialism, between particular events and larger patterns or processes (Mitchell 2002:28–29).

In the chapters that follow, I wanted to try to do something a little less ambitious. I wanted to understand how entities were connected to other entities. In order to do this, I needed to examine the traces left by buildings and by bureaucrats. I analyzed my fieldnotes by highlighting (literally) the trails, the hesitations, the meanderings, and the controversies they encountered as they tried to forge connections. I identified the trails, the hesitations, the meanderings, and the controversies they encountered as they tried to forge connections. I underlined the movements, the conduits, and the cables—all the technologies, inscriptions, and practices that linked actants together, that allowed them to reconcile their tasks, that facilitated their work. I studied the textures of these different threads, how some comings together were made to be longer-lasting, farther-reaching than others.

The differences between these two forms of explanation are nuanced. But they are important. Causality and correlation will be replaced with articulations and associations (Latour 1988c:163). The things that I have emphasized will not explain *how* architectural conservation *produces* (settler) colonial governance, *how* (settler) colonial governance *shapes* architectural conservation. They will do something else. Remember, in a flat ontology there is “no privileged force to which the others can be reduced” (Harman 2009:16). The things that I have emphasized will describe acts of translation. They will describe how things come together and stay together, how things fall apart and stay apart—how things come together *and* fall apart. They will present all of the work that is required to render elements equivalent, to render architectural conservation a specific kind of governance.

### ***Threading Together an Argument***

Throughout this dissertation, I will stitch together the traces I collected by following the human and nonhuman actors involved in the architectural conservation of the Old City of Acre. Many of these traces are the remnants of moments when the technical details of architectural conservation entangled themselves with the bureaucratic techniques of local authorities. I will map these traces in order to sketch ensembles of different agencies, agencies through which the Israel Antiquities Authority has been able to command and control from a distance, from a small office managed by a quiet civil servant. This is a fragile kind of governance, one where alignments are variously

textured, where associations are barely coordinated, where alliances are rarely guaranteed. At times, these fragilities have caused architectural conservation to stutter. In fact, the pages that follow are filled with projects that have failed, with projects that have been disrupted, disbanded, discarded. Sometimes, though, these fragilities are part and parcel of its success—a kind of functional noncoherence wherein some instabilities and some multiplicitous identities are the things that allow architectural conservation to cohere, if only partially.

I begin with the architectural plan, one of the first steps in any conservation project. Chapter 1 opens in the air-conditioned Office of Conservation Supervision in the Old City of Acre, where three conservation architects from the Israel Antiquities Authority sit discussing the architectural plans of far away buildings. I recount these events in order to say something about the bifurcation of the world into objects and representations, about the ways in which things are put into words. How is it possible that these conservation architects can study a building without ever leaving their desks? Is it because the architectural plan is an accurate representation of the building? Probably. But such a quick response does not directly answer the question. It *posits* (good) correspondence without *describing* it as an activity. In this chapter, I try to offer something different. It is a chapter that recounts the three weeks I spent with a group of architectural researchers from Italy, young professionals who had been assigned the task of documenting the Crusader-era vault of St. Andrew's Church. It discusses the small gestures through which these researchers brought together a variety of material-semiotic artifacts, gestures that allowed them to move back and forth between a building and a drawing. This close semiotic analysis of an architectural plan will demonstrate the beginnings of a flat ontology, for it will begin to direct attention away from the veracity of architectural representations, moving it towards the alignments that enable physical buildings to form associations with pieces of paper—to turn into pieces of paper.

The second chapter of this dissertation follows architectural plans into the offices of structural engineers, places where technical experts link together the structural stability of a building with the materials out of which it has been constructed. This leads me to start thinking about the efficacy of these paper documents. After all, an architectural plan, much like everything else, can act only if it musters support from a cluster of well-

aligned and faithful allies. Through these alliances, certain kinds of facts have been made about the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre. I focus, in particular, on the complex assemblage of entities that needs to *come together* and *stay together*—not only for a building to be safe, but also for a building to be dangerous. Tracing these connections underscores the extent to which there are many actants at work in the (de)stabilization of a historic structure. But it also does something else. The goal of this chapter is to explain the threads and the threadings that tie these actants together, all of the fetherings that need to happen in order to safeguard the structural integrity of a building. By the end, readers will learn that it is not just the presence or the absence of a link that matters. The quality of the connection is also important, for different threads have different affordances.

Chapter 3 considers these faithful allies in a little more detail. In this chapter, I continue to complicate conventional anthropological conceptualizations of agency by focusing on the ways in which nonhuman entities do things *alongside* humans. I begin by considering cement, a material the strengths of which are also its weaknesses. It is a material that is simultaneously too vulnerable *and* too inflexible depending on how it is placed in relation to other actants. In the Old City of Acre, conservation professionals have studied these relations, following the trails of damaged masonry left after the application of cement-based materials. They have concluded that an alternative is needed, a material that can protect historic stones from the seawinds, the humidity, and the capillary forces that have encouraged soluble solutions to stay inside the crevices of a stone, to gobble away at its pores. The material they selected was lime, for they have seen just how easily this mineral can seduce moisture and salts (a destructive duo) from the pores of historic masonry. There is just one small problem. Lime-based building materials can only make very brief commitments, as it is a material that succeeds the moment it begins to self-destruct.

The next chapter examines the brevity of these associations more closely. There is a delicate ephemerality to associations and alliances, the coordination of which requires certain kinds of movements, certain kinds of relationships, certain kinds of interruptions. This is the work of the conservation inspector of the Israel Antiquities Authority. I spend most of this chapter with her, studying the details of translation that present as she moves from the Office of Conservation Supervision to the alleys of the Old City of Acre. I



watch as she patrols the Old City of Acre in search of illegal building activities. I watch as she takes detours through its streets and through its residents, using her physical presence, her professional acquaintances, and her digital camera to deter unauthorized interventions and to prohibit unapproved materials. This is how the Israel Antiquities Authority has been able to command and control the Old City of Acre from a distance. This is how the Israel Antiquities Authority has been able to govern its building activities. But even this is not exactly correct, for what exactly *is* the Israel Antiquities Authority? In this chapter, readers will begin to see with more clarity that this dissertation is not about *actors*. It is about how translations transform that which they render equivalent (Law 1992:5–6). The Israel Antiquities Authority is an *event*. It is an entity that is never distinct from its relations. It is an entity that becomes an entirely different thing with each alliance it forms.

These alliances are often with paper. Chapter 5 recounts the moments in which I entered the bureaucratic spaces of architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. Throughout this chapter, I follow the sheets of paper that accompany civil servants as they travel from one office to another, piecing together the journeys of these artifacts as they sit on shelves, as they project onto screens, as they pass from the hands of bureaucrats to the hands of local residents, their architects, and their lawyers. I consider these documents in order to learn how flimsy sheets of paper can act as complex technologies of rule. Paper, for example, is one of the many heterogeneous materials that enables the conservation committee of the Old City of Acre to act as a *center* of calculation—to become something distinctly separate, temporally coherent, and sufficiently connected. Paper does not do all of this work alone, but it is a good place to start.

By this point, I will have sorted through much of the messiness of architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. I will have identified the human and nonhuman actors that needed to be disciplined, the fragile associations that needed to be maintained, the ephemeral movements that needed to be repeated. I will have described many of the ways in which conservation architects have become heterogeneous engineers, employing entities that do not sleep and associations that do not break, all in order to govern the everyday building activities of local residents (Latour 2005:70). This is the kind of thing

actor-network theory teaches its practitioners to do. To recount coherent stories about (in)coherence, about how things come together and stay together, how things fall apart and stay apart. Yet there are many things for which coherent stories cannot account. In Chapter 6, I examine a series of failed projects in the Old City of Acre. But these are partial failures. These are moments when entities are not coordinated into one, when things relate without adding up, when things hang together *and* fall apart. Architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre is filled with moments like this. By studying these moments, it becomes possible to see the realities that appear in the play of fractionality, in the way architectural conservation *sort of* aligns with other entities. And, as I hope to show, sometimes it is these moments of partial coherence, their fluidities and their ambivalences, that actually keep all kinds of networks in place (Law and Singleton 2005:341).

### *The Politics of Actor-Network Theory*

As readers flip through the pages of this dissertation, they will see an argument unfold slowly. There will be few shortcuts, few accelerations, few interrupted explanations (Latour 1999). I have tried to break the habit of linking ‘power’, ‘(settler) colonialism’, and ‘the State of Israel’ with “a sudden *acceleration* in description,” terms that could allow me “to connect vast arrays of life and history, to mobilize gigantic forces, to detect dramatic patterns emerging out of confusing interactions, to see everywhere in the case at hand yet more examples of well-known types, to reveal behind the scenes some dark powers pulling the strings” (22). This is why actor-network theory has been so useful. It has allowed me to investigate (settler) colonial governance and “its moments of incoherence and inchoateness, its internal contortions and complexities” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:183). It has allowed me to study its messiness, all without *explaining it away*.

Actor-network theory is not without its critiques. Some are theoretical (Ingold 2008). Others are political (Barad 2007). I never quite understood the latter. In my understanding, actor-network theory articulates nicely with the call made by Paul Rabinow, George Marcus, James Faubion, and Tobias Rees (2008) to practice an anthropology of the contemporary, an anthropology concerned with confronting the deeply epistemological and ontological assumptions that (have) organize(d)

anthropological research since the early twentieth century. Inspired by scholars like Arturo Escobar (1995) and Ann Laura Stoler (2009), this dissertation attempts to contribute to a critical re-thinking of the discipline by extending the boundaries of anthropological research, incorporating topics that may seem less ‘social’ or ‘cultural’ and more ‘technological’ or ‘philosophical’ (Peirano 1998; Rabinow 1996). And it does this by responding to Laura Nader’s early invitation to study such sites as banks, law firms, insurance companies— those “major institutions and organizations that affect everyday lives” (1972:286).

As the dates of these parenthetical citations suggest, this kind of anthropological inquiry is by no means new. Why, then, should my project continue the practice of bracketing—however briefly—a focus on the subaltern and their experiences of subjugation? My purpose for ‘studying up’ is not completeness; it is not to *add* the perspectives of ‘elites’ and ‘their’ institutions to the analysis of a particular phenomenon. Rather, the point of this exercise is to see what might get clarified or muddied when we ‘study through’ them (à la Reinhold 1994). At minimum, it will allow me to illustrate how the Israel Antiquities Authority—let alone the entire State of Israel—is not an un-reflexive, monolithic entity; it is a diverse set of human and nonhuman actants with shifting boundaries and varying commitments. At most, it will allow me to begin theorizing the pragmatics of direct action, for it will soon become clear that actor-network theory can do more than simply introduce a ‘new’ set of research questions. It can also form the basis for a ‘new’ means of intervening in the world.

The stories anthropologists tell and the methods they deploy are performative. They interact in a manner that extends beyond their contributions to social theory. (Settler) colonialism is a formidable enemy, especially when there exists the overarching presence of some underlying system. It is simultaneously everywhere *and* nowhere. But a government office is different. Sometimes it is open. Sometimes it is closed. An uncontrolled fire, a damaged computer screen, an unplugged telephone, a sick bureaucrat—each of these may slow governance down, may cause it to stutter, to fumble. As I untangle the ensemble of agencies that is the Israel Antiquities Authority, the landscape begins to change rather quickly. It becomes flat. There is no longer “the same feeling as if [I was] asked to penetrate some intimidating overarching pyramid of power”

(Latour 2005:183). The Israel Antiquities Authority no longer looks so invincible. It no longer looks much bigger than anything else. It is a person in an office writing reports about the illegal buildings she has encountered during her patrols.

An actor, here, is any entity that puts other intermediaries into circulation—any entity that aligns with others in ways that provoke some kind of transformation (Callon 1990:141). The Israel Antiquities Authority is not a stable object that *has* power. It is an event, something that is never distinct from its relations, something that reverberates with others, something with which entities are caught up. And so realities are fragile. That is to say—they are filled with ambiguities, uncertainties, and contradictions. They are always changing shape. This is the kind of world my own performance of actor-network theory will help to enact. It is a world composed of heterogeneous engineers, individuals who busy themselves with orchestrating complex assortments of human and nonhuman entities. The specific reality of something like the Israel Antiquities Authority is contingent upon these coordinations, these managerial interventions.

I prefer to imagine this as a world where simply cutting a government authority from its many constitutive connections could deflate its existence, rendering it unable to affect anything at all. In this world, government begins to look a lot less firm and a lot less stable, for it is “always made in performance, always subject to being undermined” (Mathews 2011:5). But it is here that I also need to urge a bit of caution. As readers will see, things are rarely as straightforward as this presentation of actor-network theory might suggest. In the Old City of Acre, I have encountered realities that cannot be undone by simply pulling a thread. Architectural conservation never fell to pieces because a conduit had been sealed, because a flow had been interrupted. None of these actions have been enough to undo the networks through which the Old City of Acre is administered. There have been too many moments when architectural conservation worked well precisely because it did not work well at all. There have been too many moments when local administration solidified into a coherent actor-network by dissolving into its surroundings like guerillas. Anthropologists, then, need to find new ways of grappling with realities that are messy and multiplicitous. That are never fully-formed. That are always *getting* done. This is a world that is too unpredictable to be *reduced*, to be *explained* through coherent stories about underlying causes and their concomitant effects.

It is a world that is always moving. Always jostling. Still, it is a world with which we can always tinker. A world that might always be done differently.

## CHAPTER 1: PAPER BUILDINGS AND THE GAP OF REFERENCE

There are four rooms nestled into the northeastern corner of Khan as-Shawarda in the Old City of Acre. These rooms are concealed behind the furnishings of an adjacent restaurant, rendering it easy to overlook the small, blue and white signs that inform a Hebrew-literate public about their current use (Figure 1 and Figure 2). While originally designed by Ottoman architects as warehouses for the storage of commercial goods, the Israel Antiquities Authority transformed this space into an office of conservation supervision in the early 1990s, accommodating employees from its archaeological and conservation divisions. I frequented these offices during my first four months of fieldwork. More specifically, I spent a majority of my time in the office and the archive of the conservation inspector of the Old City of Acre. This was a small room, one illuminated by long fluorescent lights, a room which felt even smaller given the fact that it was shared by both divisions—with disciplinary distinctions materializing through the strategic use of a wooden partition (Figure 3).



Figure 1: View of Khan as-Shawarda



Figure 2: Offices of the Israel Antiquities Authority, Northern Region, Acre



Figure 3: Interior view of the Office of Conservation Supervision

On hot summer days, the doors to each room were usually closed, allowing the conservation inspector and her colleagues to enjoy the benefits of climate-controlled comfort. A comfort whose humidity, perhaps, contributes to the slow disintegration of the ceiling's plaster, sprinkling a soft white powder over the chairs and tables, computers and papers of the office—contradicting all sorts of assumptions about the cleanliness, the sterility, of bureaucratic spaces. On this particular day in mid-September, I arrived at the office promptly at 9:00 in the morning. The conservation inspector had invited me to observe a meeting, the purpose of which sounded simple: to reach a consensus on how the Israel Antiquities Authority would vote on the building applications submitted this month to the conservation committee.

I gently knocked on the door as I slowly opened it. Two conservation architects from the Israel Antiquities Authority sat at the conference table, just behind the desk of the conservation inspector. One architect was busy arranging an assortment of Russian chocolates on the table. The other was speaking with the conservation inspector about the agenda for the day, watching as she searched through a messy stack of building applications piled around her. Hoping to not disturb the meeting, I quietly walked across



the room and sat myself on the opposite side of the table. My presence, however, grew exponentially. The cramped quarters of the office meant everyone had to simultaneously stand, rearrange their personal items, and move their chairs in order for me to access the nearest seat.

During the meeting, the conservation inspector sat at her desk, sliding back and forth between her computer and the conference table. Unfolded across this table sprawled a building application—an oversized piece of paper upon which were printed the floor plans, the sections, and the elevations of a building, with all proposed interventions highlighted in yellow. On her computer, she busied herself, transforming her screen into an extended workspace, “a kind of spatially arrayed library or storehouse” of “shrunk images that she [could] browse, select from, and expand” (Suchman 2000:13). These images included building survey cards, historical photographs, and applicant correspondences. They appeared on the screen at the request of the two conservation architects, who sat huddled together at a corner of the table, clarifying the details of a building application and negotiating its conformity with the Conservation Appendix of the Master Plan for the Old City of Acre. Should the applicant and her growing (Palestinian) family be allowed to construct an additional level on their house? (Yes.) Will the proposed addition adversely affect the historic value of the city’s view? (Maybe.) Does the building survey card allow for any building additions? (Maybe.) Are the proposed additions aesthetically appropriate? (Let’s compare them to the Technical Specifications.)

After reviewing all of the building applications, the two conservation architects unfolded each of the plans, stacking them one on top of the other in a single pile. They sat next to each other in front of these documents, with a pen and a legal pad in hand. One by one, they went through each application a second time. They hovered over these large sheets of paper, leaning against the table with arms outstretched. Their hands pointed, measured, and drew. They picked up the plans and moved them, sometimes to compare them with the images on the computer screen. Eventually, they would write down their recommendations for the conservation committee, slowly accumulating a long list of decisions. When they reached the final application, one of the conservation architects sat

slouching in her chair, elbows on the table, hands holding what appeared to be a heavy head. She shook this head slowly, “I don’t know. I don’t know.”

“But if this was your house, what would you do?” asked the other conservation architect.

“I do not know...”

“What would YOU do?” he probed.

And, after a long sigh, she continued, “This is too tiring.”

Her interlocutor looked over at me and smiled. “It’s okay. This is normal. Me and her have been fighting with each other for over twenty years. The problem is that there is a central dilemma with all of these applications. If we try to be too professional—too strict—with our commitments as conservators, then all the applications will be rejected. People will just build everything illegally. However, if we are too lenient, if we approve all the applications in order to accommodate the needs and desires of everyday life, then we will fail our professional obligations. The trick is to find a balance.”

What I want to highlight about this interaction are not the nuances of any decision-making processes. I am not—at the moment—concerned about the factors that went into a favorable or an unfavorable stance towards a building application. What I am interested in, however, is something much more mundane, something much more unremarkable. I want to draw attention to the pencils, the rulers, and the index fingers of these two conservation architects, particularly as they circulated over these digital and print diagrams. For it was these small gestures that brought together a variety of material-semiotic artifacts: survey cards, photographs, and architectural plans; building applications and technical specifications; physical structures and masonry walls; government officials and local residents. It was also these small gestures through which the enclosed space of the office became a site from which the conservation architects could ‘see’ a building, regardless of the fact that they were hundreds of meters away from the nearest one. How was this possible?

In this chapter, I will study the bifurcation of the world into *words* and *things*. More specifically, I will confront the radical gap that appears to separate the architectural plans found in the office of conservation supervision from the physical buildings to which they refer. Charles Sanders Peirce will help. His semiotic theory offers a set of

techniques that will allow me to account for “the homologous character of physical and mental realities” (Parmentier 1994:xiii). And so will Bruno Latour. His theory of circulating reference directs attention to the transformations that objects undergo as they are worked over by others, to all of the articulations that close the gaps between one entity and another, to all of the inscriptions that align forms with matters. With this assistance, I will proceed by examining the semiotic practices of conservation architects in the Old City of Acre, tracing the chains of mediating actors through which words and worlds get linked. These chains are filled with tiny steps, tiny translations, tiny hybrid moments that have enabled these architects to move back and forth between architectural plans and physical buildings.

The goal of this exercise is two-fold. Quite simply, it will allow me to illustrate how physical buildings form associations with sheets of paper. This is important, for it is paper—not solid masonry structures—that travel through the bureaucracy of architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. But it will also allow me to experiment with ontological levelling, to see what happens when I abandon concerns with the accuracy of representations, when I bracket the divisions between active subjects and passive objects. This establishes an important methodological framework that will inform the remainder of this dissertation. This is a framework that sets aside epistemological concerns with the veracity of statements, all in order to direct attention to the ways in which human and nonhuman actors connect and associate, link up and hang together.

### *Words and Things*

There are the large, bulky stone buildings scattered throughout the Old City of Acre. Most of these structures date to the late eighteenth century, when Ahmed al-Jazzar was appointed ruler of Damascus and its surroundings by the Ottoman Empire. Al-Jazzar turned Acre into his political center and conducted extensive building projects within the city; he fortified the city’s walls, refurbished the aqueduct, and constructed mosques, bathhouses, palaces, and caravanserai, all which reflected a renewed prosperity in the region. These are the materials to which conventional conservation practice generally refers: solid structures that retain “exemplar properties worth preserving” (Tait and While 2009:721), such as aesthetic elements or special construction methods. These are the kinds of objects that can be conserved “through the regulatory mechanisms of statutory

protection” (722), with any plans to alter or demolish them requiring prolonged, extensive discussions. But there are also the thin, flat paper documents—the architectural plans that allow buildings to enter into air-conditioned offices, to circulate through government departments, through meetings, and through (electronic) mailboxes (Jones and Yarrow 2013).

Let us return to the meeting in the office of conservation supervision. At this meeting a completely unremarkable thing happened. An individual building—the object of everyone’s activity—presented itself to these three government officials as both a physical object *and* a series of architectural plans. A pattern began to emerge during the course of the day. If there were any questions about an architectural plan, if there were any concerns about the accuracy of a survey card, then the three government officials would leave the office of conservation supervision and walk briskly to the structure under consideration. On these excursions, they were often accompanied by the applicant or the architect of the application, a knowledge expert who could not only open doors, but who could also explain the ambiguities of the diagrams and clarify any misunderstandings about what they represented.

One of these sub-meetings brought us into the residential center of the Old City of Acre, where we encountered a house that was to be renovated by a Jewish-Israeli entrepreneur. The question under consideration was whether or not the applicant should be required to submit a historical documentation of the structure before beginning their renovations. The conservation inspector suggested that the building *should* be documented, arguing that it was improperly classified in the building survey card. As we stood outside the structure, waiting for the architect to unlock the padlocked door, the conservation inspector briefed me on the building’s particulars. “The survey card identifies this building as a category ‘C’ building,” she began. “I do not think this is correct. When you walk inside, it is like ‘Wow!’ There are a lot of important historical elements. But my boss does not think that it will need a documentation. That is why we are here. To make a decision.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In 2002 the Israel Antiquities Authority conducted a conservation survey of every single structure in the Old City of Acre. This survey assigned each building to a category (A–D) based on its ascribed urban and

Then the door opened. Once my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I could see an entryway filled with an assortment of miscellaneous items, stacked to a height that exceeded my waist. I spotted old bicycles, parts of broken television sets, discarded air-conditioning units, a kayak, and a carpet of shattered glass. The architect entered the building first, lifting items from the floor and adding them to piles on either side of him. He cleared a small path through which we could walk. After we entered the building, I watched as one of the conservation architects stood in the central hallway. He held the architectural plans like one holds a map, squinting to study the details on the large, partially unfolded piece of paper. He pointed to a line on one of the plans. “What is this?” he asked. The architect responded by walking to the next room, pointing with his index finger to a short wall.

The conservation architect continued his tour of the building. He walked through each room, lifting his head up and down as he compared the architectural plans with the stone structure. He climbed the staircase to the second level as the rest of us waited on the ground floor. The conservation inspector turned to me, “I went to the second floor, but soon after, I heard that the Municipality had recently declared this building to be a dangerous structure. This is why I am staying down here. They do not pay me enough to go up there.” Shortly after, the conservation architect returned to the ground floor, where he proposed that “the building should have a historical documentation—but not a full one. Just one that will collect enough information to determine when the different walls were constructed.” The survey card would need to change. Not the building.

During this meeting, on this particular day, the ‘same’ entity occupied many different states (Latour 1992a). But how? How can a physical structure *also* be a piece of paper, something that is “viewable as a whole” and always “within arm’s reach” (Suchman 2000:13)? Before I answer this question, it is important to acknowledge that, for the conservation architects of the Israel Antiquities Authority, these paper buildings did not always satisfy the need for a one-to-one correspondence between word and world. The back and forth movements between the office of conservation supervision and the historic buildings under consideration suggest that the conservation architects from the

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architectural values, with Category ‘A’ buildings having significant architectural value and Category ‘D’ buildings having little to no architectural value.

Israel Antiquities Authority never took it for granted that the architectural drawings on the papers placed before them presented a ‘good’ description of the ‘material’ world. Often, there were doubts, doubts that other inscriptions could not assuage, doubts that bolstered the assumption that these paper documents *should* be accurate—that they *should* be clear, understandable depictions of an external reality. Work could not proceed otherwise.

And they were not alone. Archival materials from the British Mandate describe similar movements between representations and reality. In an “Explanatory Note in the Form of Questions and Answers on Survey, Land Settlement, and Registration of Title,” British Mandate officials from the Department of Surveys endeavored to convince the public about the ongoing importance of correcting the inaccuracies that exist between maps or land registers (i.e., representations) and the landscape or property ownership (i.e., reality). Land settlement, as the note explains, is the process of (1) examining into a deciding on all property disputes; (2) fixing the boundaries of immovable property; (3) creating maps that will show all the parcels of land in a village; and (4) compiling a list of all the properties and the rights to ownership in the Land Register. The note continues, illustrating how under the current system

It is generally impossible to identify a parcel of land on the ground from the record in the

old registers. For instance, in the case of two adjoining parcels registered in the names of, say, Ahmad and Hasan, the western boundary of Ahmad is usually described in the registers as the land of Hasan, while the eastern boundary of Hasan is described as the land of Ahmad. If Ahmad and Hasan quarrel as to their common boundary, the particulars given in the registers are of no assistance in the settlement of the disputes ... Since there were no permanent marks on the boundary and the surveys therefore could not be based upon fixed marks, difficulties arise and one or other person suffers.<sup>3</sup>

Something needed to be done. Inserting marks in the ground became a means for establishing correspondence between settlement maps and the landscape, land registries and the reality of land ownership. The Department of Surveys hired inhabitants from the local population, usually on a temporary, contract basis. They trained, equipped (with

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<sup>3</sup> Explanatory Note in the Form of Questions and Answers on Survey, Land Settlement, and Registration of Title. Department of Public Works. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.34.C5. Israel State Archives.

tents, pack animals, measuring and plotting equipment, notepads and pencils, and, of course, shoes), and assigned them to complete projects throughout the region. They were to fix beacons and to mark other points of relation throughout the country, so that the ‘correct’ position of the boundaries of village properties could be worked out and shown on maps. The maps could then be accurately scaled, with the boundaries and features shown on them directly referencing the survey points which were fixed in the landscape.

It is easy to imagine the importance of these markers. If they disappeared, “it will be much more difficult to complete and maintain the maps upon which settlement of land will depend. The Department of Surveys will be able to replace the marks from other marks fixed on the ground, but this will mean additional expense and labour.”<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, once this process is complete,

any boundary can easily be re-fixed, any boundary marks can easily be replaced, and the positions of any feature can readily be refound, if by chance, malice or any other cause any of them have disappeared [*sic*]. The fixing of the boundaries, marks and features can be so accurately done that it will no longer be possible for any one [*sic*] to trespass secretly on the land of another with any measure of success for any length of time, nor can he with profit to himself move a mark without it being discovered and placed again in its original position.<sup>5</sup>

This is the important part. Through these labor-intensive techniques, the land would be divided into named villages as well as consecutively numbered blocks and parcels, creating a one-to-one, referenceable correspondence between settlement maps, land registers, and the landscape. It would become possible, for example, to find in the land register and on the map “any parcel by quoting the name of the village, the block number, and the parcel number.”<sup>6</sup> If all transactions are registered, and if the records of all these transactions are properly maintained, then paper can act as a transparent intermediary, a device through which the material world could be readily accessed. Or, to put it simply, paper could act as a substitute for reality. A powerful substitute. This time paper documents would become realer than the real—the things that could set reality straight.

The work of these surveyors has left it traces in the present. Take another example. During the course of my fieldwork in the Old City of Acre, I would often

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

encounter buildings that I found noteworthy for one reason or another. “How,” I would ask myself, “can I find information on this building? How might I reference this building in a conversation with someone else? How might I tell someone where this building is?” In an interview with the conservation inspector, I asked a similar question. “How do you know the number of a building if there is no sign on it?”

“It can be difficult,” she replied. “I remember when I first started in the job. I would take a giant map—you know, the one from the Municipality—and I would walk around the Old City.” She raised her arms, outstretched in front of her, and pretended to hold a map. “I would stop at a building, look at the map, and try to locate it on the map. This was just so I could get oriented to the city. I would get so lost there. I would get really confused. But after doing this a few times, I would start to remember some buildings, where things are, and how they are ordered. So then if I did not know the number of a building, I could look at the buildings around it and know that if it is next to building number 10/175, then it must be building number 10/173. Or I would have enough information to be able to look at the map that was in my office. It was hard though. They did a project to put numbers on all of the buildings in the Old City, but the people would rip them off. I guess maybe they didn’t want anyone to be able to know the numbers of their buildings.”

As the conservation inspector wandered through the Old City of Acre during her first days on the job, she trusted that the map she held before her correctly mirrored the buildings standing next to her. The civil servants from the Department of Surveys, the conservation architects from the Israel Antiquities Authority—they also wanted to trust the papers that filtered through their offices. Sometimes there were doubts. Sometimes correspondence failed. Often, though, this happened in ways that underscored the (Peircian) ‘ground’, the understandings of iconic resemblance that connected an object with a sign, that identified these plans and these maps as signs of something else. The only remaining concern was one of accuracy. Hurried walks and pointed questions. Boundary stakes and building numbers. These are the things that were necessary to create a principled linkage, a trusted and intelligible correspondence between a stone building and a piece of paper. Word and world, the two fixed extremities that have been brought towards a stable meeting point (Latour 1999:72).



In this section, I have watched as the thin, tenuous connections between an object and a sign thickened into something that could withstand a sizable (meta)physical gap, converting both into objects that are identical to—yet independent of—each other. I studied how concerns of reference moved to the foreground, concerns about the accuracy of representations and their alignments with reality. In the process, physical buildings had been assigned an impoverished role, one in which they had “no other function, no other ontological life, than to wait silently in the dark before shutting the mouths of the human agents discussing them” (Latour 1996b:76). They had become, in short, individualized objects with determinant properties, properties that were independent of any investigations of them. In many ways, this makes sense. When I look at a photograph or a drawing of a building, it is always pictured as a fixed, solid structure—a desperately static object. Perhaps this has something to do with the affordances of Euclidean space, a kind of space that is a “rather subjective, human-centered or at least knowledge-centered way of grasping entities” (Latour and Yaneva 2008:84). Perhaps it does not. Either way, this shift towards correspondence is a reminder that the relationship between representations and reality also involves a third entity: a knowing subject.

### ***The Scope and Stability of Representationalist Thinking***

The tripartite relationship outlined in the previous section is not a novel discovery. It is a well-known empiricist version of realism, predicated on the assumption that there is a *real world* with *real attributes* that (social) scientists can *discover*. As long as they are armed with the right questions and the right methods, any (social) scientist can uncover new insights about the world. They can unearth facts. They can identify the truth. But first, they must learn how to distinguish between *the world* and *the representations* that emerge through its investigation (Law and Urry 2004:393). Many anthropologists have offered a plethora of creative ways to engage with the limitations and the affordances of realism. In this section, I will briefly explore a few of these engagements, highlighting the ways in which anthropology has responded to realism while remaining faithful to its epistemological commitments. This detour will help to contextualize the kinds of interventions (political or otherwise) such commitments might entail. It will also, I hope, engender curiosity about what might happen if anthropologists find a way to ‘close’ the metaphysical gaps it presents to them.

Realism asserts that entities, states, and processes *really do exist*—electrons and genes, gravity and photosynthesis, lobsters and airplanes, collective consciousness and social structures (Hacking 1983:21). Some, however, have cautioned against taking for granted the objects of anthropological research. Take Eric Wolf. For him, the world constitutes a dynamic “manifold, a totality of interconnected processes” (2010:4). He warns against falsifications of reality—inquiries that “disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it.” This is best illustrated, he argues, by the pervasive tendency of historians, economists, and political scientists to take separate ‘nations’, ‘societies’, or ‘cultures’ as their basic units of analysis. This tendency abstracts from complex bundles of relationships, creating objects of knowledge that are static and bounded, internally homogeneous and externally distinctive. Or, as he states more poetically, it creates “a model of the world as a global pool hall in which the entities spin off each other like so many hard and round billiard balls” (6).

Others have asked fellow anthropologists to problematize the assumption that it is possible to stand “in a disengaged relationship to the world” (Woolgar 1992:334). This has led anthropologists in another direction, a direction that flips the arrows of causality. Here, it is not that the disciplinary practices of anthropology have falsified reality. Rather, they have actually helped to enact it. I am reminded, in particular, of the dynamic nominalism articulated by Ian Hacking. This is a philosophical approach that examines “how our practices of naming interact with the things that we name” (Hacking 2002:2). Classes and classifications, people and kinds of people, ideas and materials. They are all entities that come into (and out of) existence over time. They are not given. They are historical. With that said, it is not just the objects of anthropological research that have been questioned. So, too, have the relationships between subjects, objects, and representations—all the ways in which they interact (*interact*).

Two years after Eric Wolf first published his statements about billiard balls, a group of ten anthropologists met at the School of American Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In the spring of 1984, they gathered to discuss papers, circulated in advance, about the production of ethnographic texts. This meeting culminated in a report published in *Cultural Anthropology* as well as a collection of essays edited by James Clifford and George Marcus (1986). These events—the mobilization of prominent scholars,

manuscripts, and academic presses—have been celebrated for legitimating “a strong strain of writing ethnography reflexively” (Rabinow et al. 2008:33). It now became acceptable to not only question our access, as anthropologists, to our objects of study, but to also admit our reservations about the representations we produce.

Writing reflexive, polyphonic ethnographies remains a practical way to respond to many of the ethical, political, and epistemological critiques levelled at anthropological research (Field 2009; Povinelli 2002:71–109; Rabinow 1986). It is a response that highlights the inherent partiality of ethnographic truths, one that tries to close the distance between subjects and objects by requiring researchers “to become answerable for what [they] learn how to see” (Haraway 1988:583). But the idea of partiality is not particularly new. In fact, it has been in circulation since the seventeenth century, with philosophers suggesting, in one way or another, that “we may never know reality, because there is a barrier between us and it—a veil of appearances produced by the interaction between subject and object” (Rorty 1999:49). Language has been cited as an example of this. Consider Ferdinand de Saussure and his model of the sign, a model that brackets the referent, that treats the *signified* as a mental construct—not as a physical object that exists in the world. So, then, the things that we say do not necessarily communicate anything about ‘the world’. Our sentences “merely relate things to other things” (58), for meaning is structural and relational—not referential.

The days of classical ethnography are mostly gone, days when anthropologists were expected to adopt the stance of an objective observer, sent to the field in order to watch, describe, and interpret an event or a custom (Berman 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Stocking 1992). Now, anthropologists are taught to be mindful of their rhetorical conventions, ensuring that their texts do not overlook their own subjectivity as authors. They are taught to identify the strains and the tensions that shape the relationships between subjects, objects, and representations, to highlight the ways in which representational conventions “delimit the manner and substance of research” (Woolgar 1992:333). With these interventions, three things have happened. First, the ontological footing of anthropological objects has radically shifted. ‘Things’ no longer objectively exist in the world; they are abstractions. Second, a knower, a producer of knowledge, has entered the equation. ‘Objects’ do not unambiguously present themselves to human

‘subjects’ who can “apprehend the thing *as it truly is*” (Handler 1988:14, emphasis mine); investigators must account for the role they play as an instrument in the construction of knowledge. And third, the focus of epistemological concern has moved from anthropological objects to ethnographic representations. Ethnographic texts are no longer the stable and reliable mirrors many once thought they were; they are inherently partial truths, statements that shape more than they reflect.

Despite these interventions, the social constructionism of (dynamic) nominalism and the representationalism of (ethnographic) reflexivity have much in common with scientific realism. All these projects are largely epistemological, prompting their practitioners to carefully examine disciplinary practices, methods of knowing, and modes of representing. The focus has simply been redirected *from* objects *to* subjects and representations, but the question of reference has been kept intact. How do representations mediate our access to the material world? Does scientific knowledge correspond with “things in the world as they really are (i.e., nature) or objects that are the product of social activities (i.e., culture)” (Barad 2007:48)? Are the analytic options for anthropologists limited to this? Are these the only kinds of questions anthropologists can ask? The remainder of this chapter presents an alternative, offering another place for anthropologists (and, perhaps, engaged denizens) to start. The question, then, will no longer be about the accuracy of representations, about whether or not they *reflect* reality or *produce* it, about whether or not they *mirror* reality or *push* it further away. The concerns of reference will no longer be taken for granted. The ontological gaps that exist between subjects, objects, and representations will no longer be presumed as givens. This is an approach that will flatten the ontological landscape, that will examine how things get aligned—not how things get reduced.

### ***Enacting a Gap: The Architectural Documentation***

That which unifies architectural conservation as a seemingly coherent discipline is a particular mode of practice, a specific way of documenting the built environment: the architectural plan. This is what links conservation architects located in the United States or the United Kingdom, France or Italy, Crete or Israel. I want to return to my first week in the field, when I was invited to accompany, observe, and—if needed—assist a group of architects who had just arrived to the Old City of Acre from Italy. This team of

architectural researchers had been sent to the International Conservation Center by an Italian university. They were to conduct an architectural documentation of the Crusader-era vault located beneath the Church of St. Andrew. And they needed to do it with a high degree of accuracy, for they wanted to create a series of plans that could be flexible in their usage, that could answer questions nobody has thought yet to ask. In this section, I want to slow down the pace of my ethnographic analyses, discarding any time-saving abstractions and paying close attention to the *details* of architectural practice. The purpose of this exercise is to examine a classic question in the philosophy of science: how, quite literally, does the world become words?

Since 1991 the Israel Antiquities Authority has devoted a tremendous amount of resources to the documentation of the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre. I spent many weeks studying the finished product of these documentations, small booklets filled with photographs, archival materials, and architectural plans. “In this office,” I thought, “I can see every single building in the Old City of Acre, buildings to which I might otherwise never get access.” After a while, I found myself falling into the analytic traps of onto-epistemological separation, where the boundaries of each building were as clear as the boundaries of each booklet. Even if they were smushed together, I was certain that the Old City of Acre was composed of individual buildings, discrete physical objects with evident and incontrovertible edges. I was sure that a building “ends at its outside surface just as surely as people end at their skins” (Barad 2007:155).

Except there is olfaction, all of the events that occur when chemical compounds enter into our nasal cavities, binding to receptors that will then transmit information to our brains. Events like this are a reminder that visual cues can be misleading, that edges and boundaries are not necessarily visually determinate. The architectural researchers from Italy taught me this. If an architect is to draw a building within an architectural plan, they do not begin with its outline. Objects, after all, do not *have* lines around them. Outlines are merely “the edge difference between light and dark” (Feynman 1963:36). This is an argument others have made. Consider, for example, Karen Barad, who draws from the claims of physicists:

When it comes to the ‘interface’ between a coffee mug and a hand, it is not that there are  $x$  number of atoms that belong to a hand and  $y$  number of atoms that belong to the coffee mug. Furthermore, as we have seen, there are actually no

sharp edges visually either: it is a well-recognized fact of physical optics that if one looks closely at an ‘edge’, what one sees is not a sharp boundary between light and dark but rather a series of light and dark bands—that is, a diffraction pattern. [2007:156]

If I was to practice a flat ontology, then I could not begin with a tug-of-war between subjects and objects. I could not think about a building as if it was already there, with a kind of unity and autonomy, patiently waiting for a human to document it (Haraway 1988:591). A flat ontology requires a different ontology, one where objects are *events* rather than *essences*, one where objects are defined entirely by their *relations*, one where objects become *more real* with each alliance they form (Harman 2009:104). So, then, I could not think about a building as if it emerged from an inert slab of matter, from the ways in which a subject had sliced and diced the landscape. As I would soon come to learn, buildings *and* architects both stir and transform themselves, each becoming “more and more describable as [they learn] to be affected by more and more elements” (Latour 2004:206). Some of these elements are human. Others are nonhuman. Regardless, these are the intra-actions that I needed to study, the ways in which objects (and subjects) acquire their boundaries (their outlines) with each new association they make, for they become, somewhat paradoxically, autonomous *through* the work that they do, *through* the relations that they forge.

I first met the group of architectural researchers from Italy in a conference room at the International Conservation Center. They were busy gathering equipment for their project: hard hats, tape measures, tables and chairs; nails and string; water canisters and vinyl tubes; portable lights; paper and writing utensils. I helped them carry a few of these items, accompanying them as they walked to the entrance of the vault below St. Andrew’s Church. The building was located along the western edge of the Old City. Its door was nondescript, hidden behind a medley of miscellaneous items owned by the nextdoor neighbor. (Imagine: a broken stove, tiny miniature automobiles, a four-wheeled motorbike, a scattering of damaged tables.) I had time to take note of all these items because the key to the lock would not budge. As we sat waiting for a maintenance worker to arrive with a replacement, two of the researchers spoke animatedly, pointing at the windows of the building. What were they saying? I do not know. It was in Italian.

Eventually, the door opened. We walked down a small, metal staircase into a dark, musty room. It was hot, and it was sticky. There were no windows. There was no way for the air to circulate. Long fluorescent lights had been installed along the walls. The room, however, was so large, the ceiling so high, that these barely made a difference. While I marvelled at the architecture, the researchers swiftly brought in all of their equipment, creating a makeshift workstation in one corner of the room. The project manager unfolded a legal-size piece of paper and placed it on the rickety table. It was an architectural plan of the vault, prepared as part of the building's first architectural documentation (Figure 4). Surrounding it were seven researchers, whose gazes were able to dominate “the very landscape that surround[ed] them” (Latour 1999:29).

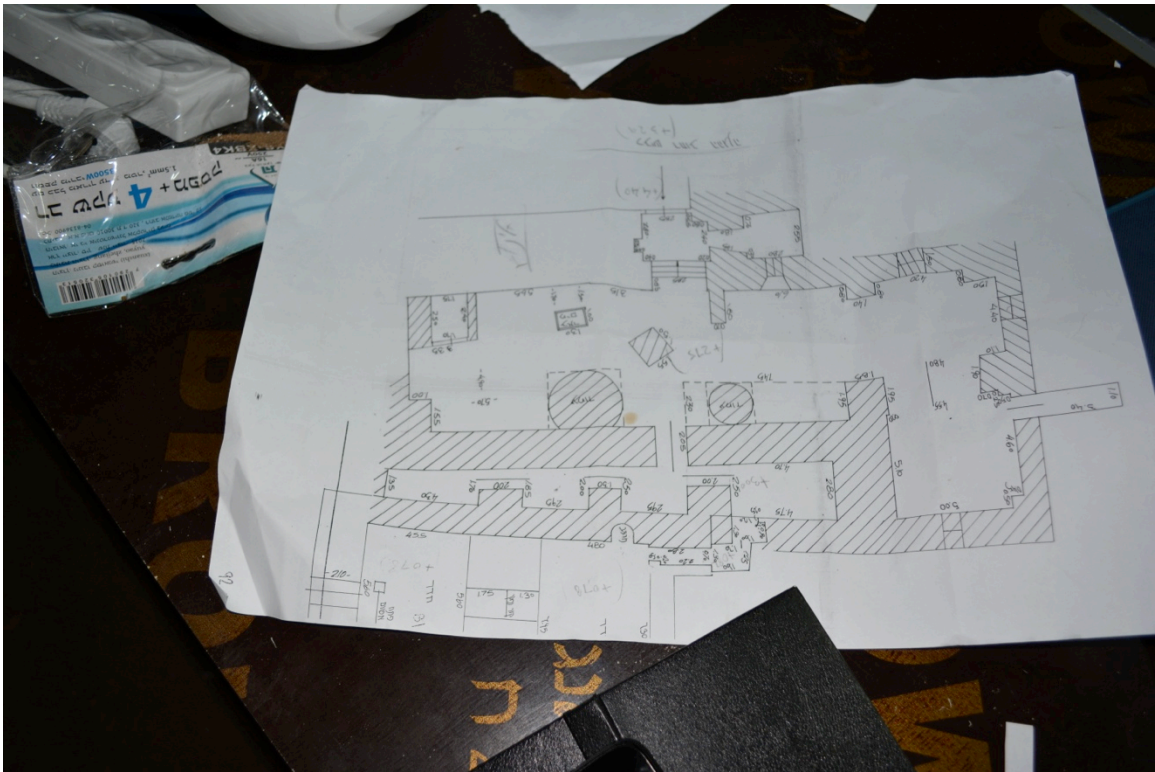


Figure 4: Initial architectural plan of the vault of St. Andrew's Church

Grabbing a pencil and a ruler, the project manager began drawing lines on the diagram, dividing the room into three zones: zona 1, zona 2, zona 3. Everyone stood around him and watched the movements of his pencil. A short dialogue ensued in Italian, after which one of the researchers turned to me and offered a translation. “There is already an architectural plan of this building. However, we cannot rely on it. We do not know how accurate it is—if the measurements are correct. So we need to make a new

one.” This was my first lesson. I was slowly beginning to learn that I needed to read architectural plans critically, that the lines on these sheets of paper do not always mirror the outlines of a building. A single inscription could not inspire trust—something else was needed. As I continued to follow these researchers, I would learn about the labor required for epistemological reference, the work required to cross the metaphysical gap between an object and its representation.

I was invited to join two members of the research team, two women who, despite their mispronunciations and awkward phrasings, felt more comfortable than the others speaking to me in English. They waved me over to zona 2, where they were standing with a long, clear vinyl tube, the diameter of which was no more than half an inch. As they straightened the tube, removing all of its knots, they began to discuss the first stage of the project: marking a series of level points through the entire vault. “We can start over here on this wall, and then circle around the building in this direction,” suggested Researcher A.

“Yes. Okay,” responded Researcher B. “But where should we mark our points on the wall?”

Researcher A walked to a wall, placing her hand flat against it at a height approximately one and half meters from the ground. “What about here?” she asked.

“Will that be high enough? There is a large pile of dirt in the corner of the wall in zona 3.” If the data collected from each zone was to be superimposed on the same diagram, then all of these level lines must be compatible with each other. Without this consistency, the gaps between each zone could not be bridged.

Researcher A grabbed a metal tape measure and walked into zone 3. A few minutes later, she returned with an affirmative nod, indicating that the suggested height would do. But there was still me, furiously writing down the details of this interaction, absolutely clueless about its meaning. “Wait. What are we doing? Why does the height matter? What is this tube for?”

Researcher A turned to me and explained slowly and carefully. “We need to begin the measuring process by identifying a level plane throughout the entire building. In order to find this, we cannot just go around the room and measure one meter, for example, from the floor. Because even though it looks like the ground is level, it may not be. Some parts



are higher than others. We need all of our triangulation points to be at the same level—not the same height. So we will use these tubes with the water and mark on the wall the level points. There is a scientific principle, you know, that water in tubes will always be the same level at both ends, no matter how far away the ends are. If we do not do this before we start measuring our triangulation points, then we cannot be sure that our measurements will be accurate.”

“But how do you select a height? Is it arbitrary?” I asked.

“Well, we look around the room, and we see what kinds of things are against the walls. We do not want to have to move a lot of things. If the points are too low, then we will have to move the dirt over there or the stones over here, you know, in order to get to the wall. We picked a height that we know will be above everything, that we will easily be able to mark and measure.”

Researcher A and Researcher B returned to the middle of the vault and began assembling the water-level device. Researcher A held the tube, one end in each hand. Researcher B lifted the water canister and started to slowly pour water into one end of the tube. I watched the water as it moved through its vinyl path, making its way from one hand to the other. Once a sufficient amount of water had been placed inside the tube, Researcher A held both ends in one hand and gently tapped, with the palm of her flattened hand, the length of the tube. She looked up at me, “This is to remove any air bubbles inside the tube. If there are air bubbles, the levels will not be correct.”

I would soon learn how this device actually worked in practice. The water-level required two people to operate. And this makes sense, as its primary affordance is its ability to establish two points, of equal elevation, that are otherwise too far apart for a spirit level to span. Researcher B handed me one end of the tube and a piece of charcoal, and she imparted three simple instructions: (1) always keep the tube vertical; (2) never allow your end of the tube to be higher than the other end; (3) always use your thumb as a cap over the end of the tube, just in case. When water gushed out of the end of the tube and drenched my shirt, I quickly learned the importance of these three rules.

Researcher B and I began measuring level markings in zona 2. We started at one corner of the building, where an initial line had already been identified. She held her end of the tube firmly against the wall, directly next to this initial line. I held the other end of

the tube, and I slowly walked along the wall, conscious of the height at which I carried the device. I paused a few meters away from her and asked whether or not this would be an acceptable spot for marking a new level line. She nodded and instructed me to place the tube against the wall. “Okay, now move the tube up, just a little bit, slowly, slowly. Now down. Just a few millimeters. Okay, stop. Stop.” Researcher B finally matched the shifting water level to the pre-established line placed before her. “Now take the charcoal and draw a line on the wall where the water line is,” she directed. I marked a horizontal line on the stone wall, and then we shifted to the left. My line became a new starting line, and we began the process again.



Figure 5: Charcoal triangulation point

Look at the horizontal charcoal line (Figure 5). How did I make the leap from a water line to a charcoal line? Was it the result of an iconic resemblance? A sign and an object linked together through their association with a quasi-mind? Yes. But also through so much more. This kind of resemblance is not found in the order of things. The water line and the charcoal line did not hold together *because* they resembled each other, because my skilled hand created a perfect reproduction. No. It was the other way around. Throughout the measurement process, each new charcoal line underwent a spot check

with a previous charcoal line. Researcher B did not want to wait until the end of the project to discover a grave error, an unfortunate inconsistency. The line of water and the line of charcoal did not resemble each other until they held together with previous markings, until the fifth charcoal line I drew aligned with the second charcoal line I drew. Continuity and reversibility, the conservation of traces, these were just as important—if not more important—than a brief moment of adequatio. This is “how one privileged trajectory [was] built, out of an indefinite number of possibilities” (Akrich and Latour 1992:259).

But look at the horizontal charcoal line again. A vertical line and a number have been added to it, inscriptions that turned it into a point that could be distinguished from every other charcoal line on the walls of the vault. The Acre Municipality and the Israel Antiquities Authority have a similar problem as these researchers. If they do not affix labels to the buildings in the Old City of Acre, writing ‘10/175’ in white letters on a blue metal plate, then the ease with which they navigate the streets diminishes; it becomes more and more difficult to keep track of illegal building activities and public safety hazards. These numbers—these inscriptions on the walls—prevent bureaucrats from getting lost when they do not have any maps. Similarly, the researchers from Italy could not fruitfully begin their work until the vault had been sufficiently marked. I can only imagine what would have happened if I took my vinyl tube of water and splashed all the markings away. Would the researchers be able to identify the measurements already taken? the measurements that needed to be taken? I slowly learned another important lesson. For a building, a city, or the world to become knowable, it must “be prepared to be rendered as a diagram” (Latour 1999:43), readied in such a way wherein certain differences might come into relief, wherein scattered locations are transformed into marked and measurable points. This was a hybrid moment. The pieces of charcoal dust onto which the stone wall gripped belonged to the world of ‘things’. The regularity of these markings, their placement within a numbered grid—all of these techniques lent them to the world of ‘signs’. This was a moment when the immense, ever-present abyss separating things and words got distributed into something much smaller (51). The leap between things (a charcoal line) and words (numbered points) is not always so perilous. It also occurs constantly.

Charcoal markings were not the only materials used to indicate a common level-plane throughout the vault. There were also strings, which criss-crossed the vault mid-air, linking one level-point to another (Figure 6). I found out later that the primary purpose of these strings would be to accurately measure, with the help of a laser, the height of the vault's ceiling. But for my purposes, these strings participated in something much more interesting. They were part and parcel of a series of successive additions rendered to the building in order to make it legible and measurable. By connecting two charcoal markings with a thread of tightly twisted hemp, the level-points changed their locations, travelling through space, spreading across the room. The level-points also changed states. They transformed from a sign inscribed on a wall to a materialized plane. This was a second hybrid moment, a perfect example of the sign-thing duality of an object.



Figure 6: Strings connecting triangulation points

On a corner of one wall, strings played another role. The vault of St. Andrew's Church was built from kurkar stone, a kind of sandstone found on the Levantine coast of the Mediterranean sea. It is a soft stone, easily erode-able from structural dampness. Sometimes the location of this erosion was inconvenient for the Italian researchers. On more than one occasion, the corner of a wall was missing at the level-line, having slowly

crumbled into dust over the years. What could these researchers do? If they placed their level-point directly on the wall, it would produce a misleading diagram, a diagram that would suggest the corner of the entire wall was missing, rounded, or flattened—not just the corner of one particular stone. So they devised an ingenious solution. Researcher C manufactured a substitute for the missing corner of the stone. The corner transformed into a thin piece of wood that was once, perhaps, a window frame. It was held in place by tightly wound string, which gripped the piece of wood to the wall with the help of two nails and some mortar. This is where the level-line would be placed. Right on this stick (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Sticky corner

A third hybrid moment. Is the piece of wood a representation of a corner? Or is it an actual corner? In hybrid moments like this, it is impossible to

detect the rupture between things and signs, and we never face the imposition of arbitrary and discrete signs on shapeless and continuous matter. We see only an unbroken series of well-nested elements, each of which plays the role of sign for the previous one and of thing for the succeeding one. [Latour 1999:56]

By examining these hybrid moments, I can begin to see just how much ‘the world’ needs to change in order for it to be rendered on a piece of paper. But the researchers from Italy

have not yet completely crossed the great abyss between objects and representations. There is still a tiny gap that must be conquered—the gap between the numbered points on the stone walls and the sheets of paper upon which the researchers record their data.

The coordinate system that appeared on the walls of the vault, that materialized in the taut strings, was also drawn on sheets of paper. After each level-line had been converted into a point and then into a number, Researcher D picked up a clipboard and attached a piece of paper to it. She walked to the middle of the vault and sat down on a discarded stone on the floor. She began to sketch the floor plan of the vault, where each line represented a wall, where each dot represented a level-point. She put down her graphite pencil and replaced it with a colored pencil. Then, she began to draw a series of lines, connecting each of the level-points together into a number of scalene triangles. She returned to her graphite pencil and moved her hand to the bottom half of the piece of paper. She began making a list, which contained the numbers of the endpoints of each triangulation line (Figure 8). This list would allow her to register, on a sheet of paper, the various distances between all the relevant level-points of the vault. The success of the project would come to rely greatly on this log sheet, for it was this piece of paper “that [would] allow us to return to each data point in order to reconstitute its history” (Latour 1999:46).



Figure 8: Preparing architectural sketch for measurement

I began to observe the triangulation process by following three researchers down a steep, metal ladder. I was helping them carry their equipment to a succession of underground cisterns, all of which had been connected by a series of small passageways that had been previously dug by a group of archaeologists. Holding a flashlight in place, I watched as Researchers D, E, and F started measuring the first passageway. They explained to me that this task is easiest to complete with three people: one person can hold the tape measure by its tang at the first point; one person can read the tape measure at the second point; and one person can inscribe the measurement on a sheet of paper. Down here, in the cistern, Researcher E made himself comfortable on a plastic chair. He rested a clipboard on his lap, and, with pen ready in hand, he read out loud the endpoints of the line segment he wanted measured. “31 - 30,” he called. Researchers D and F held a metal measuring tape; Researcher F held the tang at point 30, while Researcher D held its case, extending the tape as she walked to point 31, enacting the triangulation line with her movements in another hybrid moment. “145.5,” she responded. Researcher E entered the measurement in his list, and drew a small dash perpendicular to the corresponding red triangulation line in his diagram.

As they continued collecting and transcribing measurements, they began to notice details about the walls that had previously been overlooked. For example, there was one section of the passageway that jutted out, just a little bit, from the rest of the wall. This inspired a lengthy deliberation, where concerns of time mingled with those of exhaustion and accuracy. “Should we make a new point?” asked Researcher D.

“Yes, I guess we should,” the rest replied.

But before I continue, I want to slow down once again in order to closely examine a small apparatus that is normally taken for granted: the tape measure. This metallic device, with its floating tang at the end, contains a series of equally-spaced, black markings, identifiable by a sequence of ascending numbers. This device has become a relatively universalized norm, for it is used as a common standard by carpenters and stone masons, architects and engineers. If these researchers from Italy were to take the Crusader-era vault of St. Andrew’s Church back with them to the air-conditioned office of conservation supervision, then they would need such a standardized device. They would need it to transform the distance between two level-points into a label—into a number—

that would make it readily comparable with the distances between all of the other triangulation points. How else could they describe the lengths of these line segments to another person? to the AutoCAD program?

This is a technical trick, the significance of which extends beyond the power of standardization. A measurement appears to be a moment in which matter and meaning meet, a technique for representing the intrinsic properties of an object—of an observation-independent reality. This corresponds with realist assumptions that “objects and observers occupy physically and conceptually separable positions,” wherein it is the job of the scientist “to cleverly discern these inherent characteristics by obtaining the values of the corresponding observation-independent variables through some benignly invasive measurement procedure” (Barad 2007:106). But what about all of those moments when measurements actually *affect* the objects they are purported to merely *describe*? Consider a laser measure and its time-of-flight measurements. Such a device emits a beam of light, which then bounces off an object and returns to a detector. This allows an architect to determine the distance between the device and an object, as the laser measure calculates the time it takes for the beam of light to return to the device. What is important, though, is that when a beam of light bounces off an object, it necessarily imparts a disturbance. The object changes. Usually, this disturbance is minute and inconsequential. Particularly when dealing with a large building and a small laser. Nonetheless, it is a reminder to pay attention to the circumstances—to the stirrings and the transformations—required for measurements to take place (Hull 2012; Knorr Cetina 1999).

Researchers D and F could only measure the distance between two level-points under a certain set of circumstances, the most important of which was the requirement that the position of each level-point remain fixed with respect to the measuring tape. For many, this is obvious. If they allowed the points *or* the tape measure to move during the measurement process, then they would not have a feasible way of defining the length of the triangulation line. It takes some skill to read from a tape measure. It also takes some strength. It requires a strong grip, as the reader needs to pull hard on the device, making sure there is no slack in the tape. These small micro-movements, including the shaking hands that emerge from all of this tension, render it difficult to align the uniform



markings of the bright yellow measuring tape with the charcoal point on the rough stone surface. In fact, it took several days before the researchers trusted me enough to declare measurements. But this is how a distance turns into a number. Tape measures find themselves in alignment with a world that has been made to hold steadily together. The researchers hold the locked case of the measuring tape firmly and, by successive approximations, select the line that is closest to that of the point. Proximity and resemblance are complex achievements, a lesson already learned.

The gap between words and worlds shrunk to just a few millimeters, an intimacy that allowed for an alignment, a reading, a transmutation of distance into a universalized code. The ink printed on the tape measure transformed into a string of sounds. The string of sounds transformed into a few pencil markings. This was a radical change of state. A number on a sheet of paper replaced a physical distance, an unrolled tape measure, a line of movement. It replaced “a thing while conserving a trait that defines it” (Latour 1999:63). None of this was new. The researchers had shortened the distance between objects and representations many times before. There were all of those hybrid moments where wooden sticks were corners, hemp strings were planes, and charcoal lines were numbered points. I watched as the researchers linked together each of these moments into a string of matter-form mediations. The bits of charcoal dust became a numbered point on a grid, a point which a metal measuring tape could connect to another point. These bits of dust behaved as signs, signs that would maintain the stability of some features of the water tube, even after it was removed. They also behaved as objects, objects that would allow charcoal forms “to link themselves forward to other things in the world, which might in turn link themselves forward by functioning as signs as well” (Huehls 2016:26).

There were, of course, many points of undecidability, when things could have been otherwise. Consider, as an example, the translation between the water-tube/level-plane hybrid and the charcoal-line/numbered-point hybrid. For me, this was a difficult exercise. The grooves of each stone resisted the movements of my charcoal marker. My charcoal lines were always too thick. I was also inconsistent with their placement. Sometimes it was the top of my charcoal line that aligned with the water level. Other times it was the bottom. The point, though, is that the gap between matter (water tube) and form (charcoal point) had become tiny. Super tiny. There was now a level-

plane/charcoal-line. Gaps were by no means unbridgeable, since they were crossed constantly by the work of translation, by the work of articulation (Harman 2009:76). It is clear, then, that the gap between words and things was no different than the gap between any other series of entities—between water tubes and charcoal lines, charcoal lines and measuring tapes, measuring tapes and sheets of paper.

But the researchers were not yet finished. They placed trust in the reliability of the notetaker, Researcher E, and his careful maintenance of the data sheet. This sheet of paper would allow these researchers to return to the rickety, makeshift table once they had collected all of the measurements on their list. Here, I found Researcher G, sitting in front of a laptop computer. It was his job to enter into the computer all of the numbers his colleagues had collected, all of the numbers that had replaced a whole chain of mediations. Researcher G explained to me that triangulation in AutoCAD is a simple process, based on an understanding of the relationship between triangles and circles. In order to find the precise position of a new triangulation point within the two-dimensional space of the AutoCAD worksheet, he needed to already know the locations of two triangulation points and the distance between these two points and the third point.

Figure 9 presents an example. Say Researcher G has already established in his AutoCAD worksheet the positions of points 17 and 18. He can identify the location of point 19 by inputting two circles into the worksheet. The center points of these two circles will be point 17 and point 18; the radius of these two circles will equal the distance measured between point 17 and point 19 as well as between point 18 and point 19. The place at which these two circles intersect will be the location of the new point—point 19. After the location of point 19 is identified, Researcher G can erase the drafting circles by relegating them to another layer, and he can preserve the drafting triangles as a visible layer. Rarely, though, is it so easy. As he sat inputting data into the computer, Researcher G mentioned that when you input the measurements into AutoCAD, “sometimes the points do not line up exactly. This means there is an error in the measurements. You may need to re-measure the points. In architecture, one or two centimeters error is okay. More than that, that is not okay.” Little by little, an outline of the building began to appear on the computer screen. Finally.

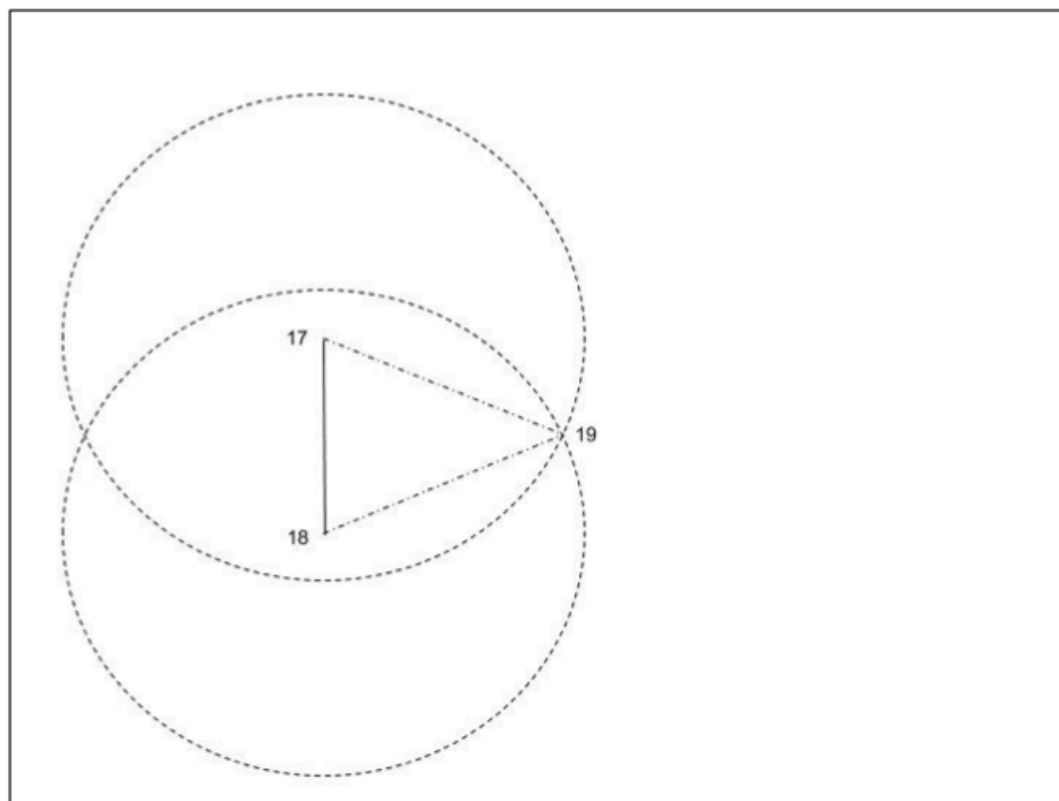


Figure 9: Hypothetical example to demonstrate triangulation process

Researcher G no longer needed to look at the physical building. He looked down at the dirty, smudged sketches that had been used for the collection of triangulation measurements. Sometimes he pointed to a line on his computer, and then to a line of the piece of paper—a familiar gesture that signaled an access to a reality that had “entirely disappeared even as [he was] sweating at the center of it” (Latour 1999:65). Occasionally he expressed the concern that the numbers, once they had been inputted into the AutoCAD program, indicated that a few of the measurements were incorrect. How was this possible? How was it that a diagram could be so accurate that it became the one to tell the researchers whether or not their measurements were correct? How was it that the diagram became more reliable than the building itself?

The AutoCAD program allowed these researchers “to oversee and control a situation in which [they were] submerged,” permitting them to “become superior to that which [was] greater than [them]” (Latour 1999:65). With an architectural plan of St. Andrew’s Church, they could *see* things that were not previously possible. Perspectives

that were unimaginable were now, suddenly, right under their fingertips. Like hummingbirds with x-ray vision, hovering up-above, they could see from one floor to the next, from one room to the next, all in one glance. But these plans did not just allow them to see new things. They also allowed them to see *with authority*. The triangulation process was important because, as one researcher explained, “a corner that looks like it is ninety degrees is probably not *actually* ninety degrees.” It would reveal to them whether or not their eyes told lies, whether or not their measurements told lies. So, then, the polished architectural plan that they generated on their computers became something that was extra-real.

What would happen to this architectural documentation once it was complete? They could expect that it might be placed quite far from the building itself—perhaps in the office of conservation supervision. This office contains an extensive archive of the conservation activities in the Old City of Acre. It maintains records of all building applications; copies of illegal building citations and dangerous building notices; reports and evaluations of completed conservation projects; historical, architectural, and engineering documentations of buildings. It is here that architectural plans are separated, labelled, and sorted, ready to be reassembled, reunited, and redistributed according to the needs of future researchers. As such, the architectural plans of these Italian researchers would come to do more than *resemble* the vault of St. Andrew’s Church. It would take its place, transforming the building into something that could circulate throughout different government and academic offices.

### ***Sealing the Black Box***

When the conservation inspector is in her office, is she near or far from the buildings in the Old City of Acre? She is near, since she can find them here in the archive. But she is not too near. She cannot fit an *entire* building into this room. She is missing the mold hyphae, the rats and the bats, the stones and the mortars. And, as Bruno Latour reminds his readers, what would be the point of transporting an entire building here? So she settles for a distance that is neither very far nor very close. She transports just enough of its pertinent features (Latour 1999:36). The reason, perhaps, is simple enough. As she walks from one historic building to another, wiping the sweat from her

forehead, I am mindful that it is much more pleasant to examine buildings from the comfort of an air-conditioned office. It is just too hot otherwise.

The question of how words relate to the world, how subjects represent objects, is a problem that has plagued philosophers for centuries. The concept of pure reference has formed the basis for much linguistic theory, as it has been considered “one of the purposive uses that seems to distinguish speech behavior from all other communicative events” (Silverstein 1976:14). Speech, much like an architectural plan, can be evaluated by the descriptions it makes of the world. And if there is a world, awaiting description or designation, then scholars are required to ask: how do individuals arrive at their knowledge claims? how can individuals determine or assess the truthfulness of what their colleagues say? how do these representations form a (transparent, opaque) barrier to the outside world? All of these questions, however, suggest that there are two “disjointed spheres separated by a unique and radical gap that must be reduced through the search for correspondence, for reference, between words and world” (Latour 1999:69).

What I hope to have illustrated throughout this chapter is that achieving epistemological reference requires *a lot* of work. There is no “mirroring of the world into representation” (Latour 1999:67). Nobody ever “travels directly from objects to words, from the referent to the sign” (40). Representation is an activity. It is an articulation, something that requires the inclusion of more and more mediators. Documenting a historic building entails travel through a host of intermediary pathways, journeys that allow conservation architects to cross from things to signs. Before the architectural researchers could begin their work in the Church of St. Andrew, they needed to prepare the structure and themselves for measurement. Buildings needed to be marked. Strings needed to be anchored. Hands needed to be steadied. When I followed the minute details of this preparation, I witnessed cunning inventions—clever hybrids—where the stickiness of a corner or the stringy-ness of a horizontal plane allowed the world of things to gently collide with the world of signs. The architectural researchers never had to make gigantic leaps. The large vertical gap between words and things had been replaced with a chain of circulating reference, with “a horizontal set of tiny translations” (Latour 1996b:76).

By the end of this project, the researchers from Italy had mastered the vault of St. Andrew's Church. They could identify whether or not a measurement was wrong, not by looking at the building, but by looking at their diagrams. Their steps were re-traceable. There was continuity throughout each of those tiny translations, a continuity that allowed them to return, moving back-and-forth between the architectural plan and the building. This is how resemblance was made. But these traces would not be conserved forever. The reversible route would soon be gone. The strings would be taken down, the wooden corners dismantled, the charcoal markings erased. All of "the intermediaries which in their concrete particularity form a bridge" would evaporate "into an empty interval to cross" (James [1907]1975:247–248). They would be replaced by a radical gap, one that separates the architectural plans found in the office of conservation supervision from the buildings to which they refer.

I have tried to not fast-forward too quickly over this series of small transformations. I maintain that this slow, careful analysis of epistemological reference is important. By tracing the manner in which reference circulates through alignments and through translations, it becomes possible to change how one might understand and attend to "the connections between a scientific discipline and the rest of its world" (Latour 1999:80). I see this happening in at least two ways. First, it suggests that knowledge does not emerge from the direct confrontation of an active mind with a passive world. Architectural plans can no longer be *reduced* to questions of correspondence with this world, for this is a world that shifts, that changes, that moves. Such a suggestion, of course, problematizes how many conservation architects have been taught to think about historic buildings. It becomes exceedingly difficult to treat these structures as inert, clearly delineated objects. As things they can grasp. Hold on to. Be sure about (Mol 2002:165). It is much easier to regard them as moments, as junctures through which "a list of incommensurate yet mapped elements throws itself together into something. Again. One time among many" (Stewart 2007:3). Reality, here, is varied. There is always the possibility that it might be done differently.

This repositions an epistemological stance that has accompanied many of the political world(s) that currently exist. That which can be said about a historic building and an architectural plan can also be said about an electorate and its delegates. Drafting

and democracy both advance (accurate) representation as an ideal. This is an ambitious ideal, but it is also an ideal that is easily approachable (even if it is never approached). This is because the problems of representation contain their own solutions; it is always possible to create better representations by way of representation itself (Kim 1996:88). You just need another election. This time with more participants. More opinions. More candidates. I hope to show, though, that the formulation of more accurate representations does not have to be the primary means of grappling with (political) realities. There are alternatives, other possibilities that have little to do with getting things ‘right’.

I learned from conservation architects that the accuracy of an architectural plan is important. It matters what has been included in, or excluded from, these diagrams. The researchers from Italy spent long days in a musty crypt because someone had doubts about an architectural rendering. It was their job to advance a more faithful, a more trustworthy representation of this particular structure, of this particular reality. But I also learned that these researchers did not just re-present a historic building in the Old City of Acre. They also intervened *in* it. They interfered *with* it. In the Church of St. Andrew, a reality was not being described so much as it was being managed—it was being done. The researchers encountered a number of obstacles as they moved from a masonry building to a piece of paper. (There were broken stones, misleading corners, reluctant charcoals.) They made commitments and formed decisions. They anticipated uncertainties and negotiated their resolutions. They handled. They experimented. They altered. This is a different way of grappling with (political) realities. The emphasis is on techniques, on strategies that model repertoires of (possible) responses to difficult problems, on strategies that inspire new ways of tinkering with (contingent) worlds. These are the possibilities that emerge as soon as questions are asked about coordination—about how different realities *hang together*. These are the possibilities I want to explore in the pages that follow.

## CHAPTER 2: ENGINEERING NONCOHERENCE

In his report on the Old City of Acre, Percy H. Winter, a senior architect with the Public Works Department of the British Mandate, makes a disregardable observation: the Old City of Acre “forms a building agglomerate in which the units are not houses but rooms and it is not practicable to segregate individual houses from the jumble of buildings” (1944:8). This brief sentence highlights the extent to which most of the structures in the Old City of Acre are two- to three-storey buildings, all of which are divided into several apartments, into groupings of rooms that are connected with adjacent structures in unexpected ways. In doing so, this description also does something else. Winter’s statement presents the cityscape as a kind of formless matter, and he warns readers against their inclination to slice and dice these structural masses into coherent houses that reside in coherent buildings.

And yet, this has so often been done. In architectural plans, the façades of a building are conventionally represented as “free-floating projection[s] devoid of all context,” a practice which signals out the building as a clearly defined object (Arrhenius 2012:61). This raises an important ontological question. Are architectural drawings best understood as a documentation *of* a building? Or should they be understood as a mechanism *through which* a building comes into being? One could argue that the everyday practices required to produce an architectural plan, while seemingly mundane and tedious, play a significant role in the enactment of the spatial boundaries of a building. They lead to drawings that obscure the complex interconnectedness of a built landscape, wherein buildings are intimately intertwined with their surroundings: as part of neighborhood communities, as part of municipal infrastructures, as part of complex built assemblages. But how much explanatory burden can scholars require architectural plans to carry? While most might agree that texts are important aides in the enactment of new realities, it is difficult to claim that they are sufficient causes. Such assertions require a firm belief “in the power of signs and symbols isolated from anything else” (Latour 1986:4). Can the ontological existence of a building *really* be thoroughly explained by sheets of paper?

Probably not. Alone, an architectural plan may not be able to explain the ontological emergence of a building, for such explanations require a consideration of the



ways in which facts need others to take them up and pass them along. Who are these others? Where are they located? Amidst the crumbling neighborhood of Wadi Salib, derelict stone houses sit quietly, overshadowed by the crisp, sharp angles of the Haifa District Court House. Through the windows of this formidable structure of modern architecture, it is possible to look into—not just at—what remains of the homes of Palestinian refugees. It is possible to note the colors of paint used to decorate the walls of each room, the intricate marble detailings that indexed the wealth of their former residents. In this court house on 22 January 2017, the Magistrate’s Court heard a case between the Old Acre Development Company (the plaintiff) and a resident of the Old City of Acre (the defendant). The Old Acre Development Company sought to evict the defendant from a property it managed in the Old City. The defendant, however, argued that “the property he holds is not the same asset from which the plaintiff demands evacuation, and that he holds a room that is an integral part of his parents’ apartment, which they hold as protected tenants.”<sup>7</sup>

The judge, Idit Weinberger, ruled to appoint a professional surveyor to assess the situation on behalf of the court. She tasked this expert with preparing

a measurement map that includes the identification of the land, as described in the evidence of the plaintiff, and the apartment of the defendant’s parents. He will give his opinion on whether there is any overlap between the property described by the plaintiff’s witnesses and the room in which the defendant holds, and whether the room is part of his parents’ apartment, for which a protected lease agreement was signed.<sup>8</sup>

Much like the architectural plans made by the researchers from Italy, this map would make a declaration about the contours of a structure. Both documents would render certain aspects of the built environment legible, but not because they placed material-semiotic grids *over* a messy reality. Rather, they would do so through the ways in which individuals had learned to intervene *in* the landscape, establishing chains of circulating reference that keep “something constant (a pattern of relations) through a series of transformations” (Bains 2006:21). Still, there is one important difference between these two documents. The court appointed surveyor had something these researchers from Italy did not have. He had a well-connected ally.

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<sup>7</sup> Case Number 53672-05-15.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

The accuracy of a map, the truthfulness of an architectural plan—these required the support of others. In order for the defendant’s room to become a room in his parents’ apartment, there needed to be more than a few lines sketched onto a piece of paper. These lines needed to mobilize others. The right kind of others. That is how a particular reality is made *realer*. This chapter examines what might happen if scholars think about something like an architectural plan, not as a statement *about* reality, but as a set of practices that participate *in* reality (Mol 2002:152–153). Architectural plans flow through networks of well-aligned and faithful allies, mustering support from (and for) each other along the way. Through these movements and these alliances, certain facts have been made about the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre. I will focus on one fact in particular, on the configuration of a historic building *as* a dangerous building. In doing so, I will follow architectural plans into the homes of local residents and the offices of structural engineers, into the places where technical experts linked together the structural stability of a building with the materials out of which it has been constructed.

This is where I will begin to map the complex assemblage of entities at work in the (de)stabilization of a historic structure. Accounting for this assemblage will require a number of different performances—some topical, some methodological, some textual. Over the years, the precarious conditions of the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre have brought together a diverse group of actants. Politicians and bureaucrats, architects and engineers, soldiers and entrepreneurs have all told stories about these historic buildings, stories that make claims about the *underlying* causes of their structural hazards, about the *real* reasons for their dangerous conditions. Quite often, these are coherent accounts about the hidden intentions of government institutions, seamless narratives about the ill-will of government bureaucrats, reasoned reports about the compressive stress of masonry clusters. In the pages that follow, I want to try to tell a different kind of story about the Old City of Acre, one that does not try to *reduce* complex, contingent events to simple, predictable explanations. I think the anthropology of Palestine could do with more stories that illuminate “the features of the world that deny themselves when everything is drawn together into a single story” (Law 2002a:198).

And so this chapter begins as an experiment. It presents something akin to a pinboard. I encourage readers to follow me as I embark from more than one starting

point, tracing my way out and back again through fractional and unfinished stories about the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre (Star and Griesemer 1989:396). Through this rhetorical technique, I will *describe* rather than *explain* the housing situation in this historic city. I will draw attention to the *threads* and the *threadings* that tie entities together, that commit entities to the (de)stabilization of a historic building. These are threads that fetter just as much as they falter, for architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre is filled with fragile alliances, partial connections, imperfect agreements. It is my hope that readers will leave this chapter with an appreciation for just how difficult it can be to assess exactly *who* or *what* is responsible for the neglect of a historic building, for the decay of a masonry structure. As I will show, solitary actors are rarely able to carry the explanatory burden of others. There is a complex assemblage of entities that needs to *come together* and *stay together*—not only for a building to be safe, but also for a building to be dangerous.

### ***The State of Housing in the Old City of Acre***

The Israel State Archives contains an assortment of documents about the housing situation in the Old City of Acre. I started with the first document I could find. Percy H. Winter's report describes its buildings with clairvoyance, asserting that "from any commonly accepted Western European standard many of the dwellings of Old Town would be regarded as unfit for human habitation" (Winter 1944:14). This was not because the town is composed of narrow, twisted, and congested alleyways. Nor was it because its structures were huddled together, piled higgledy-piggledy. Rather, as Knesset protocols from the 1960s, the 1980s, and the early 2000s make clear, such assertions about the Old City of Acre were attributed to the fact that its buildings are ancient—some built in the Middle Ages, most built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The ravages of time have rendered these structures dangerous. The lack of sanitary and other infrastructural services have made them inhospitable. And yet people have lived in them, with sewage and "the risk of collapse hovering over them day and night."<sup>9</sup>

"The housing problem and the housing shortage in Old Acre is not a new problem," said the Deputy Mayor of Acre to the Labor Committee of the Knesset on 5

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<sup>9</sup> Protocol from the meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee. 9 February 1965. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CD.82.29. Israel State Archives.

March 1965. “Most of the community that I receive as part of my job comes to me and turns to me because of the apartment issue: that the apartment is dangerous, or unsuitable for habitation, for human habitation, has dampness or darkness, or that ten people live in one room.”<sup>10</sup> This situation was so deplorably appalling that descriptions—second-hand accounts—were thought to be inadequate. According to Knesset Member Elias Nakhleh, if the Labor Committee wanted to fully understand the conditions in which the residents of the Old City of Acre lived, then it would need to meet *in Acre*. The other members of the committee needed to see for themselves “how many people live in one room without sunlight or air.” They needed to see with their own eyes “the water that is dirty, the sewage that enters the houses.” These acts of witnessing were essential, primarily because the (Palestinian) inhabitants of the Old City of Acre were “living under conditions that [were] impossible to imagine.”

Echoes of these statements reverberated over the decades, sometimes with new particulars. Some downplayed the problems, treating them as the responsibility of private individuals. The Chairman of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee, tasked with investigating the housing situation in the Old City of Acre, presented the following report on 4 June 1965 after his visit to the historic city. It is worth quoting in detail.

Anyone who enters the Old City cannot have the impression that he has entered a modern residential area. He must be warned that he has entered an ancient residential area that belongs to history. It is natural that such apartments cannot be in good shape, as you would want to see it in our lives. Mainly, in narrow alleys, where there is not always a neat and clean way, and sometimes even, you are unfortunately feeling that you have entered an area of desolation. To every house I entered, the entrance to it seems like an abandoned place. However, some of these houses, as you enter, you see a different environment, a little order. In fact, the house is located in a place that seems more abandoned than inside the house. These are the houses built with arches. All the people of the East know these forms of houses. The walls of these houses are very thick and the ceilings are also very thick. Indeed, the years do their work on these buildings. These buildings look very old.

In one two-story house, one family lives on the first floor, where the wall is about to crumble, and indeed all kinds of stones and dirt fall from it; while on the second floor, which is more vulnerable to natural hazards, it looks better. A place from which mortar fell is filled with new mortar. The house is plastered and looks good.

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<sup>10</sup> Protocol from the meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee. 5 March 1965. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CD.82.29. Israel State Archives.

The quality of the apartment in such a place is very much determined by the owner of the apartment. There are people who know how to maintain their apartments in good condition....Others who did not know and did not manage to maintain their apartment properly—it seems to be unhealthy and uninhabitable.<sup>11</sup>

Others highlighted the problems, insisting that the government do something to address the situation. On 5 March 1986, Knesset Member Tawfik Toubi brought to the attention of the Knesset a series of tragic events.

On 24 January 1986, on a day of wind and rain, the wall of house 12/12 collapsed in the al-Mublalta neighborhood of Old Acre. The wall fell into a neighbor's house and damaged the building, but the residents were not harmed. A month ago, part of the house belonging to the resident Jamal Nuri was again found in house no. 12/78. On 25 September 1985, a roof fell in the house where Khaled Badawi lives with his wife, three children and sister. His sister Wafa was seriously injured in her head and needed treatment at the hospital. House collapse in Old Acre is an annual event. In 1983 a balcony of one of the houses fell, and a passerby from Acre was killed by the name of Mustafa Falah.<sup>12</sup>

According to Toubi, the problem has been ignored by the government, by the entities responsible for maintaining the health and the safety of the population. His frustration is palpable. These tragedies, his listeners are told, could have been avoided. The implementation of a neighborhood rehabilitation program in the Old City of Acre could have addressed the problem for about sixty percent of the residents living in dangerous housing conditions. These are houses that could have been rehabilitated. That is, if there was not such “blatant discrimination in dealing with their problems, especially the housing problems of Arab residents in the mixed cities.”<sup>13</sup>

### ***Objects of Dispossession***

How did these historic buildings become a concern of the Israeli government? Why was the Knesset holding meeting after meeting to discuss the housing situation in the Old City of Acre? How did all of this become a public matter? In order to answer these questions, I need to tell a story about the things that are and how they got that way. This is a story I have learned from others. It is filled with facts, reasons, and judgments,

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<sup>11</sup> Protocol from the meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee. 4 June 1965. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CD.82.29. Israel State Archives.

<sup>12</sup> Proposal for the agenda. The danger of the collapse of residential buildings and the housing shortage in Old Acre. 5 March 1986. Accessed from [http://knesset.gov.il/tql/knesset\\_new/knesset11/HTML\\_27\\_03\\_2012\\_05-59-19-PM/19860305@19860305043@043.html](http://knesset.gov.il/tql/knesset_new/knesset11/HTML_27_03_2012_05-59-19-PM/19860305@19860305043@043.html).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

elements that can be strung together into a narrative, into an account that adheres to scholarly expectations about chronology, sequence, and causality (Linde 1993:4). The story begins with the capture of Acre by Jewish paramilitary forces. It is a plain history—what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) might call an arborescent account, an account where Part B’s follow Part A’s, mimicking the temporal “order of their referents in a presumed past world of real facts and real events” (Linde 1993:14).

The capture of Acre was the culmination of a series of attacks by the Carmeli Brigade of the Haganah in an operation dubbed Ben-Ami. In 1948, towards the end of April, the population of Acre swelled from approximately 15,000 to 40,000, turning the city into a refugee way-station and absorption center (Morris 1987:107, 1999:201; Weiss 2011:19). People slept wherever they could find space—on the streets, in coffee shops, in churches. Others left, unable to withstand the onslaught of mortar fire. Life, quite simply, had been made impossible. The Carmeli Brigade surrounded the town, cutting off its access to electricity and to fuel. There was no food. There was an outbreak of typhus. Benny Morris cites a letter written by a resident of the Old City to his son in Nablus, a letter which gives color to textbook descriptions of the chaos that encircled him:

[The Haganah have] caused panic among the inhabitants and many intended to leave....Possibly we shall go to Beirut. The urge to flee Acre has hit all classes, the rich, the middle [class] and the poor—all are preparing to leave and are selling everything possible....A terrible tension prevails in the town...and taxi fares have risen to imaginary heights. [1987:107–108]

I can add to these depictions the kind of psychological warfare that ensued. In an armoured car mounted with a loudspeaker, soldiers from the Carmeli Brigade entered the Old City and urged its inhabitants to surrender. Residents had two choices, the broadcast explained. Surrender or suicide. Shortly after, in the middle of the night on 17 May 1948, a priest emerged from the Old City of Acre carrying a white flag. He requested a meeting with Moshe Carmel, the commanding officer of the Carmeli Brigade, and he asked for the terms of surrender. He returned to the Old City and presented the conditions to the few town elders who had remained, conditions which included yielding all firearms and foreign irregulars as well as submitting to Haganah administrative rule. Later that night, the priest repeated his journey to the headquarters of the Haganah and formally announced acceptance of their terms (Morris 1987:109).

The Haganah entered the Old City, collecting weapons and detaining (suspected) fighters from the fix to six thousand inhabitants that had remained. Immediately, the Old City became a closed military zone, administered by the military governor, Major Rehav'am 'Amir. All of the Palestinians that had stayed in Acre were collected, placed within its walls and confined there, their movements constrained by strategically positioned barriers that blocked its entrances and its exits. Just like the Palestinians in other towns and villages, they needed permits to leave, an application cleared by the Arab Division of the Shin Bet (Robinson 2013:40). Here, though, it is important to note that the Old City of Acre did not experience the same fate as these other locales. To start, no evacuation orders were ever issued.

The IDF Northern Front initially sought to evict its inhabitants, formulating plans to relocate them to Jaffa or “to expel them across the border” (Morris 1987:109). Benny Morris reads these evacuation proposals through the lens of military strategy. He argues that the IDF did not want a large concentration of Palestinians just behind its front lines, nor did it want to expend its resources overseeing and providing for its inhabitants. But something happened in the summer of 1948. Bechor Shitrit, Minister of Minority Affairs, reminded Ya'acov Shimoni, Deputy Director and Acting Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of a standing IDF General Staff order from 6 July 1948. This document, recently cited by Rebecca Torstrick, states that “Outside of the actual time of combat, it is forbidden to destroy, burn and demolish Arab towns and villages [and] to expel Arab inhabitants from the villages...without special permission or an explicit instruction from the Minister of Defense” (2000:55). In other words, until David Ben-Gurion issued a written order—the kind of order he had been careful to avoid issuing—the local military authorities could “not evacuate a complete town and cause suffering, wandering and upset to women, children and the old” (Morris 2004:232).

The residents of Acre were spared.<sup>14</sup> But this was not the only thing unique about the Old City of Acre. Between 1948 and 1949, the physical landscape of Palestine changed dramatically. Approximately 350 Palestinian villages and towns were

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<sup>14</sup> At least, this is the explanation provided by Morris and Torstrick. It presents a nice, coherent account, identifying the causal connections between a General Staff order, the diplomatic work of Bechor Shitrit, the permanency of written commands, and the fate of the Old City of Acre. It is a story that allows readers to conclude that the plan to evacuate Acre had been dropped *because* of these activities.

depopulated, the majority of which were made uninhabitable, were left partially or completely in ruins (Khalidi 1992). Most of this destruction was not the result of war—of mortar fire, of aerial bombings. It was, rather, due to vandalism, to looting, and to “deliberate demolition, with explosives, bulldozers and, occasionally, hand tools, by Haganah and IDF units or neighbouring Jewish settlements in the days, weeks and months after their conquest” (Morris 1987:156).<sup>15</sup> This was by no means a new technique. The British had adopted it as an anti-terrorism strategy during the 1936–1939 rebellion, judiciously dynamiting the houses of ‘terrorists’ and their accomplices as a method of deterrence.

Eventually, however, Jewish-Israeli military and political officials had come to the conclusion that it was no longer financially practicable to bulldoze ‘abandoned’ towns and villages. The buildings were valuable and could be used for the benefit of the new state, even if those benefits simply included doors, window frames, and tiles. So, rather than crumbling into dust, the buildings that compose the Old City of Acre became affixed to a new administrative regime. Part and parcel of this regime was the Emergency (Absentees’ Property) Regulations of 1948, which stated that any person who left his or her town, villages, or ordinary place of residence in Palestine after 29 November 1947 would be designated as an absentee. Put simply, any Palestinian who escaped violence by travelling to Beirut, or to another town within Palestine, would be classified as a new kind of person. This even included “any Palestinian who held property in the New City [of Acre] but had moved to the Old City [of Acre]” during the fighting (Torstrick 2000:57).

This new legal category—the absentee—shifted “the legal definition of what constituted abandoned land from the land itself to its owner; instead of declaring land to be ‘abandoned’, people were now declared ‘absentees’ whose property could be seized by the state” (Fischbach 2003:21). The (im)movable property of these individuals passed to the control of the Custodian for Absentee Property (Peretz 1958:152). Quite suddenly, the State of Israel acquired a slew of houses in which to settle new (Jewish) immigrants and (Jewish) refugees, a practice that could also prevent Palestinian refugees from

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<sup>15</sup> None of this was easy. Destruction was a difficult activity to organize, requiring manpower and equipment, both of which were in short supply during and after the hostilities of 1948.



returning to the towns and villages that had been conquered (Morris 1987:309). (Archival evidence suggests that this dual effect was not happenstance. Reports from a meeting of the Ministerial Committee for Abandoned Property document how Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), Minister of Foreign Affairs, “objected to the initial wording of the draft legislation that would have categorized ‘absentees’ as those persons who fled over the borders into Arab territory,” noting that “under this definition, the thousands of Palestinian refugees who remain huddled in camps near Nazareth, within Israeli territory, would be allowed to regain their property” [Fischbach 2003:21–22].)

The first Jewish settlers to arrive in Acre after its capture included soldiers and their families. With assistance from a Military Settlement Committee, members of the two brigades that had conquered the city scoured the area, divided the apartments, and distributed them amongst themselves (Torstrick 2000:56). It was a chaotic process, one filled with confusion and opportunism. Sometimes, those who came first were able to take the best apartments. Other times, it was those who had the right authority and the right connections. If the happenings in Haifa can indicate anything about this process in Acre, the apartments occupied by Jewish settlers were not always empty before their arrival. In a complaint to the commander of Haifa, the head of the Haifa office of the Minorities Ministry reported that

In recent weeks the Wadi has served as a field of activity for those in search of apartments who...invade the houses of Arabs after ‘softening up’ their occupants by means of various forms of harassment, generally performed by people in uniform who on occasion also carry Stens. A favorable outcome of an attempted invasion is considered to be one whereby the injured Arab is forced to repair the doors and locks following the visits of the invaders, but in many cases he is forced to relinquish part of his apartment ‘as a compromise’ and even to flee from it, something that confines even further the residential space permitted for settlement by the Arab population. [Weiss 2011:75]

The authorities often hesitated to penalize these intruders, frequently letting squatters be squatters.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Letting’ is not quite the right word. I am reminded of Moshe Yitah. He managed the Haifa office of the Minorities Ministry shortly after the declaration of the State of Israel. Here, he wrote one letter after another to the military commander of Haifa, protesting against the displacement of Palestinian refugees from the apartments in which they had recently been settled. Yfaat Weiss cites from one of these letters, where Yitah chastises the commander for his inability to stop unapproved expropriations of abandoned properties. According to Yitah, there was no reason to relocate (once again) Palestinian refugees, especially

Concomitant with these activities, the Custodian for Absentee Property identified and surveyed all of the abandoned urban properties throughout the entire country, a task that was not completed until the early 1950s.<sup>17</sup> This involved collecting information on the boundaries, the value, and the condition of every single structure—information that would be useful in the administration of leasing agreements, in the rehabilitation of ancient buildings. The Jewish Agency was also involved in these activities. Mordehai Sarid, the individual charged with resettling Acre on its behalf, was given a map, which allowed him to know what “houses [he] was getting and [he] worked with engineers to determine what [they] would do with each apartment. One place needed sinks installed, another required a coat of paint, while other places needed flooring and sewage” (Segev 1986:77). Interiors updated. Modern conveniences installed. Water and electrical systems mended. The military commander of the Old City of Acre formed a local committee to help with some of these projects, especially those related to the sanitation system and other municipal services.

But that is not all. The Custodian for Absentee Property also established an office in Acre in 1949, the employees of which quickly acquired a notorious reputation. With the assistance of a local Palestinian resident, they entered each house in the Old City—some empty, some occupied—and they made on-the-spot determinations about which

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given the fact that there were so many abandoned properties available for Jewish families. As Yitah explains, “[i]t would have been possible to find appropriate accommodation for [Jewish families] elsewhere in the city and even on Abbas Street, in buildings which are being ‘invaded’ despite the confiscation orders issued by the command, which hang from the entrances to many of them” [Weiss 2011:74]. These words suggest that the Palestinian refugees in Haifa should not have to bear the burden of the military’s inability to enforce its own confiscation orders.

Tensions brewed between civilian and military authorities, tensions that highlight the uncertain power of laws, orders, and commands. The Minorities Ministry, Weiss suggests, was limited in its ability to prevent demobilized soldiers from seizing abandoned properties. Perhaps so was the military. She references a letter from the Haifa region military police to the Minorities Ministry, which recounts an investigation into a complaint about an illegal invasion. The lieutenant sent to investigate the situation writes, “I found a number of soldiers standing in front of the house...the soldiers present had not invaded nor caused any damage to the apartments in this building. Any damage done to the doors of one or more of the apartments in that building had been caused by other people who are not soldiers...I warned the soldiers present not to enter and not to touch any part of the apartments without a legal confiscation order from the district director” [75]. What kinds of witnessing would be needed to prove illegal settlement in an abandoned property? What kinds of barriers would be needed to prevent such unauthorized activities?

<sup>17</sup> Easier said than done in the Old City of Acre. Most of the records stored in the Municipal Archive were destroyed, burned by the Jewish-Israeli paramilitary forces during their occupation of Acre. This made it difficult to establish property ownership, to identify abandoned properties *as* abandoned properties. All that was left were the few documents saved by a prudent municipal clerk, as well as the land records stored in the Settlement Office in Haifa [Torstrick 2000:58].

furnishings belonged to its current inhabitants and which furnishings belonged to the absentees. This even included blankets and mattresses. It is alleged that if the furnishings were of a high quality and in good condition, then the representatives of the Custodian would claim they were absentee property. They would then seize the furnishings and store them in warehouses in the New City (Torstrick 2000:60). As a result, after a few short years, the Custodian for Absentee Property consolidated considerable control over the immovable *and* movable property of the Palestinian refugees.

Meanwhile, others in the civil administration worked to ensure these practices received proper legal support. The Custodian for Absentee Property played an important legal role—at least in terms of international law. This ‘custodian’ could help “forestall international indignation over collective dispossession,” fending “off any possible fallout from UN Resolution 194 that insisted that all refugees be allowed to return and/or be compensated” (Pappé 2006:215). It could, in other words, provide a legal framework for a perpetual liminality—a temporary, yet indefinite, confiscation of abandoned property. But this framework needed to the right kind of laws, without which it would not be able to justify the Custodian for Absentee Property and its “control over the thousands of Palestinian homes that had been requisitioned for new Jewish immigrants” (Fischbach 2003:28). It needed to find a way to regulate and legitimate the long-term possession of these assets, a way to align the Custodian for Absentee Property with the eviction citations and legal folders, the police officers and their handcuffs, the lawyers and the judges that grant actions their legal authority.<sup>18</sup>

Initially, the appropriation of abandoned property was authorized through the extension of Mandate-era Defense Emergency Regulations, which enabled government authorities “to issue certificates that retroactively legalized the seizure of property during time of war” (Weiss 2011:78). Then came a double-move: the establishment of the Development Authority (via the Development Authority [Transfer of Property] Law) and the creation of the Absentees’ Property Law (1950). These two simultaneous acts legalized the transfer of absentee property to the Custodian for Absentee Property, and

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<sup>18</sup> The Acre Municipality quickly learned how important these alignments can be. It did not have the resources to properly equip the four policemen whom it had hired to evict Jewish squatters from abandoned absentee properties. Without the proper clothing or the appropriate weapons, these police officers “[received] blows from the Jewish intruders” (Torstrick 2000:61) whenever they performed their duties.

from the Custodian for Absentee Property to the Development Authority, *and* from the Development Authority to other agencies (Trachtenberg et al. 2016). The Development Authority began operating on 1 January 1951 with the mandate to rent, lease, exchange, and acquire properties managed by the Custodian for Absentee Property. This quasi-governmental agency would eventually contract many of its management and maintenance responsibilities to Amidar (the Israeli National Housing Company for Immigrants, Ltd.), particularly in smaller towns like Ramla, Lydda, and Acre (Fischbach 2003:34). So, even though it was still illegal to *sell* absentee property, it was no longer illegal to (temporarily) *transfer* it to others.

I will pause here. This is the story of Jewish-Israeli settlement in the Old City of Acre. It deploys a handful of academic sources in order to present a concise, coherent narrative. This is for a good reason. Coherent accounts have certain affordances. Here, it has allowed me to quickly and efficiently inform readers about the historical events associated with the Old City of Acre, all in a way where they do not need to become experts themselves on the place. It has also allowed me to introduce a few of the key institutions involved with the management of buildings in the Old City of Acre, clarifying to a certain extent why there are so many different authorities concerned with these historic structures. The problem, however, is that the story I have sketched above presents the colonization of Acre as if it were a singular project. It is a story filled with human characters and their institutions, all of which have clearly defined political interests, interests that have aligned themselves seamlessly with the events that unfolded. It is a sequential story, an arborescent historical account, the kind of account that simulates a tree. There are roots and there are peaks, things made possible by the passage of time, by events relating to other events, by causes and their effects.

Still, there is so much that has been glossed, all sorts of failures and fumbblings. In the remainder of this chapter, I will follow the advice of John Law and try to “resist the smoothnesses of such ‘modern’ storytelling about projects” (2002a:185). I will do this by telling *fractional* stories. These are not *fragmented* stories; they are not wholes that have exploded into bits and pieces, a postmodern response to the smoothness of modernity (Strathern 1991). They are, rather, stories that consider the ways in which realities are enacted through practice, with entities holding together *and* falling apart in awkwardly

messy ways. They are the kinds of stories that are best relegated to footnotes. Stories about battered police officers. Destroyed municipal records. Ignored confiscation orders. They are stories that emerge as soon as one starts looking at the threads that link ensembles of actants together—the threadings that enable ensembles of actants *to act*.

***(Obligatory) Points of Passage***

A concern with the condition of the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre has brought together, over the years, a diverse group of actants—politicians and bureaucrats, architects and engineers, soldiers and entrepreneurs, stones and mortars. I want to examine each of these actors, one by one, in order to illustrate two things. First, I want to show that it can be difficult to assess exactly who does a doing. Objects and subjects, events and achievements, they are all “made to happen by several people and lots of things. Words participate, too. Paperwork. Rooms, buildings” (Mol 2002:25–26). Second, I want to demonstrate that even though nobody acts alone, absolute consensus is not an essential requirement for cooperation, nor is it necessary for the conduct of government work. So, then, how do different actants reconcile their tasks? What kind of labor is required on everyone’s part?

In order to answer these questions, I will need to trace how human and nonhuman actants (un)successfully enlist a diverse set of participants, all of whom are busy re-interpreting the concerns of others in ways that fit their own goals. I will begin by studying “the *flow* of objects and concepts through the *network* of participating allies” (Star and Griesemer 1989:389). I will trace this network through multiple starting points, treating the assurance of safe housing as my basic unit of analysis. This will allow me to highlight three (obligatory) points of passage, the narrow ends of three funnels that push actors to converge on a topic, to forge alliances around a question, fettering them together in such a way that “they cannot attain what they want by themselves” (Callon 1984:206). Travelling through each one of these passage points is necessary if a historic building is to be safeguarded. The structural engineers that work in the Old City of Acre have needed the advice of conservation professionals, specialists in the preservation of historic masonry materials. The conservation professionals that study its historic fabric have needed the support of tourism companies, experts at gathering the financial and the

logistical support of public and private developers. The stability of a historic building intersects with its preservation and its commodification.

I will start by considering *compressive stress*, one of the most important objects of structural engineering. This is a multiplicitous object. There are different versions of compressive stress, versions that all hang together under the same name. This is a productive place to begin—the movements through which compressive stress becomes a singular entity. By studying what this coexistence looks like in the Old City of Acre, it becomes possible to learn something about the complex assemblage of entities that needs to *come together* and *stay together* for a building to be safe *and* dangerous. But compressive stress is not the only multiplicitous object I will encounter. As I hope to show, it is difficult to talk about the multiplicity of compressive stress without also talking about the multiplicity of government itself. There are the politicians and the bureaucrats, the files and the folders, the meetings and the agreements, all of which thread together different ensembles of agencies, different versions of government. Sometimes these different versions of government hang together in ways that can safeguard the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre. Other times, these different versions of government fall apart, co-existing side-by-side in ways that leave historic structures precariously positioned. It is hoped that by the end of this chapter, readers will have a sense of the variously textured threads through which these singularities and multiplicities are sustained.

*Passage Point No. 1: Is the Building Dangerous?*

During his first year in office, Yosef Gadish, Mayor of Acre (1953–1961), tried to alleviate the housing problems for the residents of the Old City. He composed a letter to the office manager of the Minorities Department of the Ministry of Labor in Haifa, which described the conditions under which the residents of the Old City of Acre lived. He explained that there are large families, with seven to ten children, living in one-room apartments without kitchens or sanitary facilities. A terrible situation compounded by the fact that many of these structures were dangerous; they were in a poor physical condition, on the verge of collapse (Torstrick 2000:69). In the 1960s, it seemed as if this problem might be alleviated. As the financial situation of many Jewish settlers began to improve, they gradually started moving from the Old City of Acre to the new housing projects that

were being built in the New City. However, Amidar offered, under protected rental conditions, these newly vacant apartments to the low-income Palestinians that had started emigrating to the Old City of Acre from the surrounding villages (Peleg 2010:33). And the problem of dangerous buildings did not disappear.

I want to return to the Knesset meetings of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee (1964–1965). According to the testimony of a representative from Amidar, the housing situation in the Old City of Acre should not be read as an index of neglect.

We invested considerable sums in solving the problem of Old Acre and presented you with the development activities that were carried out there. In 1953, Amidar took responsibility for running the city, and since then, the company has been doing many things. We have connected the sewage in Old Acre with the central sewage line, which cost us in 1953 the sum of half a million pounds. After people refused to leave the city, we renovated many houses. We have a team of engineers who are monitoring, with frustration, the conditions of the houses, and if there has not been any disaster in recent years, it is because we have taken all the necessary measures.

On the basis of joint data from Amidar and the Municipality, it is possible to conclude that there are approximately 142 apartments in Acre that are not fit for habitation. These include crypts, not intended for residential habitation in the first place. I would like to mention the constant cooperation of Deputy Mayor, Mr. Khubashi, who helps us to explain to the residents that without their effort, it is not possible to achieve the desired solution. In October, Mr. Khubashi informed us that there was a willingness on the part of the residents to pay half of the expenses for renovating the houses. After a survey by a team of architects for all of the buildings in Old Acre, we prepared a detailed plan for the rehabilitation of 120 apartments already at this stage. We have a budget of close to 70,000 pounds. We signed an agreement with a contractor from Acre, who will begin this week with the implementation of the plan, according to which the tenants will bear half the expenses.<sup>19</sup>

There is a lot to learn from this brief testimony: (1) there were a number of dangerous buildings within the Old City of Acre; (2) Amidar and the Acre Municipality collaborated, compiling data sets that could be compared and cross-referenced; (3) Amidar and the Acre Municipality both recognized the importance of actively garnering the support and the participation of local residents.

In order to monitor the housing situation in the Old City of Acre, Amidar and the Acre Municipality devised bureaucratic procedures for institutionalized cooperation, the

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<sup>19</sup> Protocol from the meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee. 9 February 1965. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CD.82.29. Israel State Archives.

contours of which are still in use today. In the past, the Municipal Engineer would work closely with an engineer from Amidar, as the latter was often the one to inform the Municipality that a particular structure was not quite stable. Together, they would make a thorough investigation of the building. If they concluded that the structure was, indeed, unstable, then the Municipality would issue a dangerous building order. (A demolition order would only be issued if the structure was so damaged that it was deemed to be beyond repair.) The current procedure is not much different. An engineer from Amidar explained to me how he comes to learn about the existence of a dangerous structure. “People might call the Municipality or they might call us,” he began. “If they call us, we will send an engineer to the building. The engineer will take photographs and collect any necessary information about the situation. We will then send this information to the Municipality so that the Municipality can then issue us with an order. These orders contain information about the building, its structural problems, and a list of the things we need to address. Sometimes the Municipality will issue us orders for buildings that actually do not have any structural problems. We will visit the site, remove some of the plaster, and determine that there is no problem with the building at all. We will take pictures and measurements, and we will present our documentation to the Municipality. Either way, we have 72 hours to assess the situation and to apply any necessary immediate safety measures.”

Determining whether or not a building is dangerous is no straightforward task. It is messy, and it is ambiguous. Every engineer with whom I spoke commented on this challenge. “The Municipality likes to say a building is either ‘safe’ or ‘dangerous,’” observed one conservation engineer. “But there are buildings that are ‘safe’, there are buildings that contain ‘dangers’, and there are buildings that are ‘dangerous’.” With this new typology, this conservation engineer suggested that buildings are not integrated wholes. Some portions may be dangerous and other portions may be safe. They can simultaneously be safe *and* dangerous. “If there are cracks in the corner of the room on the first floor, the Municipality will say the entire building is dangerous. But no, just that room is dangerous. The danger is localized. I would argue that a building becomes dangerous as soon as problems stop being localized.”



“This building is dangerous.” The refrain appears again and again. Architects and engineers say that buildings inevitably decay and deform. The fact that they hold together for so long is quite an accomplishment, requiring a number of post-construction actions—small negotiations between human and nonhuman actants. A building needs mortars that bind, moisture that evaporates, ground that does not settle. It needs stones that can hold dead and live loads, as well as windows, doors, and ceilings flexible enough to dance with seismic rumbles. It also needs maintenance regimens for when each of these materials fail, all of those “incessant micro-renewals—a mending here, a replacement there” (Cairns and Jacobs 2014:56)—that address the effects of mechanical and physical-chemical actions (Groák 1992).

According to the engineer I met from the Development Authority, such micro-renewals failed to occur in the Old City of Acre. Until the 1990s, Amidar did not have an engineering department that was equipped to deal with the structural problems of these historic buildings in a professional manner. As a result, residents made “a lot of changes in the buildings that are quick and cheap, but that do not address the underlying problems.” On 5 March 1986, Tawfik Toubi made a similar claim, informing the Knesset how

Years go by, demolition orders are in place, the danger of collapse is increasing, and there is no treatment by Amidar or the Municipality. There are demolition orders issued in 1962 and 1970, and today the Municipality is renewing these demolition orders, but Amidar ignores these orders, and the residents continue to live in dangerous homes. I have a list of close to ten such houses, with their numbers and the names of their tenants.<sup>20</sup>

But then, in the 1990s, the problem of dangerous buildings in the Old City of Acre also became a problem for the Israel Antiquities Authority. It sent conservation engineers and conservation architects to conduct physical-engineering surveys of the buildings in the Old City of Acre. Their final reports outlined and typologized common structural problems found throughout these buildings, the goal being to formulate a series of creative solutions for each pathology—a way to preserve the original materials “without disturbing the ongoing everyday life in the city” (Cohen and Fuhrmann-Naaman 2004).

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<sup>20</sup> Proposal for the agenda. The danger of the collapse of residential buildings and the housing shortage in Old Acre. 5 March 1986. Accessed from [http://knesset.gov.il/tql/knesset\\_new/knesset11/HTML\\_27\\_03\\_2012\\_05-59-19-PM/198\\_60305@19860305043@043.html](http://knesset.gov.il/tql/knesset_new/knesset11/HTML_27_03_2012_05-59-19-PM/198_60305@19860305043@043.html).

These surveys concluded that the most common structural problems in the Old City of Acre are found in the walls, the vaults, *and* the ceilings of the buildings. Readers are told that these problems stem from the use of inappropriate construction techniques and building materials (e.g., cement, metal, reinforced concrete), as well as from their exposure to specific environmental elements and atmospheric conditions (e.g., moisture and salts, humidity and temperature fluctuations). The task of the (conservation) engineer has been to assess the extent to which these problems have produced structural damage, a condition in which a building “has partly or completely lost its load bearing capability and is liable to collapse partially or entirely” (Cohen and Fuhrmann-Naaman 2004). But this can be a tricky process, for there are no firm criteria for deciding whether or not a building is dangerous. “Everyone will have a different assessment or threshold,” explained another conservation engineer. “These may even vary amongst the same engineer by the time of day or how he felt at the moment. There are a lot of factors and it can be highly subjective.”

An engineer from the Development Authority elaborated on this process. “We can see things about a building that the residents cannot.”

“What do you mean? What things can you see?” I asked.

“When the residents look at a building, they see that it is fine. But when we look at it, we can see that it is unsafe. If we remove a little of the plaster, the cement, or the drywall, we can see even more of the damage and how it is unsafe,” he clarified.

“What things do you look for when you remove the plaster?”

“I look for cracks, crushing, crumbling. I look to see if things are breaking away or deforming. I also look at the weathering of materials. Sometimes I can tell a lot just by walking around in the building and feeling its vibrations.”

I learned, then, that an engineer is an *experienced* body, one that has learned to be affected by specific sights and textures, by specific phenomenal occurrences (Knorr Cetina 1999:100). This is nothing new. In 1951 an engineer, on behalf of the Custodian for Absentee Property, deployed similar techniques as he surveyed every single building in the Old City of Acre. Using a standardized form, he typed the information he collected about each building into its pre-given fields. He identified the names of the tenants, the measurements of the structure, as well as the building materials used. He also included

his own observations, typically a short paragraph, offering a general description of the structure's pathologies, pathologies that could be located on an attached architectural plan (Figure 10). Consider, as an example, the following description, extracted from the survey of building 18010/42:

A three-story house built of kurkar stones. The wood beams were broken in south room 202. The wooden beams of the kitchen (206) are rotten and rickety. The balustrade of the stairs is rocky. The wooden beams of the kitchen (201) are rotten at the edges and the wood beams of room 304 are weak and shabby and rotting at the edges.<sup>21</sup>

Here, the engineer has derived his conclusions from a visual survey, conclusions that will then be used to select from a list of possible recommendations. The standardized form allowed him to draw a line through any and all of the recommendations that were not applicable to a given structure. For 18010/42, he crossed out one option, leaving the other two unmarked: (1) "There is need for corrections to the structure's stability according to the description and the following diagrams"; (2) "A part of the building must be demolished and repairs made in the rest of the building, as detailed in the description."

The source of the damage is left unspecified. Were the rotten wooden beams caused by wood-boring insects? A wood-decaying fungus? And, more importantly, how did this engineer jump from rotting wood to an unstable structure? There must be other actants at work, actants that have helped this engineer forge a link between building materials and structural stability. In order to answer this question, I need to return to *seeing*. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) argued that "not only must we observe nature in the raw, but that we must also 'twist the lion's tale', that is, manipulate our world in order to learn its secrets" (Hacking 1983:149). Scientists do this, even with something as innocuous as a microscope. It is easy to overlook the complex set of practices that are required in order to see an entity *through* this device. But microscopes are not neutral tools through which scientists see tiny realities. They require interventions and manipulations (Barad 2007:51). Cell biologists, for example, must tinker with their instruments, staining their specimens and learning how to distinguish the object from any unwanted visual 'noise'. In short, they must learn how to evoke an event. Seeing, then, is

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<sup>21</sup> Architectural documentation of building 18010/42. Office of Conservation Supervision. Israel Antiquities Authority. Acre, Israel.

not a passive act. It is an accomplishment. And engineers have done the same. Just like scientists, engineers rarely see with unaided eyes. They observe objects, events, and phenomena through instruments, transforming the non-sensible into the sensible. These interventions are not always complicated feats, often requiring simple manipulations, simple experiments.

**תיעוד מבנים מסוכנים**  
עכו העתיקה

מוסד  
עמידר

ד"ר ס.ס. 183/131

**בדיקת יציבות מבנה**

המפקח על נכסי נפקדים  
מנהל המרדף למבנים הרווה, האומדנותים לבתי נפקדים

נחנים משרד המפקח על נכסי הנפקדים:

עיר: עכו  
מס. הנוש: 18010  
חלקת: 42  
הרחוב:  
הבית:  
היוריים:  
שכר דירה שנתי:

הסיבות לבדיקה וטיפול קודם בבית:

II תאריך הבדיקה: 16.10.51 מס. הקטות: 3  
מבנה הקירות: מס. החורים: 22

חור מס.	שם היוריים:	מס. הקטות:	מס. החורים:	קומת א'	קומת ב'	קומת ג'	מבנה התקרות:	קומת א'	קומת ב'	קומת ג'	מבנה הגג:
101	בלי דיירים	102, 103, 104, 105	22	אבני קורקר	"	"		קמרונים וקמרונים מעולבים	"	"	סטה
201	חורי יעקוב	202, 204, 205		"	"	"		קורות ולוחות עץ ורצוף	"	"	
207	חבישי אחמד	208, 209, 210		"	"	"		קורות ולוחות עץ ופדה.	"	"	
301	סמוליסון, שרם	302, 303, 304		"	"	"			"	"	
306	יוסף עצנור וחכיכ בו	307, 308, 309		"	"	"			"	"	

דורי כיכ: מרכוי, בודק, בור, שושון, מינימיכי תבות או דרגו  
מצבו של הכיכ וחללי

**בסדר**  
סקום תקצוא של בור השומכין ומצבו  
אם יימתי באתי, מקום המצאה ומצבה

III תאריך כללי של המבנה

בית כן שלש קומות בנוי מאבני קורקר, קורות העץ הדרומית חרר 202 שבורה, קורות העץ של מסכת 206 וקורות ורעועות, מעקה העץ של המדרגות מתנועע. קורות העץ של חקרה מסכת 201 וקובים בקצוות וקורות העץ של חרר 304 חלטים ורסופים וקובים בחלקם בקצוות, קו העץ הראשיות של חרר 306 מונחים מעל קורה עץ חלטה בקצה המזרחי.

הערכת משוערת של תוצאות התקונים: 70% לא י

אל: המפקח על נכסי נפקדים מנהל המרדף למבנים הרווה, האומדנותים לבתי נפקדים  
כות הננו מודעים לך את תוצאות הבדיקה הנ"ל בצורה המלצתינו

מסקנות:

1. הבנין יציב אין צורך בתקונים ליציבות המבנה
2. יש צורך בתקונים ליציבות המבנה לפי הפרוט התאור והתרשימים הרצופים
3. יש להרוס חלק של המבנה ולעשות תקונים כשאר חלקי המבנה הכל כמפורט בתאור

Figure 10: Engineering survey of building 18010/42 for the Custodian of Absentee Property, 1951

Over a period of two decades, between 1921 and 1938, the Department of Antiquities discussed the logistics of removing the rubble inside the Crypt of St. John, an ancient Crusader church located in the Old City of Acre. The primary concern of those involved was whether or not this excavation would seriously undermine the structural foundations of the building. In August 1921, during the initial phase of rubble removal, the Director of Antiquities halted excavation of the crypt after noticing cracks in the newly exposed walls. He requested that the Department of Public Works send the District Engineer to visit the crypt in order to evaluate its structural integrity. On 30 October 1921, the District Engineer submitted the following report.

The two main points are (a) whether this sub-structure without its earth fill is sufficiently strong to carry the superstructure above it and (b) if the sub-structure was originally built above the then ground level (we have no information re. this) whether it is now strong enough internally to resist the crushing force of the surrounding earth from the outside once the earth fill inside has been removed.

In (a) we have to all practical purposes only vertical loading to contend with viz. compression on the columns etc. and the operations could be more or less taken care of in the manner suggested in para 1 above, as a cross section of the substructure and superstructure would show the relative loading of parts. I would suggest that [Director] of Antiquities engage a surveyor to make an accurate plan of this cross section.

The point (b) is more complex as the forces acting are lateral viz. failure of the outside wall by bursting inwards and bending moments set up in the columns due to transmitted forces from the outside pressure. The pressure of course will be greater as the surrounding earth becomes saturated from the rains when the danger to the masonry from percolating water will also have to be overcome.

Probably, [Director] of Antiquities may throw some light on the fact as to whether it was originally built as an underground structure. In which case, it would be probably safe to assume that the 'builders' in their calculations considered the outside wall as a retaining wall and built it strong enough, thus eliminating the danger from point (b).<sup>22</sup>

The District Engineer draws attention to the ways in which the structural components of a building are constantly being pushed and pulled, pushing and pulling. Gravity exerts a downward pull on the parts of a building, a force engineers refer to as the building's *dead load*. When such loads are uniformly applied across the surface of a stone block, then "the surface below the block presses upward with an equal force"

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<sup>22</sup> St. John's Crypt Acre. Report from the District Engineer's Office to the Director of Public Works. 30 October 1921. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D0.49.F0. Israel State Archives.

(Allen 1980:150). The result? The block is compressed; there is *compressive stress*. If someone gradually increase the load placed on a block, slowly adding more and more weight, then the height of the block will begin to diminish by very small amounts. There will be *strain*, a measurement that tells engineers how far the atoms in a material are being pushed together. Eventually, after adding enough weight, the stone block will crush. The “material within the block will ultimately be squeezed beyond its capacity to resist” (156). The compressive stress at which this occurs is defined by engineers as the *yield point* of the block. This is when the stone disintegrates—when it is no longer capable of carrying any substantial load. These are the stories engineers tell, stories they visualize through mathematical equations and the semiological work they perform.

$$\textit{compressive stress} = \frac{\textit{load}}{\textit{area}} \qquad \textit{strain} = \frac{\textit{extension under load}}{\textit{original length}}$$

These arrangements of words establish a difference between *compressive stress*, *area*, and *load*. They magnify the former in a way that facilitates its decomposition, turning it from “a single term into a relation between two further terms” (Law 2002a:93). This, however, is not the only way to *see* compressive stress, nor is it the only way to measure a push. Another way is to study an architectural cross-section of the structure under consideration (Figure 11). Such a practice has allowed the Department of Antiquities and the Department of Public Works to see “the thickness of the walls and roof of the church itself and the disposition of the rooms in the prison which lie over it.”<sup>23</sup> This information would allow an engineer to answer the following questions: Is the weight of the building above the Crypt of St. John evenly distributed? How do the various stresses fall on the lower structure? How are they distributed on the vaulting, pillars, and walls of the church? Are there any unusual or harmful stresses?

But what about strain? How have engineers learned to see deformations in building materials? Instructions were given to the District Engineer to place cement test fingers in the vertical cracks of the supporting columns of the Crypt of St. John. He was then directed to arrange monthly visits to the site in order to observe any changes in the

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<sup>23</sup> Akka: Church of St. John. Letter from P.L.O. Guy, Acting Director of Antiquities to the Director of the Department of Public Works. 30 April 1927. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D0.49.F0. Israel State Archives.

cement test fingers.<sup>24</sup> If they had cracked, then it would be safe to assume that the vertical cracks were widening—that the column was unable to support the load placed on it, that the stone had met its yield point, that the structure was unstable. When correspondence regarding the Crypt of St. John emerged again in 1938, the Department of Public Works adopted a different—albeit similar—technique. R. W. Hamilton, the Director of Antiquities at the time, noted to the Chief Secretary that “the columns had ‘suffered severely,’ for they had been carrying “a load far in excess of their apparent strength.”<sup>25</sup> C. Wilson-Brown, the Director of Public Works, recommended a few simple tests that should be performed on the structure *as excavation was in progress*. This time, instead of cement fingers, “microscope slide tell-tales” were to be “fixed by cement and sand (1:2) mortar pats to various portions of the vaulting, walls and columns.”<sup>26</sup> Tell-tales, glass strips affixed over cracks, were designed to break when very small movements occurred within the building. During the excavation, the District Engineer was to monitor these tell-tales regularly, noting whether or not they had betrayed any movement. If not, then “the shafts of the columns” would have presented “no indication of undue weakness” and “the remainder of the earth surface [could] be further excavated.”<sup>27</sup>

With the placement of cement fingers or microscope slide tell-tales, the effects of compressive stress could be observed and measured. A crack appears in a cement finger. A glass tell-tale shatters. These are the movements of compressive stress—movements that engineers have rendered legible through a few small technical interventions. We see, then, that the District Engineer, sent on a mission to the Crypt of St. John, did not uncover its hidden structural dynamics. He created a series of trials, trials that produced a series of statements, statements that gave compressive stress a shape, that fixed its limits and its edges. In the hands of this engineer, compressive stress was defined by what it did, by its material effects—the way it cracked cement, the way it broke tell-tales. Compressive stress became a list of victories. It *was* a shattered tell-tale, a cracked

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<sup>24</sup> Crypt of St. John, Acre. Report. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D0.49.F0. Israel State Archives.

<sup>25</sup> Minute note (14) from the Director of Antiquities to the Chief Secretary. 31 August 1938. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D0.49.F0. Israel State Archives.

<sup>26</sup> Acre Church of St. John. Report from Director of Public Works to the Chief Secretary. 21 August 1938. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D0.49.F0. Israel State Archives.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

cement finger, a crushed stone. It was seeable only when it was too much (Latour 1987:87).

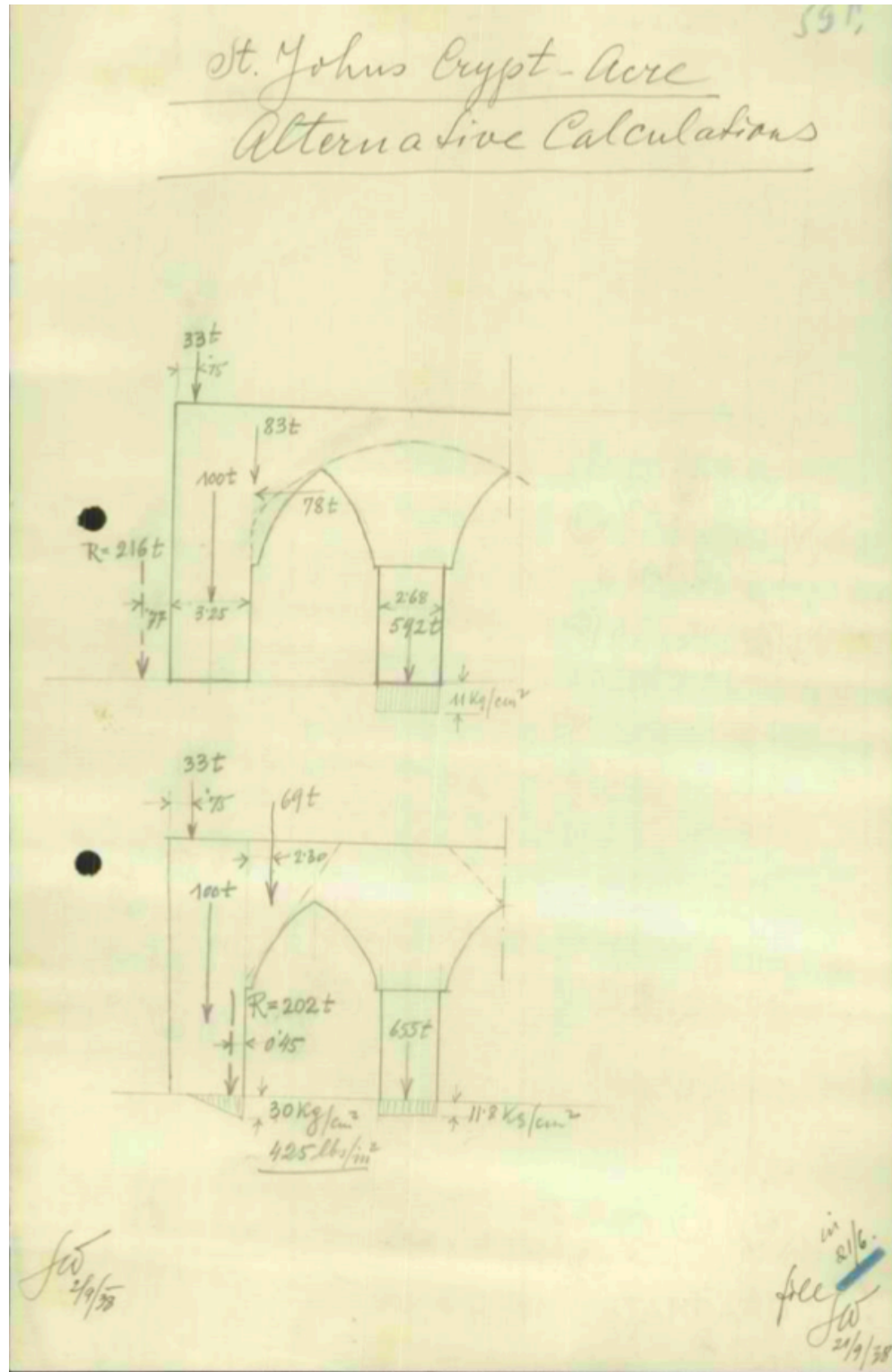


Figure 11: Architectural cross-section and calculations for St. John's Crypt, 1938. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D049.F0. Israel Antiquities Authority.



Except when it *was* a number. “Sometimes I will collect measurements and bring them back to the office and perform [static] calculations. But I can usually do a lot of my work just through a visual survey. I will do the calculations just as a way to support my claims.” I was surprised the first time I heard these comments from a conservation engineer. I assumed engineering was the pinnacle of applied mathematics. I presumed quantitative data would overshadow qualitative data, for there are all of those static and dynamic calculations that are said to consume the mental energies of an engineering student (Bucciarelli 2002; Gainsburg 2007). But after poring over the literature on conservation engineering (e.g., D’Ayala and Fodde 2008; Rabun and Kelso 2009; van Balen and Verstryngge 2016), this statement began to make sense. Performing static calculations on a historic structure has its own unique challenges. Theoretically, it is possible. It is “possible to ‘measure’ everything you need to make accurate security assessments” (Modena et al. 2016:37). An engineer could, for example, employ the architectural plans made by the Italian researchers (Chapter 1), using their cross-sectional views-from-nowhere as a way to identify how load-bearing elements transfer weight from one floor to the next. The problem, however, is measurement. There is typically more variability in historic structures than in new buildings, especially when considering the types of materials used *as well as* their conditions.

There is specific information that an engineer needs to know in order to assess the stability of a structure through mathematical calculations. For buildings in the Old City of Acre, she needs to know the specific weights of the wooden beams, the kurkar stones, and the mortars. She also needs to know the maximum compressive stress of kurkar stone: at what load does it deform? destruct? She needs to know how much these figures differ when comparing new materials with historic materials. Where can an engineer obtain all of this information? From a laboratory. From a place where engineers can invoke and extract compressive stress. These materials science laboratories are sites replete with machines that can be used to determine the current and maximum compressive stress of building materials. These are machines that simulate danger—that make building materials fail. A compression testing machine applies a steadily increasing, uniaxial load to an object—this can be a pier, a wall, or a block—and slowly pushes down on the sample until cracks begin to appear on its surface. And at that

moment of failure, a technician notes on a sheet of paper the position of the needle of an associated analog meter. As the needle of the analog meter pivots across the display, this invisible agent, compressive stress, becomes visible. It also becomes transportable. The yield point of the material, the uniaxial load at which deformation occurs, gets translated into a number. It *is* something that deforms kurkar stone at 11.8<sub>MPa</sub>.

In Palestine during the British Mandate, there were two institutions responsible for performing tests on the mechanical characteristics of building materials: the Standards Institution of Palestine and the Laboratory for Testing Materials at the Hebrew Technical College. I will limit my discussion to the former. Described as an entirely Jewish organization, the Standards Institution of Palestine was a joint undertaking of the Government of Palestine, the Jewish Agency, the Association of Engineers and Architects, the Municipal Corporation of Tel-Aviv, the Manufacturers Association and the Industrial Council. Its mission was four-fold: (1) to publish standard specifications for industrial products and materials; (2) to test commodities that had been made subject to standard specifications; (3) to issue standardization marks for approved products; and (4) to promote research related to the general properties of materials and their standardization.<sup>28</sup>

At the time, similar institutions existed throughout the British Commonwealth, but they often confined themselves to the preparation and publication of specification standards. The Standards Institution of Palestine was an exception in this regard. It created standards *and* it tested materials; it linked two (previously) separate activities, arguing that the preparation of specification standards is closely entangled with the testing techniques used for ascertaining compliance. Using the testing laboratories of the Association of Engineers and Architects, the Standards Institution of Palestine dealt primarily with questions related to the building industry, a sector deemed vital to the country's economy, but riddled with low-quality materials. As such, the Standards Institution of Palestine acquired a public character, finding itself enrolled as an integral node in projects for the Department of Public Works, the Army, and the Royal Air Force.

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<sup>28</sup> Report from Acting Commissioner for Commerce and Industry to the Chief Secretary. 9 April 1947. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1B.62. Israel State Archives.

But this was a delicate integrality. The Standards Institution of Palestine needed space, and it needed equipment. It needed up-to-date testing machines and a facility to accommodate them. More importantly, though, it needed to not be ignored. The Standards Institution of Palestine worked hard to ensure it would not fall into oblivion, for it soon realized that the publication of specification standards was not enough to ensure compliance. It needed others to take up their tests, to turn compression testing machines into black boxes, into an unproblematic component of building construction—part of its everyday, material equipment. In many ways, they were successful. They extended themselves across time and across space through the only way they knew how: through the recruitment of new allies, through the creation of new connections, through the collection of sufficient resources. One of these allies was the British Standards Institution. Recent memories about screw-thread incompatibilities during the Second World War highlighted the importance of international standards and close cooperation amongst standardizing bodies. The British Standards Institution positioned itself as an adviser to the Standards Institution of Palestine. It provided the library of the Standards Institution of Palestine with a complete set of British standard specifications as well as its notes for the guidance of drafting committees on the preparation of specification standards. As such, the Standards Institution of Palestine maintained a general policy of following British standards in their testing practices, a policy that would, coincidentally, also help facilitate trade and cooperation between the various countries of the British Commonwealth.

Disbelieving the results of a compression testing machine required unravelling a lot of threads. If anyone wished to question a statement about compressive stress, they had a formidable opponent. There were dozens of elements tied to the claims of an engineer, one black box after another, one black box made stronger by another. Skeptics must not only question the inscriptions and the machinery of a compression test, but they must also question their testing procedures and techniques, the standards institutions that devised their protocols, the government departments and the flows of Commonwealth trade that depended on them—everything to which these tests had been bound, everything that had “fetch[ed] it, seize[d] upon it for its own motives, move[d] it, and often transform[ed] it” (Latour 1988b:16).

Yet, doubt still remained. But it was the kind of doubt that did not question the testing process itself, just the limits of its applicability. In 1985 Pier Paolo Rossi, head of the Department of Rock Mechanics at the Experimental Institute for Models and Structures in Bergamo, Italy, presented a paper at the 7th International Brick Masonry Conference. This paper proposed a new testing technique, a way to analyze the mechanical behavior of masonry in-situ. According to Rossi, this was important because the considerable heterogeneity of historic structures—the layers of high mechanical properties alternating with more deformable layers—makes questions about their structural characteristics difficult to answer. The only way to gather reliable data is to conduct compression tests on large, undisturbed samples. This is something a materials scientist might have trouble convincing a conservation architect to sanction, for it would require extracting from a historic building large chunks of original masonry materials. A new technique was needed, a non-destructive method that would eliminate the need to extricate masonry samples from the structure and transport them to a laboratory.

At the Experimental Institute for Models and Structures, Rossi worked with masonry samples, electronic gauges, computers, and technicians to devise a testing technique based on the use of two thin flat-jacks, a hydraulic pump, a pressure-reading manometer, and a linear measurement device. The instrumentation and the equipment were designed to be simple (Rossi 1985:3). But before they could be deployed, each device needed to be calibrated for use. The inherent stiffness of a flat-jack causes it to resist expansion when pressurized. This creates a situation wherein “the fluid pressure in the flat-jack is greater than the stress the flat-jack applies to masonry.” A conversion is needed to relate internal fluid pressure to applied stress, a conversion that can be achieved by inserting a flat-jack into a compression testing machine. It is this little detail that (literally) clamps together the interests of materials scientists and conservation architects, tying conservation architects and compressive stress together. This tiny detail allowed Rossi to move the materials testing laboratory *into the field*. It allowed Rossi to unite the compressive stress of a laboratory with the compressive stress of a building. Movements that were once impossible were suddenly made possible.

There are two phases to the flat-jack test. Phase one is used to determine the current compressive stress of a masonry assemblage. Rossi describes this phase in detail:

[T]wo measuring points are installed on the wall surface and the initial distance ( $d_i$ ) between the two points is read. Then a cut normal to the wall surface is made (2) and the stress release determines a closing of the cutting, the distance ( $d$ ) after the cutting being  $d < d_i$ . A special thin flat jack, is set inside the cutting and the pressure is gradually increased up to cancelling the previously measured convergency [*sic*] (3). In this condition, the pressure  $p$  inside the jack is equal to the pre-existing state of stress  $\sigma$  in a direction normal to the plane of the cutting. [Rossi 1985:2]

Phase two replicates the compression test discussed above, providing information about the deformability characteristics of the masonry assemblage. The testing procedure is described as follows: “[A] second cutting is made, parallel to the first one, and a second jack is set in it. The two jacks delimit therefore a masonry sample of appreciable size (40x40x20 cm) to which they apply a uniaxial state of stress” (Rossi 1985:2). Electronic displacement gauges are attached to the wall in between the two flat-jacks. Then, pressure is slowly applied to the flat-jacks via a hydraulic pump as data from the electronic displacement gauges are automatically transferred to a computer. A stress-strain ratio is graphed on its screen (RILEM 2004:499).

Moving from one section of the building to another, a conservation engineer can gather together a series of stress-strain graphs. With these inscriptions in hand, the conservation engineer can forget all of the intermediary steps that made them possible (Latour and Woolgar 1986:63). They can forget the technician who sliced into the mortar with a power saw. They can forget the pressurized flat-jacks. They can forget the hundreds of dollars spent on transportation and labor. They can forget the wall, the sample site. Their attention has shifted to the graphs on their computer screens, the sharp, hectic curves of the yield points, where compressive stress takes a new shape, leaves a new trace. Once again, compressive stress has become something small, comparable, dominatable. And now the job of the conservation engineer is to manipulate graphs, to study printed lists of numbers, sheets of paper that can be moved around, rearranged, and placed one on top of another (Latour 1988b:83). Their job is to extract numbers from these lists and to insert them into static calculations, an exercise that allows them to see degrees of nuance that were invisible with observable cracks, microscope tell-tales, cement fingers, and architectural cross-sections.

I began in the Crypt of St. John. I travelled through the British Empire. I ended with a polished graph. All the while, a new agent has been added to society—

compressive stress. This is an agent that has allowed engineers to fashion a link between building materials and structural stability. It should be clear by now that this new agent is multiple. In the Crypt of St. John, it is a shattered tell-tale, a cracked cement finger. In the Department of Public Works, it is an annotated architectural cross-section. In a materials science laboratory, it is a number, a written sign. In a visual survey, it is a crack along the wall. Compressive stress is thoroughly constituted by these material settings. Its shape is dependent on how it is handled in practice. Like so many other objects, it comes into being and then it disappears, a slightly different entity each time. How, then, do all these different versions of compressive stress hang together under a single name? How are the numbers inside a laboratory made to relate to the cracks on a stone wall in a historic building?

Engineers have stories that tell them how cracks on a wall and stress-strain graphs hang together, stories that I have already told in my description of compressive stress. The correlation appears self-evident. Sometimes, though, this story falters. Sometimes cracks and flat-jack readings contradict each other, creating a situation wherein they are no longer signs of a single object. Sometimes they are a sign of creeping vegetation, incompatible structural materials, or shifting foundations. “Cracks in a wall can indicate a building is dangerous,” explained one conservation engineer. “However, you need to make controlled tests in order to decide where exactly it fits on the safe-to-dangerous spectrum. Or, if you have the time, you can implement a monitoring system to see if the failures actually do mean the building is ‘dangerous’.” So, then, not all cracks index compressive stress. And not all versions of compressive stress are treated equally. Sometimes the different versions of compressive stress are ordered hierarchically. One is given more weight, more authority, than the others. The engineer just mentioned privileged the results of a controlled test (i.e., flat-jack tests) and the results of a monitoring system (i.e., tell-tales) above the presence of cracks. But after many years of coordinating different versions of compressive stress, enough patterns have been established. “We don’t really need to perform tests anymore in Akko because we have done so many in the past,” explained one conservation engineer. “Now we know what the typical problems are and their symptoms. Most of our assessment is by looking. We may

do some tests to support or prove our visual assessment, especially if it is an important building.”

The different versions of compressive stress can interfere with one another, producing tensions while avoiding clashes. Sometimes they cohere, if only partially. But they also do something else. Just as compressive stress has linked together building materials and structural stability, it has also linked together the Development Authority and the Acre Municipality, the Old Acre Development Company and the Israel Antiquities Authority, a materials science laboratory and a structural engineer. Consider, for a moment, a materials scientist who performed a series of compressive stress tests on two types of masonry: a local kurkar stone and a Moroccan limestone. In 2001 the Old Acre Development Company requested her assistance with one of their conservation projects, a project to reconstruct a portion of the historic sea wall. “They wanted to know if there was any kind of stone that could be compatible with the original stones located in the sea walls of the Old City of Acre,” she recounted to me when we met in her laboratory at a local university. “I was working at the Technion at the time as a materials scientist specializing in the durability of concrete materials. I also had a little bit of experience in conservation science. They asked me for an answer to a purely technical question: could a limestone from Morocco be used to replace the original kurkar stones in the sea wall?”

“Why did they want to know the answer to this question?” I asked.

“They needed me to conduct these experiments after finding out just how expensive kurkar stones from the local quarry in Israel actually are. They had already started conservation work on the sea walls and were ready to insert stones into them. They went to the quarry and learned that the cost of the stones far exceeded their budget. They did not check the prices of the stone before they began their work.

“So I conducted a number of experiments and composed a report. I did micro-structural studies, which focused on the durability and sustainability of the materials. I also did structural studies, which were concerned with strength. Is the stone strong or not? These reports need to be understandable to engineers. They should serve them and their concerns. Their concerns with structural issues, like the ‘strength’ of a material. The

reports must also consider the behavior of materials on a micro-structural scale. We are interested in the structural *and* the micro-structural.

“I submitted [the report] to the Old Acre Development Company, but the Antiquities Authority rejected it. Looking back on it now, I agree with their objections. They were right to reject my report. The problem was that I was not aware of the context of the question. I learned a very valuable lesson. The Old Acre Development Company is an economic enterprise. They manipulated my findings for their own purposes. The beneficial part of this interaction, though, was that it brought me closer to the Israel Antiquities Authority.” As the revealer of compressive stress, this materials scientist extended it, linking it to a government tourism company and its financial preoccupations, to conservation architects and their mandate to preserve ‘the authentic’, to structural engineers and their concerns with structural strength.

It is possible to learn something else from the testimony of this materials scientist. Even if an object is able to unite different groups around a common interest, it is not necessarily enough to unite them around a common solution. I have gleaned from the meeting minutes of the Knesset that dangerous buildings are a public hazard, an offense to public order. And, according to the engineers with whom I spoke, this is a hazard that cannot be ascertained by the residents who live there. It requires a qualified technical body, one that can properly assess which houses should be evacuated or demolished because of the potential for their collapse. Engineers from the Development Authority needed to collaborate closely with the technical department of the Municipality. They needed to do “everything possible not only to hear complaints that [a] house is dangerous, but to see with their own eyes.”<sup>29</sup>

Yet dangers have continued to loom over the residents of the Old City of Acre. Some have offered explanations, some kind of reason that can account for this neglect. One senior official from the Municipality, for example, noted that they experienced economic and administrative weakness during the 1990s, a weakness that intensified the deterioration of the built environment of the Old City of Acre. In the opinion of this official, “positions that were within the jurisdiction and obligation of the Municipality did

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<sup>29</sup> Protocol from the meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee. 5 March 1965. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CD.82.29. Israel State Archives.



not exist—or existed only partially” (Peleg 2010:67). Activities related to the licensing and supervision of new construction, to the provision of assistance to the underprivileged, to the maintenance of public roads and sidewalks, to the removal of hazards in dangerous structures—these were all neglected. Whatever the source of this neglect, it continues to persist into the present. As of 2018, it does not take more than a brief perusal through recent newspaper articles to find a story about a building collapse in the Old City of Acre.

And so I have watched as the Development Authority and the Acre Municipality aligned themselves around compressive stress. But the Development Authority and the Acre Municipality are not always enough. Other actors are also needed in order for everybody to act. On 5 March 1965, the Municipal Engineer reminded the Members of the Knesset that the renovation and rehabilitation of apartments in the Old City of Acre requires the logistical support of the residents. Without this support, it would be impossible to renovate any apartments, for the Development Authority can only do so much with residents still living inside of them. In order to facilitate these (allegedly temporary) evacuations, Amidar implemented a program whereby it would offer alternative housing to residents whose homes were undergoing renovations. But it has not always been easy to convince residents to leave these homes in the Old City of Acre—to relocate elsewhere. As one representative of Amidar testified to the Knesset, “We inform the family that the house in which it lives is shaky and so on. We also inform the police. But the family has not responded.”<sup>30</sup>

These refusals sometimes required representatives from Amidar to plead with the residents. “I know of a case in which I personally came across—I turned to a family member and said to him: ‘Have mercy on your children and go to the apartment offered to you.’ The form submitted to that individual had the signatures of the police and the Secretary of the Municipality and, despite this, we encountered refusal to leave the apartment.”<sup>31</sup> There seems to have been as many reasons for refusing to evacuate a dangerous apartment as there were residents. There was one family, in particular, that garnered much attention from the Knesset during the 1964–1965 hearings of the Sub-

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<sup>30</sup> Protocol from the meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee. 16 July 1965. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CD.82.29. Israel State Archives.

<sup>31</sup> Protocol from the meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee. 9 February 1965. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CD.82.29. Israel State Archives.

Committee for the Labor Committee. The house in which this family lived was determined by the Municipality and by Amidar to be a dangerous structure—a building about to collapse. The family had been offered alternative housing, but they refused to accept it.<sup>32</sup> According to Toubi, the mother of the family protested that the alternative apartment they had been offered in the Old City of Acre was no less dangerous than the apartment from which they were evacuated. This was the reason for their refusal.<sup>33</sup>

As an anthropologist, I do not want to attribute the attitudes of these residents to ignorance, to passivity, to a willful disregard, to a conflict of interest. I could, for example, argue that adherence to a dangerous building order conflicts with the interests of the residents. They would need to leave their homes *again*, perhaps for a less desirable apartment—one in an inconvenient location, in a poor physical condition, with a less befitting layout, with a more exacting rental stipulation. I could allow my analysis to stop there, arguing that, as uneducated denizens with vested interests, the (Palestinian) residents of the Old City of Acre have blocked the claims of engineers, slowing their progress down to a standstill. But I will not. Such explanations cannot account for the 200 families from the Old City of Acre who did evacuate their homes during the 1970s under the pretext of unsafe housing. Structures beyond repair were sealed or demolished, and they were moved to alternative housing in the Old City, the New City, or in the newly-created village of al-Makr (Khirfan 2010:42; Assaf 2014:16).<sup>34</sup>

This is a reminder that the point is not to attribute simple causes to complex effects. It is, rather, to explain *how* these residents shifted their stance towards evacuation. Did it work through pleading? through negotiations? through the warning letters sent by the Ministry of Housing or the Mayor of Acre? Sometimes. But absolute consensus was not always necessary. Other times, another tactic was entertained: coercion. The Chairman of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee suggested that “when they are not prepared to do so, I also think that in such cases, it is obligatory to

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<sup>32</sup> Protocol from the meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee. 26 April 1965. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CD.82.29. Israel State Archives.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Proposal for the agenda. The danger of the collapse of residential buildings and the housing shortage in Old Acre. 5 March 1986. Accessed from [http://knesset.gov.il/tql/knesset\\_new/knesset11/HTML\\_27\\_03\\_2012\\_05-59-19-PM/19860305@19860305043@043.html](http://knesset.gov.il/tql/knesset_new/knesset11/HTML_27_03_2012_05-59-19-PM/19860305@19860305043@043.html).

remove them by means that we usually do not use.”<sup>35</sup> This was his subtle way of referring to the forcible removal of residents by the police. Either way, diplomacy has often been the preferred method—the alignment of interests, the maintenance of allies, the fostering of trust. “The residents give us negative comments. They are very suspicious of us,” began the engineer from the Development Authority. “They will not let us come into their homes to work. They will hesitate to let us in to do work because they think we will try to evict them. But we just want to make the building safe. It’s all political. They have these assumptions and fears when I come in with a government hat. Sometimes because of their unwillingness to work with us, we will try to find an engineer that is married to the sister of someone in the Old City. That way they will trust us because they will know that he wouldn’t put them at risk.”

Throughout the preceding paragraphs, I have traced the chains of mediating actants that linked together cracked stones and hazardous buildings. These chains were filled with different versions of compressive stress, a multiplicitous reality where things came together—if only partially. I followed these noncoherent entities. I watched as they got punctualized into the nodes of other actor-networks, prompting the Development Authority, the Acre Municipality, and the local residents to forge new associations, to converge around a single question: Is this a dangerous building? If the Development Authority wants to maintain its stock of abandoned properties (whatever its reasons), if the Municipality wants to ensure public safety (whatever its reasons), and if the local residents want to continue living in the Old City of Acre (whatever their reasons), then all three must know the answer to this question. All three must be able to act on the answer to this question. And this, I showed, was not so simple. This is passpage point number one, the first mess.

*Passage Point No. 2: Preserving the Old City of Acre*

After the dissolution of the British Mandate and its Department of Antiquities, two of its employees, Shemuel Yeivin and Immanuel Ben-Dor, became the Director and the Deputy Director of the Antiquities Unit, which was established in July 1948. (Note: In August 1955, the Antiquities Unit would transform into the Israel Department of

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<sup>35</sup> Protocol from the meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Labor Committee. 26 April 1965. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CD.82.29. Israel State Archives.

Antiquities and Museums. However, the two are often conflated in historical accounts.) Their work, though, had begun at least a month earlier. On 25 June 1948, these two individuals composed a letter with Binyamin Mazar to the secretary of the government in Tel Aviv. Together, they urged the fledgling administration to establish a department of antiquities, claiming that acts of war and projects of development had already irreparably damaged a number of ancient remains, sites, and monuments. According to them, this destruction was not because of any malice or ill-will, but because of the lack of public knowledge, the lack of a government department, and the lack of an appropriate administrative apparatus (Kletter 2006:5). In fact, many of the military commanders with whom they met “showed an understanding and a willingness to help, but did not know what to do and to whom to apply, and they, as well as those who are interested in the antiquities of our land, were happy to meet people authorized to explain to them how to act.”<sup>36</sup>

On 8 July 1948, this trio submitted a report to the new government, copied to the Chief of Operations and the Minister of Construction and Public Works, that assessed the current conditions of antiquities throughout the country. The information for this report derived from a tour of northern Israel that the three conducted between 29 and 30 June 1948. As archaeological officers operating on order of General Headquarters, they obtained the assistance of local military officials, which allowed them to spend more than two hours touring the Old City of Acre.

In this conquered district I found that, generally, the situation is more or less satisfactory, since no robbery was performed in Acre, and the authorities managed to save the Acre houses and by this the Acre monuments. The Mosque of Jazzar Pasha is closed and locked, and an Arab official holds the keys. According to him, nothing was taken from the mosque and during my visit to the building all seemed in order. Only one of the Crusader buildings formerly used as wood stores by a rich Arab merchant still holds wood; immediate steps must be taken to clean and preserve this building. The guard of the former Department of Antiquities, Mahmud el-Lakham, remained in Acre, and needs to be relieved from the enforced labor duties required from time to time of the local population, and restored to protecting the ancient monuments, as he was before the liquidation of Mandatory rule.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> File 44875/9. Israel State Archives.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

About a month later, between 28 July and 2 August 1948, the three archaeological officers conducted a second tour, under the command and the protection of the Jerusalem Front. The security situation in the country was still chaotic at this time, which meant they could only enter Acre with the appropriate military passes.

We also visited the city itself for a short time and saw the Chairman of the local committee, Mr. Ahmad Abdu, who at our request called on Mahmud el-Lakham, who was an antiquities guard for the Mandatory government....They said Mr. Ahmad Abdu asked us about the plan for the restoration of Acre prepared formerly during the days of the Mandatory government. Of course we could say nothing to him about this; it is not our business to say at this time whether the restoration is possible from any point of view. But as for preserving antiquities, we have to note that with a relatively small expenditure it will be possible to clean and restore the old buildings; and possibly to clean the underground room complex and open access to it and install electric lights and so turn the city into a place that attracts tourists and becomes an important factor in the region's economy.<sup>38</sup>

There were no guarantees that the preservation activities in the Old City of Acre during the British Mandate would persist—that its antiquities would continue to be protected. In fact, the Acre Municipality would soon begin to make plans to unite the New City with the Old City, to develop the latter as a place befitting of modernity. Shemuel Yeivin expressed his concerns quite explicitly in 1949. He reflected on the problem of modernization in a memorandum to the Prime Minister's Office, asking "Can [the old cities] be 'frozen' as they are now, with all their 'Eastern' form and exotic appeal, or should one try to develop them as modern centers of settlement by saving and restoring [only] some special monuments?"<sup>39</sup> Neither, he concluded. "One must understand that it is not only a question of 'freezing' the situation."<sup>40</sup> There was also the question of how (and by whom) the structures should be used. He continued,

It is impossible to maintain empty buildings. If one puts people to live in them, changes must be made to fit them to modern use. If people are taken out, the buildings must be filled with new content: turn them into museums, libraries, cultural collections and places of scientific and cultural conferences. Of course, money is needed for this, in very considerable sums. There are also buildings that in the meantime other ministries occupied for unsuitable purposes. A notable example is the fortress (former jail) in Akko. Without consulting anybody or

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

asking permission from anyone, the Ministry of Health occupied the building and turned it into an asylum. It is impossible now to bring any tourist to this building, which has plenty of Crusader parts (especially underground). I myself in my last visit had to wait about half an hour until I could visit it, because when I came the patients were in the courtyard and ‘were not calm’, as one doctor there said. I was therefore forced to wait until the courtyard was evacuated.<sup>41</sup>

What was needed, then, was *controlled* development. The Old City of Acre would need to change *and* stay the same. Another moment of noncoherence.

In 1959 the Old Acre Planning Office was established. Headed by an Israeli architect named Alex Kesten, the office conducted a survey of the Old City of Acre, which culminated in a comprehensive development plan. The Kesten Plan (1962) recommended that the Old City of Acre be considered a ‘museum city’, a designation that implied its residents “would probably have to adapt to its ancient form” (Kesten 1962:27). This designation accompanied the re-declaration of the Old City of Acre as an Antiquities Site in 1964, a statutory technique that rendered the Antiquities Law of the State of Israel applicable to the *entire* Old City of Acre—to historic buildings that would otherwise have been outside its purview.<sup>42</sup> The Department of Antiquities had aligned the Old City of Acre with a legal instrument, an instrument that would require individuals and institutions to preserve its ‘original’ building materials. And with this new alignment, architectural conservation slowly moved from being a point of passage to an *obligatory* point of passage.

In order to carry out its mandate to conserve the Old City of Acre, the Israel Antiquities Authority<sup>43</sup> established an Office of Conservation Supervision in Khan as-Shawarda in the early 1990s. At this point, practically any intervention made to a building—whether by the Development Authority, the Old Acre Development Company, the Acre Municipality, or the local residents—would need approval from this office. This could include anything from installing an air-conditioning unit to renovating a building,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> This legislative apparatus closely resembled the Antiquities Law formulated under the British Mandate. The British Mandate distinguished ‘the ancient’ from ‘the historic’, the former including any object—movable or immovable—created by humans before the year 1700. Thus, anything built before 1700 would be subject to the Antiquities Law and the purview of the Department of Antiquities. If not for the Mandate government’s declaration of the Old City of Acre as an antiquities site (15 May 1929), then this legal definition would have rendered many of the buildings in Acre beyond the scope of the Antiquities Law.

<sup>43</sup> The Israel Antiquities Authority replaced the Israel Department of Antiquities in Museums in 1990.

adding a new addition, or modifying a window or a balcony. A conservation committee would assist the Israel Antiquities Authority in these tasks, the members of which included the Municipal Engineer and the Director of the Conservation Department of the Israel Antiquities Authority as its Chairperson and its Professional Director (respectively), but also representatives from the Old Acre Development Company, the Society for the Preservation of Israel Heritage Sites, the District Planning Commissioner, and the Association of Architects (Giladi 2013).

Suddenly, the conservation of the historic fabric of the Old City of Acre required the active participation of many different actors, for it was something the Israel Antiquities Authority could not—and would not—accomplish alone. For many, this probably makes sense. After all, the Old City of Acre and the buildings of which it is composed are an asset for everybody, a bonafide boundary object. They are homes for residents, property for the Development Authority, historic materials for the Israel Antiquities Authority, and a commodity for the Old Acre Development Company. In a way, then, these other actors never needed to find architectural conservation an important and a necessary project in itself. They simply needed to find its overlaps, the moments in which it could fold into their own activities. And, if these moments were not momentous enough, then they simply needed to find breaking the Antiquities Law a more burdensome pursuit than adhering to it. Absolute consensus is rarely required. Often, things only need to cohere partially.

But even partial coherence can be tricky. It can be incredibly difficult to bring all of these different actors together. Translations are needed, something “to create common understandings, to ensure reliability across domains and to gather information which retains its integrity across time, space and local contingencies” (Star and Griesemer 1989:387). To help with this task, the Israel Antiquities Authority published its first set of technical specifications for the conservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings in the Old City of Acre. Other specifications would soon follow. These included specifications for the stabilization of windows (2000), the application of plaster (2010), and the installation of insulation systems (2012). Technical specifications such as these included a clear set of methods—methods that could guide the interventions of human actants. They could create a situation wherein the architects and the engineers working within the

Old City of Acre would not necessarily need to become expert conservators in order to intervene in its buildings. They could simply direct their attention to a set of clearly defined and highly standardized guidelines, guidelines that would ensure the aesthetic and the mechanical compatibilities between new materials and historic materials, guidelines that would prevent a repetition of previous construction mistakes, guidelines that would help protect the historic fabric of the Old City of Acre. These are guidelines that would help save its stones, that would protect their mechanical strength, that would ensure their ability to push against compressive stress for as long as possible.

It was hoped that these guidelines would allow the Israel Antiquities Authority to seamlessly enrol other actors by making their behaviors a little more predictable. This is the thing about (obligatory) points of passage. Actors can rarely travel through them alone. As I have already shown in passage point number one, if the Development Authority is to send a building through the Office of Conservation Supervision, then it must be accompanied by the Acre Municipality. (Remember, the current policy of the Development Authority is to intervene in a building only after the Acre Municipality has issued a removal of danger order—an order that pronounces a structure as an immediate danger to its residents, its neighbors, or the general public.) The Acre Municipality imposes a strict timeline for following through on these orders, and all proposed treatments require approval from the conservation committee and compliance with its guidelines. In many ways, however, this process cannot even begin if the residents are unwilling to notify the Development Authority or the Acre Municipality about possible structural hazards. As a structural engineer from the Municipality explained, “I do not go and pound on someone’s door to let me into their house. I do not go inside unless something happens or I have an invitation. My inspections are of the external parts of a building. This is why we try to get residents to learn what the signs of a healthy building are.”

Perhaps this is the most contentious part, for residents are also required to participate in this process—if only financially. Protected tenants, that is, tenants with partial ownership in the building and reduced rental fees, are obligated to finance fifty percent of the cost to remove a danger from their homes. Accompanying this financial obligation is a profound mistrust. A journey through newspaper articles, advocacy



reports, and government hearings makes plain the extent to which many (Palestinian) residents have experienced these renovation projects as discriminatory acts, the primary purpose of which is to evacuate them from the Old City of Acre. “I am afraid that the Amidar company does not enter the Old City of Acre with clean hands,”<sup>44</sup> expressed a local activist, Sami Hawari, to the Finance Committee of the Knesset. His fear was that Amidar intends to evacuate its current tenants and never allow them to return, all so that it can sell these properties to Jewish-Israeli investors. A representative from Amidar responded to these accusations, proclaiming that “this is not the first time we have been attributed a [hidden] policy [of discriminating against Arabs]. I do not know where it came from. Nothing is further from the truth. It’s unbelievable. We are public servants.”<sup>45</sup> In fact, he continues, it is “the court—not Amidar—[that] has determined that it is dangerous, that the order of danger must be removed. This concerns the health of the residents. I hardly understand why we are present in this discussion on such a subject. After all, if something happens to the structure, you will complain to us. We have a responsibility.”

Knesset Member Haneen Zoabi explained the situation with a little more detail. Her testimony suggests that the problem is not the known structural dangers. It is the unknown monetary costs.

They received evacuation orders because of the building’s danger. Two years ago they also received—and the residents will correct me if I am wrong—the same evacuation orders because of dangerous housing, and Amidar claims that repairs should be made. The repair period is unknown. The families are afraid to evacuate the apartments not only because the length of time is not fixed, but also because the repairs are unknown. From time to time, they are asked to evacuate their homes, and the amount of repairs and the amount of renovations is unknown, although the residents also contribute to this sum. To this day, Amidar has not issued any building permits. Amidar also has not determined what work there is to perform, and, I think, these are necessary conditions for issuing evacuation orders.<sup>46</sup>

I can link these details with what I have already learned from my interview with an engineer from the Development Authority. “I am like an investigator,” he began. “I go in

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<sup>44</sup> Protocol No. 956 from the meeting of the Finance Committee. 7 January 2012. Accessed from <http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/ksafim/2012-01-02.rtf>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

the apartments, and I take lots of pictures. The residents, they ask me about the pictures—what they are for, what they are of. Sometimes, even when the house is in very bad shape, they will refuse our offers to fix it. You will go in and you will see that they are living very poorly. There will be leaks or damage. But they would rather live like that than let us do the work because they are so scared of us.” And so maintenance problems grow into structural problems. Structural problems go unreported.

Policies have been revised in order to alleviate the weight of this burden. In 2009, for example, the Israel Land Administration changed its policy regarding the financial obligations of protected tenants in such situations. Now, a protected tenant is no longer required to pay the added expenses incurred because the Old City of Acre is a historic site; they are no longer required to pay for the (more expensive) building materials required by the specification guidelines of the Israel Antiquities Authority. They simply pay half of the costs that would have been accrued if the structure was not historic; the Development Authority and the Old Acre Development Company absorb the rest. Therefore, the cost of renovating a dangerous building for a resident in Acre should be the same as the cost of renovating a dangerous building for a resident in Lod, Ramle, or Jaffa (Azoulay 2009). But even this is still too much.

This is passage point number two. I have encountered another multiplicitous reality. Although this time, the multiple object is not compressive stress. It is *government*. At one moment, government is a municipal authority. At another moment, it is a housing company. In one office, it is a conservation authority. In another office, it is a tourism company. Sometimes these governments cohere in ways that can preserve the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre. The Acre Municipality coordinates with the Development Authority in order to issue a citation for a dangerous building. The Development Authority coordinates with the Office of Conservation Supervision to ensure that its proposed intervention will align with the technical specifications of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Given the time sensitivity of the request, the conservation committee fast tracks the Development Authority through the approval process. The maintenance of public safety has aligned with the maintenance of property. The maintenance of property has aligned with the maintenance of historic materials.

However, there are other times when these different governments come together *and* fall apart. And it is not just because there are reluctant residents. The Acre Municipality modernizes the infrastructure of the Old City of Acre. The Old Acre Development Company submits its dangerous buildings for tender. Two government practices that are somewhat at odds with those of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The conservation committee can help synchronize these different governments, smoothening out some of their multiple folds and complex layers. But not always. There are many noncoherences and inconsistencies that remain. Some are troubling. (Historically significant buildings slowly collapse as they wait for wealthy investors.) Some are not. (Original masonry materials are severed for the installation of modern water pipes.) With this, though, it is clear that nobody can travel through a passage point alone, that actors are only able to act because they have formed associations with others—partial alliances that perform in unexpected ways. The Israel Antiquities Authority may only be able to preserve the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre because “the capacity or propensity for action has been distributed in [its] direction” (Law 2002a:122)—because there are wealthy investors who can finance conservation activities, because there are infrastructural networks that can maintain the health and safety of caretaking residents.

*Passage Point No. 3: An International Tourist Site*

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, architectural conservation and tourism have been intertwined, albeit not as seamlessly as one might expect. This entanglement required a lot of work. A government decision on 21 August 1955 established the Government Tourism Corporation (GTC). As a corporation owned by the government, its explicit aim was “to strengthen and promote all activities related to the development of tourism” (Kletter 2006:252). However, in order for it to succeed, it needed to closely collaborate with the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (IDAM). In *Just Past? The Making of Israeli Archaeology* (2006), Raz Kletter scoured the Israel State Archives, uncovering an exchange of letters between the IDAM and the GTC that illuminates the weakness of alliance and the tenuousness of diplomacy—the fragility of network-building.

Kletter asks readers to first consider the following two letters, dated 27 October 1955 and 21 December 1961, authored by representatives of the IDAM.

Mr D. Levinson and his entourage from the GTC, as well as his car, are permitted to enter any area of antiquities found under the protection of the IDAM. We ask all antiquities guards and employees of the IDAM to help him and to guide him if so required.<sup>47</sup>

And then,

[To] Mr D. Levinson, the GTC

In the current situation, it seems desirable to us for the employees of the IDAM to have a certificate from you, allowing [them] access at any time—without payment—to ancient sites held in your hands, such as Avdat and Beth-Alpha. Our workers who ought to be given such certificates are [list of 23 employees]...In fact, problems have arisen lately in two cases: A. When an employee of yours at Caesarea did not let Dr Biran and his entourage see the statue of the ‘City Goddess’. B. When someone guarding Beth-Alpha demanded entrance fees from Mr Zori [inspector of the IDAM].<sup>48</sup>

Of course, the IDAM and the GTC cannot operate alone. When the IDAM and the GTC act, others are also acting. Automobiles. Entrance certificates. Employee lists. Guards. Inspectors. Fees. The ‘City Goddess’. But what I want to highlight here is that these two letters remind readers to not only consider the different human and nonhuman actants involved in any activity, but also their associations and the unexpected trails they (do not) leave behind. These two letters remind readers to study the acts of translation themselves, those techniques that induce actants into coexisting. The letters of permission, the certificates of entrance, the guards—they all link the preservation of a historic site with its commoditization. They are the intermediaries and the mediators that, once put in place, transform the sub-programs of the GTC and the IDAM *into actions* (Callon 1990).

Between the six years spanning the first and the second letter, there was a conflict between the GTC and the IDAM, one that highlights the ephemerality of these translations. It is a controversy that emphasizes just how important it is to delegate to the right kinds of actants. Before the creation of the GTC, Shemuel Yeivin made a verbal agreement with Tedi Kollek, soon-to-be-chairman of the GTC. The contents of this agreement included the stipulation that the IDAM would be represented in the management of the GTC, “partner to discussions and decisions about [the] conservation and restoration of historical sites.”<sup>49</sup> This verbal agreement was quickly forgotten—or

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<sup>47</sup> File לָ 44882/9. No. 9981. Israel State Archives.

<sup>48</sup> File לָ 44882/9. No. 160. Israel State Archives.

<sup>49</sup> File לָ 44881/13. Israel State Archives.

disregarded—by Kollek. On 14 October 1955, Yeivin sent a letter to him, stating the following:

When we discussed it you indeed told me that two executive managers would be appointed to deal with administration and execution of the decisions of the corporation, but that there would be a board of directors, as you said, which would rule on the corporation's activities. And that there would be a representative of the IDAM on the board.... So the IDAM would also have a legal status in the corporation's management; so that no action can be taken with regard to historical sites without its knowledge.

From the memorandum I learn that there is no intention to set up such a board of directors.... The corporation will have only a council, surely with the representation of the IDAM—although this was not explicitly mentioned.... As we know, a council is very different from a board of directors: it can only advise and does not make decisions; it meets occasionally...and has no hold over the corporation's activities like a board of directors.

I must say that despite the promise given in writing that nothing would be done in relation to historical sites without the approval and guidance of the IDAM, I have some concerns about the legal position of the matter. As long as the corporation is headed by the same people with whom I have negotiated, I believe that there will be no conflicts and lack of agreement on that matter, and I hope for full cooperation.... But who knows who will have control after a while? As long as the IDAM has no legal position in the management of the GTC, the IDAM cannot be certain that something is not done without its consent and guidance, as far as historical sites are concerned.<sup>50</sup>

Tensions between the IDAM and the GTC arose because of the breach of a verbal agreement regarding the establishment of a board of directors, an exchange of sounds so fleeting that nobody could rely on them in the future. They would need to be produced anew. And they were not. But it is not just words that are transitory—so is personnel. Collaboration between the IDAM and the GTC requires something more, something for when the human actants change, for when diplomacy can no longer be relied upon. There needs to be something else in place, another mediator that can (re)produce and maintain the traces of association. This can be another person, an individual appropriately disciplined. Or, these network builders can substitute “for the unreliable humans a delegated nonhuman character” (Latour 1988a:301). The advantage of the latter is that it minimizes the work of a network builder. They need to only discipline one nonhuman; the others—the humans—may be left to their erratic, unpredictable ways. However, not

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<sup>50</sup> File 78 44882/9. No. 7864a. Israel State Archives.

just any nonhuman actant will do. This is the lesson learned from Yeivin and his reliance on a verbal agreement. Legal authorizations, while by no means sufficient on their own, have the potential to “bring into play associations *that last longer than the interactions that formed them*” (Callon and Latour 1981:283)

Of course, one can read the concerns of Yeivin and his dispute with the GTC as a personal matter. Maybe he felt his professional status being undermined, threatened by his exclusion from a powerful committee with direct ties to the Prime Minister’s Office. One can also read his concerns as a strictly professional matter. Maybe he was worried about who would decide site selections, budget allocations, and work plans. All of these assertions may be true. But accessing intentions is a mysterious cognitive feat. Mapping associations and following traces, this is much less mysterious. The goal, then, is not to study actants *per se*. It is not to uncover ‘why’ Yeivin pursued, so enthusiastically, his dispute with Kollek. Such answers risk becoming empty repetitions, with the social scientist rushing onto the scene to give the answers that the actors do not know—or do not let us know. So, what conclusions can be drawn if anthropologists are no longer concerned with the actors themselves—with uncovering a hidden drive or a buried subconscious? What conclusions can anthropologists draw if, instead, they direct their attention to the relations themselves?

There are, I think, at least two conclusions. The first repeats a lesson from before: what can one individual accomplish? It is clear that Yeivin, a dedicated—if somewhat unsuccessful—network builder, worked tirelessly. This work, however, was not enough to entangle the IDAM as an integral node in the activities of the Prime Minister’s Office and the GTC. Nor was it enough to require the GTC to follow its protocols and guidelines, to receive its work orders and demands. In a letter to Yeivin regarding the Old City of Acre, a representative from the GTC exclaimed,

In all your latest letters you point out that you are the ‘boss’ over all sites, and rely on governmental decisions and on various sections of law, etc. If this is so, why do you keep demanding that [the GTC] take action to prevent collapses, etc.? I think the IDAM should take care of it.... We know our own field exactly, which is improvement and restoration related to, and aimed at, easing visits by tourists. [Kletter 2006:262]

No matter how highly regarded the IDAM was as an institution in the matter of historical sites, it needed to acquire a cohort of actants that could translate its interests, that could

transform architectural conservation into tourism development. There was money in tourism. A letter from Yeivin to the Minister of Education on 2 December 1952 attests to these challenges.

The conservation and restoration of the [Old City of Acre]...is needed to preserve a monument unique in all of Israel, but it can also be a pressing factor for international tourism as a source of foreign currency and also propaganda for the cultural level of our state....I must add that the situation has deteriorated recently, for cracks and openings appeared on some buildings that demand thorough repairs and a significant investment of money, in order to protect them for the future and make them a worthy place to exhibit to tourists and visitors....This also demands a large investment of money, which the Municipality in its current state and the IDAM with its current budget cannot supply.<sup>51</sup>

And the second conclusion? How long can something *stay* accomplished? The Mayor of the Acre Municipality, Yosef Gadish (1952–1961), was elected to office just as the period of austerity began to ease in the country. Shortly after assuming his position, he began coordinating with the Ministry of Tourism and the Prime Minister’s Office, seeking to advance a number of projects that could help develop the city (Rubin 1974:25). He was able to acquire funds from these institutions, funds earmarked for developing the Old City’s tourism potential—restoring the seawalls, excavating the Hospitaller Fortress, renovating al-Jazzar Mosque and the Turkish bathhouse (Torstrick 2000:25–26). Another infusion of funds came in 1963 from the Ministry of the Interior to renovate the Old City, and by 1965, “almost half a million Israeli pounds had been invested in restoring the Old City and developing facilities for tourism” (70–71).

In 1963, the Old Acre Development Company (OADC) was established by the Ministry of Tourism to manage this process of developing the Old City and transforming it into an international tourist destination. Between 1967 and 1982, a number of assets managed by the Development Authority were transferred to the OADC. By 1993, the OADC became the landlord for approximately 220 properties, including “tourist sites, commercial sites, and residential buildings” (Peleg 2010:54). 1993 is an important year for the Old City of Acre. With the help of a fresh injection of development budgets, the Ministry of the Interior and the Israel Land Administration initiated a project to prepare a new Master Plan (C/10895) for the Old City of Acre. A multi-disciplinary team of

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<sup>51</sup> File 448565/1. No. 7194. Israel State Archives.

architects and urban planners, conservators, sociological and economic experts, tourism consultants, and representatives from government institutions gathered together under the direction of Arie Rahamimoff in order to assess the tourism potential of the city. This team concluded that the development of tourism in the Old City of Acre would not be possible without the development of the city and all of its layers: touristic, socio-economic, historical, architectural (Peleg 2010:56). The OADC adopted this perspective. As its current CEO, David Harari, explained,

The [OADC] saw itself as taking care of all areas, not just tourism, because it is impossible to develop an ancient city in the field of tourism and ignore everything that surrounds it. If the city is polluted, if there is no infrastructure, if sewage is flowing in the streets, etc., the city cannot be maintained and no one will want to come there even if you build the most beautiful and attractive hotel. Therefore, the [OADC] found itself engaged in things that are not purely touristic, such as the construction of kindergartens or the planning of community centers and the continuation of [dry and wet] infrastructure, which the company still deals with.<sup>52</sup>

According to the OADC, the only way to effectively commodify the Old City of Acre was to develop it and its inhabitants, a mission that could be readily aligned with those of the residents, the Municipality, the Development Authority, and the Israel Antiquities Authority. Or so one would think.

During the preparation of the Master Plan (1993), the OADC established a community committee, which met once a month in order to learn about the development plans for the Old City and to offer their opinions. This was an attempt by the OADC to remove the disconnect between the residents and the development process. Many residents had indicated that they believed tourism would benefit their city. One, for example, asserted that the presence of Jewish-Israelis in the Old City of Acre would force “the government and the Jewish establishment” to “take responsibility for Old Acre. Old Acre would receive all the necessary services. They would build receivers just like they do for settlers in the territories. They would also take care of all the other problems of Old Acre” (Peleg 2010:86). Nonetheless, another sentiment circulated throughout the Old City of Acre—resentment towards “the nuisances resulting from construction work, such

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<sup>52</sup> Protocol No. 235 from the meeting of the Labor, Welfare, and Health Committee. 12 December 2000. Accessed from <http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/avoda/2000-12-04.rtf>.



as the noise, the dirt, and the scaffoldings that endanger public safety” (85). Shelley-Anne Peleg presents the testimony of a local resident:

They have already been working on the hotel for three years. Initially, we thought that it would be good if they built the hotel here, but since they started working there have only been problems. There is a lot of dirt, and I have to clean all the time. In the morning, there is a lot of noise and we must get up early in the morning. At night we usually sit outside and have [a gathering with food and beverages]. When there is a hotel here, we will not be able to do that. The hotel will hear what is happening in the houses and this is not suitable for us. There are many dangerous areas here. Behind the hotel, they built an elevator. The elevator now occupies the entire yard at the entrance to [my friend’s] house. When they installed the elevator, they built scaffolding there. It was dark at the entrance to the apartment and it was dangerous. One of the neighbors fell and broke her arm. [2010:85–86]

Budgets temporarily linked the Old Acre Development Company, the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the Acre Municipality. Later, Master Plan meetings and community committee meetings fastened together the residents with this assemblage of institutions. This was temporary too. Residents would grow tired of the messiness of development, their support converting into opposition. Infrastructure emerged as a promising intermediary. Temporally, the connections it forged were a little more durable than those of a budget or a meeting. It would help keep residents and tourists in place, tying concerns for public health and safety to the concerns of profit-making. This is the third point of passage. It is the third kind of mess: the momentary comings together of actor-networks. The ephemerality of verbal contracts, the referability of certificates of entrance, the proclivity of antiquities guards, and the dexterity of diplomats—each provides a different affordance in the maintenance of associations. Architectural conservation, tourism development, and municipal governance hang together. But not always and not forever.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

Describing ethnographic research to those unfamiliar with the discipline of anthropology can be an awkward task. It took me a few months to formulate the most efficient, the most effective, summation of my project. “I am studying all of the actors involved in architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. I am looking at how they all come together.” My interlocutors, however, regularly modified my description, adding with an amused smile, “and don’t come together, right?”

*And don't come together.*

People living and working in the Old City of Acre could acknowledge the messiness of architectural conservation—the fractional coherence of government and its objects—months before I could. This chapter has been an attempt to take up their observations, to seriously consider the ways in which things come together *and* fall apart. In order to do this, I needed to refrain from any ready-at-hand forms of reductionism, forms of explanation that entail a search for some underlying cause. I presented no discussion of the technical constraints, the political intentions, or the economic conditions that may have shaped the housing situation in the Old City of Acre. This self-imposed restraint forced me to find new ways to narrate an account of Palestinian displacement from this historic town. No longer in pursuit of the *real* reasons behind a building hazard, I could more readily highlight the threads and the threadings that linked building materials with structural instabilities, structural instabilities with government authorities, government authorities with local residents.

I opened this chapter by introducing readers to the Old City of Acre. I asked them to imagine the swirling events of 1948 in the ways the New Historians of Israel have described them. Scholars like Benny Morris and Ilan Pappé have stitched together an assortment of moments in order to construct a cohesive account of Jewish-Israeli settlement in Palestine. This is a narrative that is easy to read, even if it is difficult to swallow. It is an arborescent historical account. It contains a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end, with all of the important details “held together in a centrally coordinated way” (Law 2002a:5). However, after rehearsing this account, I noticed there were all sorts of details that I kept leaving out. These were things that I could not find a way to incorporate into my description without losing its through-line. They were the trivialities. The anomalies. The exceptions. All those things best relegated to footnotes.

I became a collector of these fragments. Stories about plainclothes police officers and burned municipal records. Stories that have been important enough to mention, but not important enough to theorize. I prefer these stories because they foreground the fragilities, the hesitations, and the failures of Jewish-Israeli (settler) colonialism. The displacement of the Palestinian inhabitants of the Old City of Acre no longer looks like the effect of a singular, monolithic project. It becomes harder to imagine individuals (and

institutions) with clearly defined political interests, interests that could seamlessly be effectuated into a new reality. I admit, this preference renders it difficult to find the cohort of individuals responsible for these reprehensible acts. However, it also makes it easier to see (settler) colonialism as an *activity*, one that requires the complex orchestration of unpredictable humans and unruly nonhumans. The details of Jewish settlement in a place like the Old City of Acre are too important to be treated as interesting addendums to a coherent narrative. *They are the narrative.*

In order to privilege these fragmented details, I experimented with a textual strategy practiced by Susan Leigh Star and James Griesemer. I deployed a kind of patchworking technique, one that encouraged me to follow entities as they weave their way through multiple starting points. The second half of this chapter scattered in multiple directions, guiding readers back and forth along different paths. I began by examining the ways a building becomes dangerous. I watched as a new actor—compressive stress—linked building materials with structural stability, a materials science laboratory, the Old Acre Development Company, the Acre Municipality, and the Development Authority. I spread all of this out on a metaphorical pinboard, an exercise that allowed me to highlight the partial centerings, the rhizomatic relations. It soon became clear just how many actants are at work in the (de)stabilization of a historic structure. There are budgets, verbal agreements, and locked doors. There are cracks, skeptical residents, and conservation guidelines. There are competing personalities and ambiguous evaluations.

This is a simple observation, but it is also an important one. Solitary actors are no longer able to carry the explanatory burden of others. As I have shown, if something is to move through a (obligatory) point of passage, then it must link arms with other entities, for *nobody* and *nothing* can act alone. These alliances require seductions and interruptions, techniques that can tie different entities together, that can commit different entities to the stabilization of a historic structure. But it is not just the presence or the absence of a link that matters. The texture of the connection is also important. Different threads have different affordances. Some are more durable than others—some are *made to be* more durable than others. These are the kinds of details the rest of this dissertation will explore. Without these details, it is difficult to see how architectural conservation

comes together and stays together, how architectural conservation falls apart and stays apart—how architectural conservation comes together *and* falls apart.

### CHAPTER 3: WHEN SALTS ATTACK

Professor Guglielmo De Angelis d'Ossat, the Italian Director General of Antiquities and Fine Arts, organized the second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in 1964. Attended by approximately six hundred participants from sixty-one countries, the meeting became noteworthy for the fact that it led to the articulation of an international charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites—the Venice Charter. Three days before the opening of the event, Raymond Lemaire, Paul Philippot, and Jean Sonnier met in Italy to begin composing an initial draft of this document. They needed to start from scratch. There was no preliminary outline from which they could work. They did not have access to reference documents or literatures. There was not even a copy of the conclusions of the first meeting of the International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, a meeting that resulted in the publication of the Athens Charter of 1931. The story recounted by Lemaire is one of dedicated perseverance. Before the conclusion of the conference, an ad hoc committee composed of twenty-three colleagues examined, discussed, and amended the draft, with the conference attendees approving a final version not too different from its initial formulation (Houbart 2014).

The Venice Charter of 1964 declares as imprudent the use of cement-based materials in architectural conservation. The document advises conservators to only deploy modern techniques and materials if their efficacy “has been shown by scientific data and proved by experience” *and* if “traditional techniques [have] prove[d] inadequate” (Venice Charter 1964:Article 10). This clause was an explicit revision of the position outlined in the Athens Charter of 1931, which approved the *judicious* use of modern techniques and materials, including reinforced concrete. Between 1931 and 1964, science and experience failed to give cement the support it needed. The rapid degradation of original stone materials that conservation scientists attributed to the suffocating effects of cementitious interventions became less and less an attribution, and more and more an established fact.

This chapter examines the workings of cement in the architectural conservation of the Old City of Acre. Cement can be used as a plaster, or it can be mixed with water and aggregates to create another material—concrete. This ‘liquid stone’ (Cohen and Moeller

2006) is a potent, yet malleable material. It can take any shape. This initial flexibility mutates into a sturdy fixity, as the chemical reaction between water and cement effects “an irreversible process of gradual hardening” (Harvey 2010:38). And so it became the building material *par excellence* during the British Mandate. It would come to replace local masonry as the preferred building material, a fact made apparent by the agitations that erupted through its rationing during the Second World War. But its strength is a fragile strength. It is a strength that becomes a weakness over time. Cement-based materials are “vulnerable to water, temperature, heavy loads, and neglect” (43). They are also “exceptionally inflexible and brittle,” for they are unable to adapt to the movements of that which surrounds them.

This attention to cement presents an opportunity to clean up some of the mess I left in the previous chapter. That chapter was not entirely successful. It complicated conventional anthropological conceptualizations of agency, suggesting that it is not a solitary attribute but a relational accomplishment. However, its commitment to a symmetrical analysis was only cursory. Here, then, I present an even flatter ontology, one whereby “[n]othing can be reduced to anything else, nothing can be deduced from anything else, everything may be allied to everything else” (Latour 1988b:163). This kind of flat ontology is a response to the ways in which many contemporary scholars have theorized objects. Its noted practitioners (e.g., Ian Bogost, Levi Bryant, Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux) have expressed concerns about the intuitions of philosophical inquiry, particularly the somewhat instinctive tendency to always examine objects in relation to subjects—in relation to some privileged standpoint from which everything else can be defined.

Quite often, this metaphysical center is a human, an entity that recognizes, that represents, and that rearranges the passive matter that surrounds it. This configuration has created a situation wherein the things that populate the world are only deemed analytically significant if they can be shown to *carry* human projects, to *signify* mental abstractions, to *reflect* social happenings. The worry, then, is that entities are not actually being studied, for the emphasis is almost always on their (social) contexts, their (social) meanings, their (social) conditions of possibility. A flat ontology is speculative. It experiments with what might happen if theorists refuse to position humans at the center

of things, if theorists opt to treat humans as entities among other entities, as one type of object among many others (Bryant 2011). Methodologically, this is a tricky thing to do. It requires a generalized symmetry, one where the analyst tries to abandon all *a priori* distinctions between that which is ‘human’ and that which is ‘nonhuman’.

In practice, this approach commonly manifests as a litany of lists, a recital of entities that appear to have no relation whatsoever. That is, at least, until the theorist identifies the connection, the link, the thread (Berry 2014:117). This can leave readers with much to sort through. There are all the ways in which entities fashion themselves into collectives. There are also all the ways in which these collectives find themselves aligned with another object—the anthropologist, the philosopher, the theorist. But this is the crucial part, for the emphasis of a flat ontology is not necessarily on *objects*, but on the many ways that objects might relate, might come to matter, might come to make a difference (Bogost 2012:9). I admit, the ethical implications of flat ontologies are still unclear, with some suggesting that it revives a spirit of conservatism, an atmosphere where human-centered politics are bracketed, buried beneath a mind-numbing list of nonhuman objects (Harman 2018). Still, I think there is something useful in bringing nonhuman actors into view—not in place of humans, but alongside them.

This chapter is an exploration into how one might practice an anthropology of irreductions. The focus is on *everything*, and *everything* will be placed on the *same* ontological footing. No actor, whether human or nonhuman, tangible or intangible, will be disregarded “as mere noise in comparison with its essence, its context, its physical body, or its conditions of possibility” (Harman 2009:13). Atoms and compounds, files and flash drives, kurkar stones and tugboats, architects and bureaucrats, numbers and rumors will all be studied exactly the same way—as entities that align and associate, that translate and delegate. The emphasis, then, will be on the clever interessement devices that bring these entities together, that commit them (however briefly) to the respiration of a historic masonry building. Things will get messy (again)—ontologically messy, epistemologically messy, ethically messy. But it might just be worth it. A flat ontology might succeed where other forms of critique have failed. It is able to capture the (political) work of human *and* nonhuman entities, noting the unpredictable maneuverings through which they help to render buildings safe *and* dangerous, legal *and* illegal. A flat

ontology models the ways in which others have handled these unpredictabilities, presenting techniques that might inspire new ways of defining and associating entities, of obliging a faithfulness to their alliances (Callon 1984:224). It provides, in short, a case study in how to tinker.

***Cement Buildings, American Coal, and Tiny Boats***

“It would certainly be a step in the right direction if an order could be passed prohibiting the import of cement which does not comply with British Standard Specifications but I fail to see how this can be carried into practical effect.”<sup>53</sup> So begins a minute note from the Director of Public Works to the Chief Secretary on 17 August 1935. There was concern about the quality of certain brands of cement from Europe. How much would materials testing delay the clearance of imported cement from customs? Would these tests even be meaningful? After all, cement “may be of perfectly good quality when it leaves the factory but may, owing to bad storage or other conditions, be unfit for use by the time it is incorporated in the work.” Cement needed to be disciplined, something that could only occur if local architects, builders, property owners, municipal authorities, and government departments also took action, insisting on building materials that met—and maintained—specific quality thresholds.

By 1935 a significant proportion of all new construction in Palestine utilized reinforced concrete. So much so, that its absence almost a decade later threatened to gridlock the entire region. As Nazi troops advanced across Europe, draping the continent with red, white, and black flags, everyday goods found themselves in short supply. In 1941 a representative from T. S. Boutagy and Sons recounted to the Chief Secretary of the British Mandate the difficulties caused by these shortages. As a family-owned trading goods store based in Haifa, T. S. Boutagy and Sons had made repeated efforts to obtain a permit from the Department of Public Works to purchase cement from the Nesher factory in Haifa, a commodity an ounce of which they had not been able to obtain for the past two years. They pleaded with the Director, asking him to reconsider the matter “as cement is badly wanted in Palestine and is an essential commodity for repairs,

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<sup>53</sup> Minute note from the Director of Public Works to the Chief Secretary. 17 August 1935. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.09.5E. Israel State Archives.



development, building expansion and countless other purposes.”<sup>54</sup> Put simply, it was a commodity without which “no country in the world can exist.” In a few short years, concerns over quality quickly transformed into concerns over quantity.

Each attempt to obtain a permit to purchase cement encountered a denial. Cement was not to be used by the public to repair a roof leak, to build a new house, or to shelter pigs and cows in the winter.<sup>55</sup> The reason given? “The entire output is required for the prosecution of the war.”<sup>56</sup> These petitioners were unable to convince the Mandate administration to invest in their projects, to increase their allocations of cement for civilian use. They even tried tailoring cement in ways that would cater to the interests of the government (Latour 1987:108). T. S. Boutagy and Sons, for example, tried to persuade the High Commissioner of Palestine by highlighting the role of cement in ensuring public safety; it could “at least enable the public to erect air raid shelters.”<sup>57</sup> Or, consider a letter from the Arab Tile and Cement Products Factory Owners Association to the Chief Secretary, which linked their concerns with the availability of cement to the government’s interest in maintaining a stable economy. They wrote,

It is within your knowledge the important role that cement plays in the constructional development of the country....Still more when it employs a large number of artisans, skilled and unskilled labour in the building trade. It is therefore the duty of Government who is in charge of the well-fare of the country to safeguard the rights of the public by keeping adequate supplies, of this commodity on the markets.<sup>58</sup>

Sometimes the government even petitioned itself, noting that it is not only the general public who is suffering from the cement shortage. A letter from the District Commissioner’s Office in Gaza states,

Over a month ago this administration ordered 200 tons of cement direct from Neshet for various public projects; up to the present we have received 30 tons despite numerous telephone calls and even telegrams to the Company. As a result,

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<sup>54</sup> Letter from T. S. Boutagy and Sons to the Chief Secretary. 25 February 1941. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.14.CC. Israel State Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from T. S. Boutagy and Sons to the Assistant Director of the Department of Public Works. 9 October 1941. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.14.CC. Israel State Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from T. S. Boutagy and Sons to the Chief Secretary. 25 February 1941. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.14.CC. Israel State Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from T. S. Boutagy and Sons to the High Commissioner. 28 February 1941. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.14.CC. Israel State Archives.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from the Arab Tile and Cement Products Factory Owners Association to the Chief Secretary. 10 December 1946. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1A.68. Israel State Archives.

to quote a few examples, work on the important new boys' school at Khan Yunis is being held up and construction of schools at the villages of Hatta, Jabaliya and Bureir is likewise impeded.<sup>59</sup>

Bruno Latour instructs readers that the easiest way to enroll others in your project is “to let oneself be enrolled by them! By pushing their explicit interests, you will also further yours” (1987:110). Unfortunately, this strategy of translation has not always worked. One by one, cement markets collapsed. Cement from Britain could not be obtained. Cement from Egypt could not be spared. Both were required for the war effort in Europe and Africa, respectively. The only source of supply was Syria and Lebanon, where the assets held by Palestinian merchants had been frozen, locked-up in ways that could only be liquidated through the importation of a commodity such as cement; the only way for these merchants to transfer their capital into Palestine was to purchase goods in Syria, and then import them into Palestine. Even so, it was not uncommon for import licenses to be revoked, cancelled “without the slightest notice or provocation.”<sup>60</sup>

Shortages of cement continued to plague the country even after the war ended. Letter after letter in the Israel State Archives attests to the importance of cement for everyday life in Palestine—to the hardships rendered to the population because of its scarcity. At this time, the Palestine Portland Cement Works (Nesher) was the *only* cement factory in Palestine, operating at an output insufficient to cope with the construction requirements of the region. Orders remained unfulfilled. Black market dealers proliferated. Public and private construction activities halted. As one letter to the Palestine Portland Cement Works attests,

the cement you give to your agents for distribution to the public is being given to privileged persons and friends of those agents who sell the cement in the black market at exorbitant prices. Today I asked your agent in Jerusalem, Mr. Kattan to be kind enough and sell me 3 tons of cement to enable me to complete the building which I had started at Katamon in Jerusalem and although in my presence he sold to certain of these privileged persons yet he told me that there was no cement for me and that he shall not give me at any time any cement. Your agents have been persecuting the public by refusing to sell at the fixed prices and

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<sup>59</sup> Letter from the District Commissioner's Offices (Gaza). 14 December 1946. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1A.68. Israel State Archives.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from T. S. Boutagy and Sons to the War Supply Board. 4 March 1941. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.14.CC. Israel State Archives.

people are obliged to go and buy in the black market at a price double that fixed by your company.<sup>61</sup>

Some framed this shortage of cement and its manner of distribution as a reflection *and* an enactment of ethnic discrimination. Rumors circulated, alleging that the Neshet company, a Jewish enterprise, deliberately withheld “cement from Arab areas whilst allowing Jewish interests to obtain as much as they like.”<sup>62</sup> As one lawyer explained, before the outbreak of the Second World War, anyone in need of cement “could obtain the quantity required by him on the free market from importers or traders, at a reasonable price.”<sup>63</sup> But after the war?

[T]he Neshet Co resorted to several tricks in an attempt to deprive the Arab dealer of his lawful income. One of such tricks was to supply the Jewish Settlements adjoining Arab towns with large quantities of cement, which by far exceed their own requirements, and on the other hand to reduce as much as was practical the deliveries to the Arab dealers, so that most of the Arabs in need of cement had no alternative but to resort to the black market which flourished in the near-by Jewish Settlements under the auspices and with the whole-hearted assistance of the said Neshet Co.

A year ago, on finding that its previous devices did not wholly satisfy its nefarious intents, a new practice was embarked upon by the said company. A new company—called the Zahar Co, which in fact is a mere sister-company and which can be properly called a branch of Neshet Co—was incorporated. This new company was given the monopoly of selling the Neshet cement in Arab markets, thus depriving the Arab dealers of an important source of livelihood, and ousting the probability of any competition that might arise between the distributing dealers. As an example, I would state that Jaffa, a predominantly Arab town which is in an acute need of 1000 to 1500 tons of cement per week, was supplied by the Neshet Co through its subsidiary the Zahar Co with no more than two or three hundred tons a week—a very meagre quantity that could only meet the needs of a very small portion of the inhabitants, the remainder of whom had no option but to purchase their requirements on the black market in the Jewish settlements surrounding that town, which were supplied with sufficient quantities to enable them to carry out these vicious black market transactions.<sup>64</sup>

What could the Mandate administration do? Policy recommendations included:

(1) eliminating the customs duty that protected the local production of cement (i.e., the

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<sup>61</sup> Letter to the Palestine Portland Cement Works, Ltd. 22 November 1946. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1A.68. Israel State Archives.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from the District Commissioner’s Offices (Gaza). 14 December 1946. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1A.68. Israel State Archives.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from a lawyer to the Chief Secretary. 26 November 1947. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1A.68. Israel State Archives.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

Nesher company) against foreign imports; (2) actively facilitating foreign imports at quantities high enough to meet the demands of public and private construction activities.<sup>65</sup> However, the problem—at least according to the Controller of Heavy Industry—had nothing to do with the status of cement as a protected commodity.<sup>66</sup> It had, rather, to do with the inability of the Palestine Portland Cement Works to obtain coal for their kilns, as allocations from the United Kingdom, South Africa, and India were blocked.<sup>67</sup> After an extensive series of correspondence between the Secretary of State, the High Commissioner for Palestine, and the Department of Commerce and Industry, the Palestine Portland Cement Works obtained permission to acquire coal from the United States. However, the archive leaves the actual fate of its delivery unknown. Readers are left watching at the transit of 3,500 tons of coal from the United States is stymied by the fact that “they are encountering considerable difficulty in finding a smaller ship.”<sup>68</sup>

I want to pause this unravelment here. Cement might seem like an innocuous material. It is a binder, a material that sets, hardens, and adheres to other materials. It can be used to produce mortars as well as concrete blocks. Yet the documents I stumbled upon in the Israel State Archives reveal a collective hysteria the moment it was found to be in short supply. This is odd. How, in just a few decades, did portland cement become such an integral component of everyday life in Palestine? How did it become such an important building material, its unavailability warranting countless petitions to the government, to foreign exporters, to the Palestine Portland Cement Works? Answering these questions is beyond the scope of this chapter. I ask them merely to highlight the widespread use of this specific building material. Cement had become a ubiquitous component of modern architecture, reinforced with steel in ways that rendered large, arch-less spans possible. An attempt, as many have argued, to exert “the power of society over the reality of nature” (Harman 2009:60; Holston 1989; Rabinow 1989; Wright

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<sup>65</sup> Letter from the Arab Tile and Cement Products Factory Owners Association to the Chief Secretary. 10 December 1946. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1A.68. Israel State Archives.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from the Controller of Heavy Industry to the Chief Secretary. 23 December. 1946. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1A.68. Israel State Archives.

<sup>67</sup> Letter from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner for Palestine. 6 July 1946. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1A.F2. Israel State Archives.

<sup>68</sup> Saving gram from the High Commissioner for Palestine to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 14 October 1946. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.1A.F2. Israel State Archives.

1991). And it could be found everywhere—in the new neighborhoods materializing throughout the country, in the essential repairs made to historic monuments. This included the Old City of Acre.

### *Cement Repairs in the Old City of Acre*

The historic buildings in the Old City of Acre are constructed primarily from kurkar stones, which are held together by either cement or lime-based bonding materials. During the twentieth century, the wooden ceilings, window frames, and doors of these structures were slowly replaced by more cost-efficient materials: reinforced concrete, iron beams, and aluminum. Interior walls have often been covered with cement, drywall, or a lime-based plaster, although it is not unusual to find many exposed. Each of these materials interact with each other and with elements in the environment in unique ways—ways (conservation) architects and (conservation) engineers have only recently begun to notice.

“In the 1950s and 1960s,” an engineer from the Development Authority recounted, “residents started creating additions to the buildings, primarily using cement and steel as the materials for the building and the roof. This combination of cement and steel, however, is very dangerous. The salts from the sea interact with the cement and the steel in ways that cause the materials to rust and to explode. So we try to demolish everything new and rebuild with materials approved by the Antiquities Authority.” A structural engineer from the Acre Municipality stressed just how dangerous this can be. “When I first started this job, there was not much being done in the Old City in terms of identifying dangerous structures,” he recalled. “But then all these buildings began to collapse. I would get calls at one or two in the morning about a building collapse and I would have to go out and examine the situation so that we could prevent other adjacent ceilings from collapsing too. After that I became very active in identifying dangerous buildings in the Old City, which requires different knowledge. I went and learned about it on my own. But what we try to do is get residents to learn what the signs of a healthy building are.”

Now, cement is a material which conservation architects and conservation engineers view with skepticism, characterizing its pervasive application as indiscriminate, as careless, as ill-advised. “Cement is only meant for heavy construction.

Yet we use it for everything,” explained a mineralogist from Germany. “We have been using lime technologies for thousands of years. We have only started using cement in the past sixty or eighty years. Yet now all we use is cement. The production of cement has increased so much and the material is now so cheap that it is used everywhere. We ignore all these time-tested materials that have proven effective, which we are replacing with a newer material that we are still learning about. We are only just now realizing that cement is not an effective building material. Now we are realizing our mistakes from the 1970s. The truth is on the wall. It is not in the data sheets that contractors like to give out. We can see the effects.” Not everyone has learned to be affected by these effects. Or, perhaps, they have simply not stayed long enough to see them.

### *Studying Nonhumans: Object Oriented Ontology*

The parliament of things continues to grow. Readers have already seen the (conservation) architects, the (conservation) engineers, and the (Palestinian) occupants. In this chapter, a handful of other actants has suddenly appeared. The sea and its salts, cement and its steel, kurkar stones and their mortars—all of these things are busy “supporting, sealing, joining, weathering, peeling, rusting” a historic building, either holding it in place or compromising its presence (Jacobs and Merriman 2011:211). The proposition that no actor acts alone seems quite obvious when placed in these terms. What is perhaps more surprising is just how many of these actors are nonhuman.

Actors such as these are typically cast in the shadows. For some, this is because “taking things seriously is not a self-evident thing to do” (Verbeek 2005:vii). Particular philosophical positionings render it difficult to apply agency to anything other than intentional, human acts (Kant 1997:115). Others, however, simply hesitate to describe the doings of nonhumans as a kind of agency (Bennett 2009:ix). Such hesitations are tethered to certain political projects (Coole 2005), wherein the earnest recognition of nonhuman agencies has the potential to undermine “established notions of moral responsibility and political accountability” (Bennett 2005:446). The result? People are the protagonists of social scientific accounts, and intentionality supplies these accounts with their logical coherence (Mitchell 2002:29). In these two clauses, a bundle of decisions has already been made about actants and action—about agency: (1) the world is divided into humans and nonhumans, subjects and objects; (2) humans are a special kind of entity, one with

the unique ability to possess intentions; and (3) intentionality guides most, if not all, human actions.

I want to try something different. I want to continue this chapter without deciding in advance what counts as an actant, without adhering so firmly to the human-nonhuman divide. Some may say that this kind of analysis is a distraction, a dangerous embellishment, that it is a playful metaphor, a more poetic way to describe ‘material’ or ‘causal’ relations (Woolgar 1992:337). But this talk of nonhuman agency is only metaphorical if anthropologists insist on a specific definition of agency, a definition to which intentionality, rationality, and free will have already been ascribed. I propose, instead, a simpler definition. Agency is the ability to act. It is the ability to intervene in ways that produce effects, that produce differences. An agent, then, is anything that modifies a state of affairs (Latour 2005:71). Architects and blueprints, engineers and concrete, residents and rumors—all of these can be agents. If positioned just right, each of these entities can create an effect, each of these entities can leave a trace, each of these entities can *act*. This definition places all objects on the same ontological footing, treating humans and nonhumans as things that *act* through the ways in which they *relate*.

Before I can begin such a symmetrical analysis, I want to depart briefly from the theoretical-methodological recommendations of actor-network theorists, for these scholars are far more adept at studying human and nonhuman actants as *they enter and exit relations* than they are at studying *objects themselves*. It is quite obvious that anthropologists have become skilled analysts of human entities. But is there a way for an anthropologist to study nonhumans without allocating them to an impoverished role? This can be a difficult thing to do. Thus far, at the center of every single account I have told, stands a human (an Italian architect, a materials scientist, a structural engineer) and the many things that they did. They drew on the world. They crushed the world. They calculated the world. But what did the world do? What did the buildings, the stones, and the cracks do? Well, sometimes they collapsed. Sometimes they resisted. Sometimes they grew. Yet, even when I highlight these activities, it still seems as if everything “had been there all along, waiting to be metamorphosed into so many stakes, diagrams, maps, arguments and brought to bear on the realm of human discourse” (Latour 1999:114). Perhaps my flat ontology has not been very flat, for I have not adequately accounted for

what the (nonhuman) entities of the world do when they come into contact with architectural conservation, when they “begin to be socialized into the collective.”

Curriculums in the humanities and the social sciences are adept at training students to identify objects and to explain the processes through which they have been socially constructed. The common targets have included the trinity of race, class, and gender, although more and more scholars have directed their attention to the objects of science. Often, these projects are designed to be liberating. They highlight the historical contingency of that which many take for granted, suggesting that the world could be otherwise. Over the years, many have added nuance to these explanations. Ian Hacking (1999), for instance, has helped social constructionists to clarify their analytics—to delineate the differences between the social construction of an *object* and the social construction of an *idea*. This is best illustrated through an example. Few are willing to deny the social construction of the Palestinian refugee. After all, they were created as a consequence of very real, very serious (human) events. But this is not usually what is meant when someone says that something is a social construction. What they have in mind are the manifold ways in which an individual becomes *classified* as a *specific kind of person*. This includes all of the techniques through which the *idea* of a (Palestinian) refugee comes into being—all of the institutions, the lawyers, and the legislations, all of the things that render this concept imaginable, practicable.

Things become a little more complicated when this approach is applied to the objects of the natural sciences. Take caterpillars as an example. It is difficult to imagine that someone would claim that caterpillars—as objects—are socially constructed. Most are fairly confident that zoologists do not invent caterpillars, even if they are fabricated in a laboratory through a sophisticated breeding program. Nor do caterpillars need to be honored by human vision or illuminated by human consciousness in order to exist. They will continue to very hungrily eat whether or not we have “tamed, killed, photographed, or studied them” (Latour 1988b:193). It is easier to imagine someone arguing that the *idea* of a caterpillar is socially constructed. How did they come to be distinguished from butterflies? Is a caterpillar still a caterpillar when it is in a cocoon? When does it stop being a caterpillar? When does it start being a butterfly?



It is not necessary to choose a side between realism and constructionism. Yet many so often do. Social constructionist approaches, particularly as they are practiced in ‘the Edinburgh School’ of the sociology of scientific knowledge, often quite simply “*abstain from giving a role to nonhumans* in the story of discovery and instead construct the account exclusively with reference to the practices, the places, the instruments, the authorities, the institutions, and the historical events furnished by the context” (Latour 1996b:78). References to any kind of substance external to the work of humans is avoided, for how could anyone believe humans have immediate access to the always-already-there substance known as *the real*? Experiments are much too uncertain. Instruments are much too unreliable. Interpretations are much too ambiguous (79). But if scientists do not *discover* the world, then what do they actually do in their laboratories? Social constructionists tell us that they construct facts. They tell us that scientific explanations “are not determined by how the world is, but are convenient ways in which to represent it. They maintain that the world does not come quietly wrapped up in facts. Facts are the consequences of the ways in which we represent the world” (Hacking 1999:33).

Throughout his philosophical investigation, Ian Hacking seats readers somewhere between realism and constructionism. At moments he echoes R. G. Collingwood’s declaration that “nature stays put, and is the same whether we understand it or not” (1946:84). He elaborates on the differences between people and things, emphasizing that “what camels, mountains, and microbes are doing does not depend on our words” (Hacking 2002:108). At other moments, though, he frames scientific objects in accordance with the protocols of social constructionism. His historical ontology presents a way to talk about all types of objects (things, classifications, institutions)—what makes it possible for them to come into being as objects of scientific study (Daston 2000), what effects come into existence only after something has become an object of scientific study (Hacking 2002:11).

He brings together these two approaches by articulating a dynamic kind of nominalism, a nominalism that highlights (1) how our categories come from nature (not just the human mind) and (2) how our categories refuse to be static. “The claim of dynamic nominalism,” Hacking explains, “is not that there was a kind of person who

came increasingly to be recognized by bureaucrats or by students of human nature but rather that a kind of person came into being at the same time as the kind itself was being invented” (2002:106). This is a nominalism that considers the ways in which the world must “be cut up into recognizable temporal and spatial units—partly because that is the way the world is and partly because that is the only way that science as we know it can work” (Bowker and Star 2000:98). It is a nominalism that holds onto “the concreteness of things in the world in a given moment, while at the same time allowing for the possibility that other, yet undeveloped, ways of registering, slicing up, and bringing into being the complexity of the world are, were, and will be made possible” (Murphy 2006:8). Still, as you may have noticed, a quiet tension remains, one that requires qualifier after qualifier.

Hacking draws a thick line between ‘the social’ and ‘the natural’, between ‘the subject’ and ‘the object’. The discussion has softly become epistemological in the oldest of fashions. Philosophical investigations into *being*—into *substance*—have been replaced by philosophical investigations into our *access to being*—into *being-for-humans* (Bryant 2011:35). There are appearances, and there is reality. There are social constructions, and there is the reality they construct. There are representations, and there is the world they represent (Mitchell 2002:4). The world is split into two, bifurcated in a way that leads scholars to ask: how do subjects relate to objects? how adequately do they represent them? how thoroughly do they fabricate them? The problem for an object-oriented ontology is that these questions are not questions about the *objects themselves*. They are not questions about objects and object-ness. They are questions about *how we know objects* and *whether or not we can know objects* (Bryant 2011:16). They are questions about “objects or their effects which do not exist in any recognizable form until they are objects of scientific study” (Hacking 2002:11).

Are these the only questions that can be asked? Must reality be carved into these two sectors? The answer, of course, is no. But I will need an ontology where “humans are no longer monarchs of being but are instead *among* beings, *entangled* in beings, and *implicated* in the other beings” (Bryant 2011:40). I will need to find a way to downgrade the special status assigned to human actors, all without eliminating them from my analysis. This has proved difficult for two reasons. First, it has been hard to tell stories that do not frame “the initiative of action [as] always [coming] from the human sphere,

the world itself doing little more than offering a sort of playground for human ingenuity” (Latour 1999:114). Consider, for example, the work of Bruno Latour. Even he has been guilty of privileging humans as actants, all the while instructing others on the importance of doing otherwise. As one reads *The Pasteurization of France* (1988b) or *Laboratory Life* (1979), they are not hard-pressed to find a human agent at the center of everything.

Perhaps this stems from the fact that in order for an object to enter into an account, it needs to leave some kind of trace. Without such a trace, an object will have offered “no information to the observer and will have [had] no visible effect on other agents” (Latour 2005:79). It is easiest to identify the traces objects leave *for us*. According to Latour, this is because specific tricks have been invented to make objects talk, “to offer descriptions of themselves, to produce *scripts* of what they are making others—humans or non-humans—do.” Sometimes the examples he gives reifies the human-centricity of this. “Printed questionnaires,” says Latour, “remain in the archives forever unconnected with human intentions until they are made alive again by some historian.” This is a thorny selection of words. Printed questionnaires must be made alive again *by* some historian? Ask any archivist or scrapbooker and they will tell you a different story, one in which papers are as active as any identifiable life form. They will tell you about the alum rosin coating commercial paper, about the ways in which the molecules of this waterproofing substance “split up and form an acidic solution” when “exposed to warmth and high humidity” (Browne 1990:n.p.). The cellulose fibers in the paper, “which are made of molecular chains of carbon atoms, are easily split by even weak acids. The strength of the fibers is destroyed, and paper made from them becomes as fragile as a dead leaf.”

I want to read this passage again. This time a little more closely, for Latour is not necessarily saying that printed questionnaires—as printed artifacts—stop acting, only that their “mode of action is no longer *visibly connected* to the usual social ties” (Latour 2005:80). But where does this leave the termites and booklice, the fungi and molds? What kinds of traces—what kinds of scripts—does paper leave for them? Latour has left this out. And he is not the only one. I have done the same. If you read the first two chapters carefully, you can spot glimmers of a privileged human, a privileged social sphere. I have not discussed the traces nonhuman entities leave for other nonhuman

entities. This is particularly apparent when I write about how the built environment of the Old City of Acre is rendered legible to humans, how material-semiotic grids have been placed over a messy reality. It will emerge again when I draw from John Law and his concept of noncoherence, when I refuse to create “neat little piles of coherent analysis” (Bogost 2012:20). By reclaiming messiness, I relinquish tidiness. Implicated in this metaphor, however, is a (human) viewer—some kind of organizer who is unable (or unwilling) to unscramble that which stands before them.

Yet there is another reason why it has been difficult to practice a symmetrical ontology. Let me return to the Palestinian refugee. The classification of an individual as a ‘Palestinian refugee’ is an interactive kind, a term Hacking uses to describe the ways in which people interact with our classifications of them. The lives of these Palestinians are often “broken, twisted, and torqued by their encounters with classification systems” (Bowker and Star 2000:26). A Palestinian refugee can become aware of how they are classified and modify or mold their behavior to fit—or reject—those classifications. For Hacking, this self-awareness is unique to humans. Scientific objects like quarks, for example, “do not form an interactive kind; the idea of the quark does not interact with quarks. Quarks are not aware that they are quarks and are not altered simply by being classified as quarks” (Hacking 1999:32). Or are they?

This might sound strange, but it need not. There are a number of object-oriented ontologists who have helped scholars think about how human *and* nonhuman actants agitate the world. In *Alien Phenomenology* (2012), Ian Bogost examines what it is like to be a thing, pursuing a line of inquiry into speculative philosophy that considers how objects perceive and experience one another. He encourages readers to reshuffle their scholarship, to decenter the human, and to think about what it might be like to be a Foveon digital image sensor, a bat, a pepper. These prompts push against Hacking’s tight grip on the Cartesian notion that the mind is what differentiates humans from nature—and that this difference matters. Consider, for a moment, disease-causing bacteria.

This classification triggers a series of interactions, all of which affect—at the level of life and death—an object of science. As Matt Drabek observes,

The classification of the natural scientist inspires the medical scientist to treat the newly classified object as problematic. In response, she develops and produces antibiotics. The use of these antibiotics causes distinct selection pressures on the

original bacteria. These selection pressures lead to evolutionary changes in the objects of classification and even to the development of new classifications, namely antibiotic-resistant bacteria. [2010:65]

Hacking, of course, admits that microbes “adapt themselves to us, quickly evolving strains that resist our antibacterial medications” (1999:106). The difference, he argues, is that the object of classification is not *aware* of the ways in which it is classified: “Bacteria are not aware of the work of natural scientists. They do not hold meeting[s] to discuss what must be done about the grave threat of antibiotics. They do not think of themselves as disease-causing and do not consciously modify their practices as a result of such classifications” (65). The difference between humans and nonhumans is indifference, and with this, his demarcation criterion has changed—if only in emphasis. It is not simply that humans interact with their classifications, but that their interactions are a specific kind of interaction, one that stems from *reasons* rather than *causes*. But is this difference of any ontological significance? For my purposes, this is what Hacking needs to show. He needs to show *how* this difference has been *made to matter*.

I want to think through these two difficulties surrounding the performance of a symmetrical ontology, first by considering the pasteurization of France, then by considering the classification of Palestinian refugees. The setting is a laboratory in Lille. Obviously, Louis Pasteur is an important character in this story, but he is not the only one who plays a part. There is also lactic-acid yeast. The problem, however, is that lactic-acid yeast has not yet become a durable substance, an object defined (by humans) by its attributes. It is merely a collection of verbs referring to a series of laboratory gestures, to a series of laboratory trials. This is how lactic-acid yeast is made to leave a trace *for us*—or, rather, *for him*. Readers have already seen just how important these traces can be: the only way to define an actor is through its actions, and the only way to define an action is “by asking what other actors are modified, transformed, perturbed, or created by the character that is the focus of attention” (Latour 1999:122).

As such, lactic-acid yeast, like anything else, is not *real* until it enters into associations with others. These others do not need to be humans. This is easier to understand once it is recognized that Pasteur was an unforeseen event that happened to lactic-acid yeast. Lactic-acid yeast experienced other lives before it encountered Pasteur and his laboratory in 1857, but it had also changed. Lactic-acid yeast took the “little push

that Pasteur has given it as a historic opportunity to manifest itself by altering its trajectory. The yeast proposes, Pasteur disposes. Pasteur proposes, the yeast disposes. Pasteur has not imposed his views on an infinitely plastic form, nor tentatively discovered the resistance of an infinitely robust form” (Latour 1996b:87). Lactic-acid yeast did not become *real* because it met Pasteur. It had previously been *real* as an actant “in relation to other organisms before becoming another fact of human knowledge” (Gratton 2014:90). Nonetheless, Pasteur’s encounter with lactic-acid yeast changed him as much as it changed them. It made them both *real-er*.

How does the self-awareness of classification systems fit into these definitions of actants and action? There are two things to consider. First, there is the reality of self-awareness. If actants are defined by their actions, and if actions are defined by their effects, then why not study self-awareness as an entity just like any other? Traces are left, or they are not. This is the premise behind a flat ontology. Self-awareness becomes *real*, self-awareness begins to *matter*, through its associations, through the ways in which it affects others. In this sense, self-awareness is, ontologically, no different from lactic-acid yeast, from cell mechanics, from environmental sensitivity. This, of course, is not meant to suggest that humans and their capacity for self-awareness are no more *important* than lactic-acid yeast and their ability to respond to their environments. Nor is it meant to suggest that a human and a microorganism *should be* of equal concern to ethical thought. In fact, I think it suggests the opposite.

A Palestinian refugee and a laboratory technician, a lactic-acid yeast and a political classification, a moment of self-awareness and an instance of environmental sensitivity—all of these things equally exist. But they do not exist equally (Bogost 2011:11). There are differences between a Palestinian refugee and a lactic-acid yeast. Many, I presume, probably feel much differently for a political refugee than they do for a microscopic organism. We have learned to be perturbed by their cries of anguish, their unbearable living conditions, their indefinite liminality—perturbed in ways that are often not even extended to those who migrate ‘voluntarily’ for economic reasons (Peteet 2005:ix). These kinds of perturbations, these kinds of articulations with other humans have made a Palestinian refugee *matter* in ways that a lactic-acid yeast does not—maybe

not for the State of Israel, maybe not for the Jewish Agency, but, I suspect, for many anthropologists, for many activists, and for many Palestinians.

This brings me to the second thing to consider. There is the efficacy of classification systems and the efficacy of self-awareness. Entities enter into relations with one another. Pasteur and lactic-acid yeast are no exception. But these relations are not always seamless. The world often resists, forcing scientists to either quit or to accommodate themselves to that resistance (Hacking 1999:71). In order for Pasteur to develop a vaccine, he needed to become a heterogeneous engineer. He needed to develop robust relationships with a host of other entities, simultaneously bringing them together in new configurations. The same can be said about classifications and the forms of self-awareness by which they are so often accompanied.

It was not the words of an Israeli lawmaker that transformed the Palestinian in Lebanon into a trembling refugee. It was also the military order that sent IDF soldiers to the border, armed with guns and the authority to arrest (even shoot) returnees. It was not just the conscious knowledge of one's political classification that made one Palestinian refugee stay in Lebanon, that made another Palestinian refugee strategize a mode of resistance. It was also the UN ration cards promising food and provisions, the fellow freedom fighters collecting supplies and supporters. The point I am trying to make is that classifications and self-awareness are, indeed, very real. Classifications have been made very real by the politicians who craft carefully worded guidelines, by the Palestinians who reflect on their new identities. Self-awareness of these classifications has been made very real by the refugees who fill out census cards, by the refugees who sneak across the border under the cover of darkness. A classification has aligned with a moment of self-awareness. A moment of self-awareness has aligned with a government form, with a stealthy border crossing. Without alliances such as these, neither would have left a trace. Without associations such as these, neither would have made a difference.

How, then, despite all of these difficulties, can scholars practice a flat ontology, one that treats human *and* nonhuman actants symmetrically? Luckily, there are a few examples from which to draw. Some are positive. Others are negative. I will begin with the most recent. In *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (2013), Eduardo Kohn reminds readers that semiosis is not unique to humans, that all

sorts of entities engage in semiotic practices. Through these remarks, he has replaced a dualistic approach in anthropology with a monistic one. Humans may be separate from the worlds they represent, but no more so than are jaguars and monkeys, ticks and plants. The lesson for an anthropologist is that “whenever you encounter an entity, the reference of the former language game, you can, by taking the entity itself as part of the semiosis, *reverse* the direction of description and start instead with the entity, letting the vibration from this entity traverse other entities” (Latour 2014b:262). This is, perhaps, best illustrated through the following joke:

[T]wo dogs meet in Moscow, one of them very fat and wealthy, the other pathetically emaciated. The latter asks the former: ‘How can you find food?’ The former zoosemiotically replies: ‘That’s easy. Everyday, at noon, I enter the Pavlov Institute and I begin to salivate: immediately afterward a conditioned scientist arrives, rings a bell and gives me food’. In this case the scientist reacts to a stimulus but the dog establishes a sort of reversible relationship between salivation and food: it knows that to a given stimulus a given reaction must correspond and therefore the dog possesses a code. Salivation is for it the sign of the possible reaction on the part of the scientist. [Eco 1976:20]

Other scholars have not been as successful. In “How to Attend to Screens? Technology, Ontology and Precarious Enactments” (2011), Malte Ziewitz narrates the obstacles he encountered as he tried to enact a flat(ter) ontology. He wanted to study the ubiquity of screens. These are objects we stare into and huddle around. They are often private, requiring the acknowledgement of certain rules of etiquette. And yet “they are virtually never mentioned or talked about. Screens are taken for granted, ignored and looked through as if they did not exist” (204). They are treated as placeholders, as extensions, as mediators—frameworks that highlight the relationship between screens and their users, two ontologically distinct objects, two analytically separate entities. This makes sense. After all, the human that operates a computer plugs flash drives into sockets, view words and images on a monitor, and applies physical force to a mouse and a keyboard. Ziewitz’s attempt at an object-oriented ontology was, he admits, a failure. Just like the studies that came before him, he tried “mitigate the boundaries between the material and the social, the non-human and the human, technology and society,” but all in a way that “somewhat ironically reinforce[d] this universal binary as the conceptual basis of [his] arguments” (2011:207–208).



But there are others. Timothy Mitchell provides another example. He has readers consider a chain of events in Egypt formed by the interconnections between war, disease, and agriculture.

War in the Mediterranean diverted attention and resources from an epidemic arriving from the south, brought by mosquitoes that took advantage of wartime traffic. The insect also moved with the aid of the prewar irrigation projects and the ecological transformations those brought about. The irrigation works made water available for industrial crops but left agriculture dependent upon artificial fertilizers. The ammonium nitrate used on the soil was the main ingredient in the manufacture of explosives and was diverted for the needs of war. The irrigation works made water available for industrial crops but left agriculture dependent upon artificial fertilizers. The ammonium nitrate used on the soil was the main ingredient in the manufacture of explosives and was diverted for the needs of war. Deprived of fertilizer the fields produced less food, so the parasite carried by the mosquito found its human hosts malnourished and killed them at the rate of hundreds a day. [Mitchell 2002:27]

A number of actants are sprinkled throughout his account: mosquitoes, parasites, ammonium nitrate, Sherman tanks, soldiers, rivers. He presents an ecology of human *and* nonhuman actants, weaving together a series of events, ever mindful to not make any *a priori* assumptions about who (or what) will count as an agent. There is also Levi Bryant, who presents another example, although it is more of a recommendation. Academics, he suggests, should spend less time sitting.

[P]hilosophers, as writers and scholars, do a lot of sitting. This is also true of those times when we *pause* to reflect and wonder what objects are. Everything is *still*. Rather than *acting* on objects, we *look* at objects. Where *acting* on objects tends to produce qualitative differences in the objects, gazing at objects tends to reveal fixed properties. [Bryant 2011:93–94]

Perhaps adding action to the repertoire of philosophical practice might require academics to think differently about the objects that surround them. They can start small, with a nearby coffee mug. The fact that the mug tends to have a relatively stable spatial structure—the fact that it is large, red, and solid—is an effect of its placement within a stable regime of relations. Any change in these relations, such as a fluctuation in temperature, gravity, or electromagnetic radiation will effect a change in its spatial shape (91). The mug and its ‘properties’—the shaping or the coloring actions it performs—are not intrinsic features of the mug; they are an effect of the relations it enters into with other objects. These are things that are often overlooked, for on our planet gravity, pressure, and temperature are fairly stable. But once this idea is no longer strange, we can

begin to apply it elsewhere: to self-awareness, to compressive stress, to concrete, to government.

An actant is an event, a mediation, a translation. With this statement, I have made a series of ontological commitments, the most important of which is that an object is neither a substance nor an essence, but an occurrence, a happening, a phenomenon. It is also something that becomes an entirely different entity with each association it forms. So, then, at the beginning of this section, when I momentarily bracketed human actants and their relations with nonhuman objects, it was not meant to reinscribe a dichotomy that I would ultimately seek to overcome. It was, rather, meant to find a way to show that one type of entity is no more passive or active than the other. If positioned just right, humans *and* nonhumans can be equally as alive, equally as vibrant. This is why I am mindful of the terms that I use. Actor-network theorists deploy words like ‘actant’ instead of ‘actor’, ‘translation’ instead of ‘interaction’, ‘interessement’ instead of ‘interest’, ‘delegation’ instead of ‘representation’. This is not meant to confuse readers. It is merely meant to blur “the distinction between the really social and human-centered terms and the really natural and object-centered repertoires” (Callon and Latour 1992:347).

The problem, however, is that it has not always been easy to acknowledge the liveliness of matter, for it is often presumed that scientists can speak for themselves (and for others) in ways that objects cannot. In the pages that follow, I will talk about the sea and its salts. I will talk about cement and concrete. I will talk about the flows of moisture and the respiration of stone. I will also talk about materials scientists and building contractors, local residents and local authorities. While doing so, I will try to talk about each of them in the same register, observing how the traces left behind by each of these entities modifies the controversies at hand. Whether it is a scientific report, a layer of lime-based mortar, a verbal complaint, or a crumbling stone, these traces are not to be treated as “those closed, frozen, and estranged things-in-themselves whose part has been either exaggerated or downplayed” (Callon and Latour 1992:355). To paraphrase from Michel Callon and Bruno Latour, they are to be treated as actants—open *and* closed, active *and* passive, wild *and* domesticated, far away *and* near, depending on the results of their interactions.

### *The Movements of Moisture*

I was in Kafr Yasif, standing outside the workshop of a local ceramicist. I had accompanied my friend here on an errand, for she had been tasked with delivering materials to the artist. We were a little early. She was a little late. We waited. I watched as my friend wandered around the alley, examining the different plants that had emerged from a stone wall. She picked a handful of dandelions and brought them to me. “Here, you can eat this.” So I did. She picked a few more and handed them to me again. “The Jews do not like to eat these. They say the cats urinate on them.” My friend was one of a handful of Palestinian graduate students studying anthropology at the University of Haifa. As such, she recommended that I visit this town. “Out of all the Palestinian villages, this one has one of the largest concentrations of ancient buildings. Many of them are now empty. People go and build new houses rather than repair the old ones.” The ceramicist confirmed this statement when she arrived. Her workshop was situated inside one of these historic structures, newly renovated through a process filled with one surprise after another.

“I did not find out until later that there is another room in this building,” she began. “Someone told me there was a room behind this wall. So we took down the wall and opened it up. Now it is a workshop for students.”

“What did it look like when you first opened the room?” I asked.

“There was a dirt floor and the walls were covered in a black soot. You know, like from a fire—from cooking or baking. This wall behind you, we had to put in concrete reinforcements. They say you are not supposed to use concrete, but this is something we needed to do because there is a building on top of us, and this building, this wall, cannot carry that weight. We also added plaster. This is over areas that had small stones that were not very pretty. But with the plaster, we had to leave a gap of a few centimeters.” She extended her hand, using her fingers to illustrate the size of the gap. “We needed to leave this gap in order to let the stone, you know....”

I caught myself smiling, for I could anticipate what she would say next. It is a strange phrase, one I had heard many times before. And maybe it was this smile that encouraged her to continue her thought.

“...breathe. To let the stone breathe.”

The stones need to breathe. Perhaps I find this phrase strange because it contradicts everything I thought I knew about a building. Buildings look so hopelessly static, don't they? They look so fixed, so solid. It is almost impossible to imagine them "as movement, as flight, as a series of transformations" (Latour and Yaneva 2008:80). There is no need for Étienne-Jules Marey's photographic gun, a camera that can arrest the flight of a pelican so as to be able to study in a fixed format the physiology of its movement—"every single successive freeze-frame of a continuous flow of flight." Yet everybody knows, especially architects and engineers, that buildings are never static objects, that "once it has been built, it ages, it is transformed by its users, modified by all of what happens inside and outside, and that it will pass or be renovated, adulterated and transformed beyond recognition" (80). The challenge is how to capture these movements, all of the flows and all of the relations that make up a building.

I have already begun to show how a building can be as active as anything else. It pushes against loads. It explodes. It breathes. This is what I needed to study next, for these are the actions that preoccupy the conservation professionals working in the Old City of Acre. They play with stones, mortars, and plasters, experimenting with new combinations of materials. They monitor the ways in which these entities resist, the ways in which they give way. They do not always know whether or not their experiments will make things 'better' or 'worse'. There is always the fear of silent or unrepresentative traces, the anxiety that there are too many variables to consider—the moisture, the salts, the stones, the pollution, the temperature. Sometimes the uncertainty is so great that it freezes a conservator; no decisions are made, no actions are taken. This is how I found myself in the middle of a construction site on Nahalat Binyamin Street in Tel Aviv, interviewing a mineralogist from Germany.

He was an older man, tall and skinny, who moved with an energizing briskness that is usually reserved for youth. My impression may have been affected by his choice for a work helmet. It was deep orange with stickers plastered all over it, the kind of helmet designed for and decorated by skateboarders. He warned me to watch my head and my step, escorting me through a labyrinth bedecked with scaffolding, exposed piping, and the rhythmic banging of hammers. He reached his hand into his tool belt and pulled out a moisture meter, a small device with two prods and a digital screen. "You can

see I have marked throughout the building the water line of every wall. I used this device. You place it against the wall, like this, and a percentage will appear on the display.”

“What does the percentage mean?” I asked.

“See here. It says, ‘ten percent’. This means that there are 200 liters of water for every cubic meter of construction material. Most of the building materials are way less than one cubic meter. So you can imagine how much water that is for such a small piece of material. Say you took a blow dryer and tried to remove the moisture. It would be like taking buckets of water from the sea in order to change its level.” He moved the device around the wall, placing it here and there, showing me all of the different readings. “See how the readings differ above and below the line? You can see this is where capillary action stops. Above this line, the reading is only 1.4 percent. Below the line—look. There is five percent, seven percent, nine percent.” In general, the percentage decreased as he moved the device higher up the wall, but not always. “Even the machine is not perfect. But you can feel the difference with your hand.” He held his palm against the wall above the moisture line and then below the moisture line. I did the same, mimicking his movements. To my untrained hands, however, both sections felt the same: cool and damp.

He called the phenomenon he measured capillary action, an event that happens when a porous material—such as stone—comes into contact with moisture from the ground. Capillary suction draws groundwater into the pores of a stone. In *Lectures on Materials Science for Architectural Conservation* (2009), Giorgio Torracca describes the forces acting on water inside a pore. He illustrates how the water inside a pore forms a meniscus, rising along the walls of the pore, albeit with a slight depression at the center (81). Water molecules, he explains, are attracted “to the surfaces of the material and tend to climb along the walls” (82). While these molecules are partially restrained by the force of gravity as well as by their attraction to other water molecules, the effects of these restraints are “small in comparison with the electrical forces that act between the water molecules and the surface of the material.” This is why the size of the pore matters. If the distance between the walls of a pore is small enough, then the attraction of the water molecules to the walls of the pore will prevail over the attraction of the water molecules to each other. As a result, water can climb, often to considerable heights. This, I was told,

is the most common means through which moisture travels through building materials. It is a means that is so common that building materials with low capillary absorption will often be deployed for use as a moisture-controlling barrier (Scherer 2004).

“In Acre, or even here in Tel Aviv, you cannot escape the moisture. It doesn’t matter if you are near the sea or closer inside the city. If you are inside or outside. There will be moisture problems. It is something that will only increase overtime. This is why cement is so problematic. This is why you need to learn how to be a sailboat, not a submarine.”

“What makes cement so problematic?”

“Cement will cause the moisture line to increase exponentially. For example, there was one building I was working on in Germany. The moisture line went, say, to here.” He pointed to a spot on the wall, just above his waist. “This was in a building constructed a few hundred years ago. Then they covered the building in a cement plaster, and the water line rose to here, almost double the original height. This means that in fifty years, we have caused the moisture level to rise an amount that took hundreds of years. The moisture cannot go out, so it goes up. This is something you can see in Acre. You can walk around the Old City and find the moisture line because all of the stones below it will be more rotten.” These are the traces moisture has left, traces by which the mineralogist taught me to be affected.

During the British Mandate, the residents of the Old City of Acre had also identified the sea as an actant adversely affecting the built environment. They came to grips with the actions of the sea by simply avoiding it. On 15 December 1942, a Sitting Board for the Mandate Administration convened, tasked with selecting a site for the residence of the Deputy District Commissioner (Acre). The Sitting Board inspected two sites, both of which had previously been reported to be suitable. The first site was located in Block 13021, “close to the sea shore just north of the Acre urban boundary but within the town planning area and south of the Jail Labour Camp.”<sup>69</sup> It was, however, deemed unsuitable on account of its close proximity to the sea. Or, rather, on account of residential opinions, on the verbal traces residents left for the authorities.

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<sup>69</sup> Report of a Sitting Board to select a site for the residence of the Deputy District Commissioner (Acre). 15 December 1942. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.33.81. Israel State Archives.

At first sight this would appear to be an advantage. But there is an unanimity of opinion among Acre residents that housing sites near the sea are to be avoided. It is stated that humidity on the sea coast in Acre is phenomenally high, especially in summer, and that it has an injurious effect on materials, and the life of a house and of house property (notably clothes) situated on the verge of the sea is said to be considerably less than that of a site hundreds of metres inland. It may here be noted that all the ancient settlements along this coast and the houses of the Pashas of the last century were not situated on the coast but along the sand-ridge which runs from Napoleon's Hill northwards parallel to the coast at a distance of a mile or so from it.<sup>70</sup>

What I would come to learn from my conversations with conservation professionals is that moisture, in and of itself, is not necessarily a harmful actant. It *becomes* destructive to building materials through its association with other entities, through the ways in which it mediates, delegates, and translates. Consider reinforced concrete, which undergoes a process chemists call carbonation when it is exposed to just the right elements. "Reinforced concrete will only last for thirty years or so," explained the mineralogist from Germany. "Overtime, carbon dioxide will slowly enter the cement and diffuse into the materials. This creates a reaction—calcium hydroxide to calcium carbonate. When this reaction happens, the pH decreases to around seven, maybe, and the steel is no longer protected. The still will then start to push away and the cement will rupture. This will happen with all metals—even stainless steel. So in Acre, the stainless steel interventions they have added to the outside of the buildings, they will not be immune from this."

He was describing the ways in which the high alkalinity of cement paste passivates the steel that reinforces concrete, protecting it against oxidation and corrosion. Carbonation, however, is almost impossible to avoid, and there are a number of actants that can hasten or delay its deleterious effects. These include moisture, calcium hydroxide, and carbon dioxide. These are the three actants with whom the mineralogist needed to collaborate. They are present in the pores of the concrete as well as in the concrete and in the air—respectively. As carbon dioxide slowly penetrates the surface of the concrete, it reacts with a compound found in concrete (calcium hydroxide) and the moisture circulating through its pores. Water is essential to this reaction, for a reaction

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

between carbon dioxide and calcium hydroxide can only occur in a solution. The result of this reaction is calcium carbonate.

As the larger calcium hydroxide molecules are replaced with smaller calcium carbonate molecules, the porosity of concrete increases, allowing carbon dioxide to travel deeper and deeper into the concrete until it approaches the embedded steel. As already mentioned by the mineralogist, this is important because the presence of calcium carbonate near the steel disrupts the high alkaline environment created by calcium hydroxide, slowly neutralizing it, its hydrogen ions consumed during carbonation. The lower pH weakened the passivating layer surrounding the reinforced steel, exposing the metals to the corrosive effects of water and air that cause it to rust, expand in volume, and push against the concrete. This is how the concrete cracks, spalls, and fails. This is how the concrete gets weakened to the point that it loses its load-bearing abilities (Hanson 2015).

The carbonation of reinforced concrete has been a major problem throughout Israel. One noteworthy example is the site of the former Orchard Cinema, located along the seawall of the Old City of Acre, adjacent to the land gate. Constructed almost fifty years ago from cement, the structure is currently inaccessible, blocked by fences and signs forbidding entrance to the site—objects to which the Municipality has delegated the enforcement of its dangerous building order. Every engineer with whom I spoke mentioned this building, emphasizing the extent to which it is a very, very dangerous structure. It is so dangerous that nobody is allowed to go inside—not even to demolish it. The structure sits right along the sea, basking in perfect conditions for the quick deterioration of reinforced concrete. The mineralogist, however, taught me how to see this kind of damage in other structures. “When you look at a building and you see cracks that travel in a straight line, then you know inside is some kind of iron bar. This material will last for maybe thirty years or so.”

He encouraged me to think about how the deterioration of reinforced concrete has affected the New City of Acre just as much as the Old City of Acre. “You know those buildings on stilts in the northern part of Acre outside the Old City?” he asked me. “What will they do with these buildings when, after fifty years or so, they will start falling apart and looking like shit? Building in Israel, it is all political. To settle as many Jews as



possible and as quickly as possible. But they are not building with good materials. You can even look here and see. That building there. There is the Bauhaus structure built with cement and modern materials, and it is starting to show signs of decay. And then right next door—RIGHT NEXT DOOR—they are starting to build this huge apartment complex using the same materials. Have they not looked around and tried to learn from past mistakes? The mistakes are right next to them!”

The engineers with whom I spoke regularly expressed concerns about the dangers of reinforced concrete, dangers that can affect those inside and outside a building. The structural engineer for the Acre Municipality, charged with identifying and reporting dangerous buildings, even cited the Municipality as a ‘dangerous structure’. Walking to his office inside the Municipality, he pointed out a window. “If you look here, you can see parts of the concrete wall are different colors. This is because pieces of concrete were breaking off and falling down. So I wrote up a report and sent it to the Mayor to sign—just like I do with every other dangerous structure. Right away the Mayor calls me about the situation. Luckily, they were able to find the money to fix it, which was really important because if one of those concrete pieces falls off, it can hit someone in the head. It can kill them.”

Reinforced concrete is not durable. Nor is it safe. It is also not ‘original’ to the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre. There are all of the international charters promulgated by ICOMOS to consider, which identify key conservation principles relating to interventions and their reversibility, their repeatability, and their re-treatability. These are statements of ‘good practice’ that set international standards and guidelines, encouraging conservation professionals to preserve as much original material as possible, to keep any interventions to a minimum, and to do no more than is necessary to the original materials. There are, of course, statements that amend and complicate these recommendations (e.g., the Nara Document on Authenticity, the Declaration of San Antonio). Nonetheless, conservation professionals in the Old City of Acre directly linked their conservation interventions with the principle of compatibility, asserting that conservation treatments should not negatively affect the original materials of a historic building.

Some linked these conservation principles to moisture and salts quite explicitly, directing attention to the ways in which minerals, compounds, and conservation guidelines act *with* each other and *against* each other. I want to revisit the materials scientist we met in Chapter 2 and the report she submitted on behalf of the Old Acre Development Company. Remember, the Israel Antiquities Authority had rejected her recommendations—the conclusions she derived from a series of capillary absorption tests, evaporation tests, compressive stress tests, and salt crystallization tests on a Moroccan limestone and a local sandstone. “According to the Israel Antiquities Authority,” she began to explain as she leaned forward in her chair, “the stones need to be authentic. Compatibility is not just a scientific or a technical issue. It is also a historic issue. If you were to ask me whether or not, on a technical level, the Moroccan limestone is compatible with the stones in the sea wall, I would say, ‘Yes, of course’. But if you were to ask me if the Moroccan limestone is compatible for conservation purposes in the historic sea wall, then I would say, ‘Absolutely not. They may be appropriate for new construction, or maybe for construction in a buffer zone. But you cannot use the Moroccan limestone in the sea walls of the Old City of Acre and call it conservation.’ My report was fine. But when it is placed in a conservation context, then it is wrong. We have to use authentic materials. We have to quarry the same kind of stones, even if the price is extraordinary.”

There is a lot of heterogeneous engineering that a conservation professional needs to perform. There are human and nonhuman actants that need to be identified. There are entities that need to come into association. There are alliances that need to be strengthened. How does all of this happen? This is a difficult question to answer, mostly because there are still so many unsettled controversies. How does salt migrate through stone? How does the crystallization of salt affect stone? The problem, perhaps, stems from the fact that stone conservation requires designing creative ways to ‘see’ inside a wall, inside a stone. Materials scientists have deployed a variety of devices that have allowed them to zoom into a material. Environmental scanning electron microscopy, nuclear magnetic resonance methods, moisture meters, computer modelling techniques, all montage together a series of impressions that create the effect of scale, that enable a materials scientist to ascend and descend through different scales of reality, nestling each

level one within the other (Latour 2014a). It is also an effect encountered in practical conservation guides, which strategically position an assortment of photographs and drawings in ways that allow readers to ‘see’ inside a wall. These are the texts from which I will continue, for these are the controversies that have settled. These are the kinds of texts conservation practitioners in the Old City of Acre instructed me to read.

“Capillaries are the highways for the transport of salt.” This is how the mineralogist began his explanation of why moisture needed to be accommodated, needed to be dealt with. Salts are soluble. They dissolve in water, which transports them into the masonry of a structure and through an intricate network of pores. In the Old City of Acre, one of the primary methods through which these water molecules enter stone masonry is capillary rise, an upward suction that is offset by the rate at which water is evaporated. This is when the problem emerges. Evaporation is when salts attack, a phrase used to describe the damage caused by water-soluble salts as they crystallize within the pores of masonry materials. It is a problem that compounds itself. When moisture evaporates from a stone wall, salts are left behind. This renders the solution that remains inside the wall even more concentrated than before; salts located within the porous material will actually “increase the amount of water in it, partly by enhancing capillary rise, as suggested by G. Massari and I. Massari (1993), but also because of hygroscopicity (Weber 1984)” (Charola 2000:329).

Eventually, the solution becomes supersaturated, at which point crystals begin to form, exerting a force sufficiently strong enough to disrupt, to fret, to crumble masonry material (Scherer 2004). Crystallization pressure tends to be higher in stones with smaller pores (Buj and Gisbert 2010); they can better maintain supersaturation and there is not as much space to accommodate salt crystals (Delgado et al. 2016:3). Perhaps this is what makes the sandstone local to the Old City of Acre so vulnerable. It is a highly porous stone, which allows it to absorb a substantial amount of moisture. But it is also a stone with fine capillary pores. This means water evaporates from the stone very slowly. It also means that the local sandstone is highly affected by salt crystallization (Wasserman 2002).

These technical details make clear the ways in which nonhuman actors delegate tasks to others—the ways in which nonhuman actors get others to perform particular

tasks (Callon 1984:201). Take moisture as an example. When moisture moves through the capillary pores of a stone wall, it delegates to salt the task of attacking these pores. Salts, as I learned, crystallize in ways that disrupt the physical properties of a stone, enlarging the pores ever-so-slightly. While these are minute changes, they accumulate over time, resulting in the progressive deterioration of masonry material (Doehne 2002:51). But they also do something else. As the larger pores crack, flake, or otherwise disintegrate the stone, they expose new portions of the masonry to evaporation; larger pores allow for more vapor permeability, increasing the rate of evaporation in ways that allow moisture to continue its cycle, to transform from a saturated solution to an invisible vapor. There is a shift, a displacement, one that makes it possible for an actant (moisture) to have an effect on the world, even when it is absent. This is what it means to delegate.

Specific human interventions have exacerbated this destruction. Cement-based mortars and plasters have become quite popular as construction materials in the Old City of Acre. They are simple, reliable, and durable. And that is exactly the problem. They are simply too reliably durable. “I have not done a survey of all the buildings in Acre, but the ones that I have worked in, I would say ninety percent have had cement plaster or mortar,” began one conservation professional. “This was done beginning in the 1920s and 1930s. Cement became popularized. They didn’t know yet that it would be destructive for the stones. That it wouldn’t allow the stones to breathe. I believe the stone needs to breathe. That it is alive and that it can die. Just like wood.” By monitoring the effects of past interventions, conservation professionals have linked the use of cement-based materials in the maintenance of historic structures with discernable damage to the original masonry materials. These cause-and-effect associations have led many to assert that “architectural conservation should use materials and techniques identical, if possible, to the original ones” (Torraca 2009:69).

“Cement plaster will turn the kurkar stone into sandstone. No. Not sandstone. It is already stone. It will turn it into sand,” explained the mineralogist. He invited me to walk around the Old City of Acre and notice “all the places they used cement. If you look at the stone walls, you will see what looks like ribs from the pointing interventions. The mortar will be very hard and the parts of the stone around the edges will be disintegrated. Left and right of the pointing, the stone will be gone.” Conservation scientists have

become quite skilled at studying the ways in which different nonhuman entities exist as autonomous actors in their own right. They have explained to me how the physical and mechanical properties of cement-based materials interact adversely with original masonry materials. Cement mortar uses the capillary force of its relatively smaller-sized pores to attract moisture to the joints of a stone structure (Hughes et al. 1998:127). This is what a mortar should do. However, the small pores found in cement render the material impermeable, a characteristic that prevents air and moisture from flowing *through* it. As a result, the moisture inside the stone is required to find an alternative route. Instead of travelling through an impermeable cement, it gets re-directed to a path through the sandstone, through a material which, because of its larger-sized pores, allows evaporation to take place. Or, to put it differently, cement-based mortars deflect the soluble solution, forcing it to evaporate from adjacent surfaces instead of through the mortar. Salt crystallization, then, takes place inside the sandstone itself (Torraca 2009:87).

### *A Sociology of Translations*

Thus far, I have tried to remain impartial towards the technical arguments articulated by conservation professionals in the Old City of Acre. I have refrained from imposing a familiar analytic grid onto the statements they have made, one that classifies their claims as social constructions or as non-negotiable facts. Instead, I followed the traces that these conservation professionals have learned to follow, identifying a few of the clever means they have devised to see the trails nonhumans have left for other nonhumans. I listened to the stories these experts had learned to tell, stories through which they have mapped the many relations that give something like reinforced concrete or kurkar stones their ‘properties’. These are the stories through which controversies about salt attack have closed, through which representative traces have been deemed unquestionable. This, then, is how cement and steel, moisture and salts, stones and pores have interfered in architectural conservation. But there are also many others that interfere. In this section, I will explore a few of the controversies that have emerged in the Old City of Acre, controversies that parley a number of different ontological positionings about cement—what it does and what it does not do (Callon and Latour 1992:353). By examining the details of these controversies, I want to practice a sociology of translations, studying all of “the movements and detours that must be accepted as well as

the alliances that must be forged” (Callon 1984:206). I will show just how fragile architectural conservation can be, just how tricky it can be to get everything to align—and stay aligned.

In 2001 the Old Acre Development Company, the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the Israel Land Administration initiated a Pilot Project. It was a project to rehabilitate a residential block in the Old City of Acre, a kind of case study to assess the kinds of challenges that might arise during the architectural conservation of a historic city. The understanding was that the conclusions derived from this Pilot Project could be used to guide similar projects in Safad, Tiberias, and Ramleh. There were other goals as well, including (1) the improvement of the quality of life for the occupants of the block; (2) the conservation of the exterior façades of a number of historic structures; (3) the development of the Old City of Acre as an international tourist destination; (4) a reduction in the scope of tenancy through the marketing of leasing rights to residents and investors; and (5) the education of residents and property managers about proper maintenance techniques (Shoef and Fuhrmann-Naaman 2008).

The story I will tell begins in a meeting between the Old Acre Development Company and the mineralogist from Germany. They had arranged to conduct an experiment on the exterior of building 18010/28a between 21 October 2007 and 20 December 2007, one designed to identify a suitable formula for a durable lime-based plaster—a plaster that would allow the buildings in the Old City of Acre to breathe. All of this was part and parcel of the Pilot Project, for many had technical questions about how best to preserve the masonry fabric of the Old City of Acre. This is a fabric composed of kurkar, a type of sandstone found along the Levantine coast of the Mediterranean Sea, one that provides a nesting site for an endangered bird—the European bee-eater. As such, it has been illegal to quarry this stone from anywhere but a few licensed quarries, a fact which has rendered it substantially more expensive than modern building materials, a fact that has underlined the importance of conserving the original masonry materials.

Surveys conducted by conservation architects from the Israel Antiquities Authority revealed that many of the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre have been treated with a sacrificial layer of plaster, which has been applied to buildings in order to

protect them from salt attack. However, as Ram Shoef and Yael Fuhrmann-Naaman, two conservation architects from the Israel Antiquities Authority, explained in their report, “At the beginning of the [P]ilot [P]roject it was decided not to plaster the buildings because it was believed at the time that no such plaster exists that can withstand the environmental conditions” (2008:n.p.). It would simply be too difficult, as it requires just the right composition of materials, just the right application techniques. But after removing the plaster from many façades, they discovered that the stones showed extensive deterioration, a condition that necessitated the application of a new plaster.

This is where the mineralogist and his plaster experiments enter the story. The two conservation architects from the Israel Antiquities Authority asked questions about the movements of moisture through sandstone, about the crystallization of salts within its pores, about the effects of different building materials on these processes. They wanted to know if it was possible to control rising damp and attacking salts in the Old City of Acre, for they had seen with their own eyes the extensive damage caused when salts attack. The mineralogist also shared these questions. These questions were deceptively simple. How does a building breathe? Are there any materials that can assist in this respiration? How can conservation professionals ensure these materials last as long as possible? In order to answer these questions, over a period of two years, “a number of experiments were conducted using plaster in the city, some of them with industrial plaster, manufactured by prominent firms in the field, and some with mixtures that were specifically made for this purpose” (Shoef and Fuhrmann-Naaman 2008:n.p.).

These three conservation professionals had positioned themselves as an obligatory point of passage, one which required the fettering together of property managers, building contractors, local residents, and soluble solutions—four sets of actors, all of whom are interested in these simple questions, neither of whom can attain what they want without the others. This part is crucial. It follows the mantra of obligatory points of passage that I already showed in Chapter 2, one I have paraphrased from Michel Callon: If moisture wants to continue its hydrological cycle (for whatever reason), if property managers want to maintain safe housing (for whatever reason), if building contractors want to perform effective repairs (for whatever reason), then they all must learn the answers to these questions. They all must learn that “their alliances around [these] question[s] can benefit

each of them” (1984:205–206). But the road is often blocked by a series of obstacles. The salts attack the plaster too aggressively. The plaster treatments are too expensive, too unreliable, too complicated. The mechanical characteristics of each building are too unique. How, then, does this work? How do actors submit—or refuse—to being integrated into these alliances?

Devices of *interessement* are needed. Stated generally, an interessement device is a special kind of trace. Interessement occurs when an actant adopts a device and positions it between itself and another entity in such a way as to entangle their identities. The problem, however, is that these other entities are often implicated, if only tentatively, in other projects. So, then, an interessement device, whether it is a strategy or a mechanism, must be able to interrupt these other entanglements in order to establish new ones. If these initial entanglements are strong, then force may be necessary. If these initial entanglements are weak, then seduction and solicitation may be enough. This entire process requires a lot of interpretive work. A device builder needs to identify all the other relevant actants, anticipating the things that they want and the things to which they are associated. Only then can she attempt to corner these actants, interrupting any (competing) associations in order to construct a new series of alliances. Callon provides readers with a formal example:

A interests B by cutting or weakening all the links between B and the invisible (or at times quite visible) group of other entities C, D, E, etc. who may want to link themselves to B. The properties and identity of B (whether it is a matter of scallops, scientific colleagues, or fishermen) are consolidated and/or redefined during the process of interessement. B is a ‘result’ of the association which links it to A. This link dissociates B from all the C, D, and E’s (if they exist) that attempt to give it another definition. We call this elementary relationship which begins to shape and consolidate the social link the triangle of interessement. [1984:208]

The mineralogist relied on seduction as an interessement device, guiding the movements of soluble solutions by enticing them with lime-based mortars and plasters. Such materials have certain affordances, all of which link together in ways that encourage the movement of soluble solutions away from the surrounding stone masonry. They are relatively weak. They also contain a wide range of differently sized pores. They have pores with high capillarity, a technical characteristic that allows them to withdraw moisture *and* salts from stones. They also have larger pores, pores that can facilitate



evaporation as well as accommodate salt crystal growth (Henry and Stewart 2011:312). The right combination of small and large pores is important. It shifts the evaporative front away from the original masonry materials and towards the plaster or the mortar. This enables the plaster or the mortar—rather than the stone—to become the site where salts attack. That is, if the soluble solutions *can* enter into the sacrificial mortar, if the moisture *can* evaporate from this sacrificial plaster—if the appropriate dissociations *can* take place. These entities may have other commitments, other enticements—other things (sea breeze, air-conditioning unit) that encourage them (salts, moisture) to stay in place.

Lime-based plasters and mortars need to be able to extract the moisture and salts circulating within the pores of a stone, physically dissociating them from the original stone material. But they need to be able to do this without immediately disintegrating. As an interessement device, these materials are designed to grant users a certain degree of control over moisture and its presence within a masonry structure. They are designed to sacrifice, formulated to crumble and decay, to absorb the impact of attacking salts so that the original stone material can remain unharmed. It is a treatment strategy that transforms moisture and salt crystallization into a problem that can be managed and controlled. However, if it is to work, this interessement device must be kept intact—it must be held in place for as long as possible. The right mixture of binders and aggregates, additives and admixtures needs to be applied to the stone with just the right series of textured layers. This is something that is easier said than done. Lime-based plasters and mortars can be fickle. Their utility for any building—or any portion of a building—requires a carefully formulated recipe, an ongoing experimentation.

Interessement does not stop with soluble solutions. Other devices are needed in order to entangle building contractors, property managers, and local residents with the goals of conservation professionals. Examples of these devices include conversations and demonstrations. They also include laws. Conservation architects from the Israel Antiquities Authority have not always had an easy time convincing local residents to abandon cement-based materials in favor of lime-based materials. Explanations about the reasons behind the disintegration of kurkar stones have not effectively untangled residents from their reliance on cement-based materials. Descriptions of the affordances of lime-based materials have not been enough to forge new links between residents and

lime, extricating them from the other actors to which they are pulled. The durability of lime-based materials has not yet been sufficiently demonstrated. Local residents merely need to look around them, at how quickly lime-based plasters began to deteriorate after the rehabilitation and conservation of buildings in Block 18010. Words have not worked their seductive magic when positioned against these acts of witnessing. The representatives of lime-based materials have betrayed the Israel Antiquities Authority, leaving traces that have not been picked up and carried forward by others.

According to Shelley-Anne Peleg, the Director of the International Conservation Center, the residents of the Old City of Acre have often criticized the extensive plaster work performed under the guidance of the Israel Antiquities Authority. It simply disintegrated far too quickly. One resident she interviewed argued that the residents should be the ones to direct these interventions, for they are the ones who understand the stones. They are the ones who “understand its unique building materials and conditions,” who are better equipped with “the right knowledge to perform a stable and durable plastering” (2010:79). Another resident echoed these claims, stating that the plaster continues to fail because the work is performed by contractors who are not residents of Acre. “It was only when the contractors were assisted by the knowledge of local residents that they began to have more successful results.”

“A sacrificial layer is applied,” began Khaled, a building contractor based in the Old City of Acre. “This is so the plaster will get worn instead of the stones. The material they use, though, doesn’t even last for five years. They did a project with Arco lime mortar. Before they even finished—before they even removed the scaffolding—the mortar started to crumble. How are you going to convince the residents to use these materials instead of cement? These are the materials approved by the Israel Antiquities Authority and they didn’t even last for two months.”

“There is just no trust,” continued Khaled. “That’s the problem with the International Conservation Center. They have been there for so many years and they are not able to build trust with the local residents. This is a conversation I had with some of their employees. We were talking about how to get the community involved in conservation and how to get the community to trust the Israel Antiquities Authority.”

“Did they have any ideas about how to build trust?”

“No. It is all just talk. They talk about needing to build trust, but it doesn’t go beyond talk. This is the problem,” he replied. And so cement-based materials remain an attractive alternative for local residents, one that has been shown to last for decades. There are financial concerns to consider. There are aesthetic standards to maintain. Lime-based materials need to be able to attach—and stay attached—to the stone walls. But they cannot. They are built to disintegrate. In consequence, they simply require too much maintenance. “Even the Israel Antiquities Authority runs into the problem of maintenance. A lot of the work they have done throughout the Old City has not been maintained. They have not done any maintenance. That is why there are a lot of buildings throughout the Old City with plaster crumbling and peeling off the walls. If you want to protect the stones from the effects of the sea, then this is something that needs to be re-done every two to three years,” Khaled concluded. Peleg agrees:

The composition of the traditional plaster and the manner of its preparation are of great importance for its durability over time and, in any case, regular maintenance is required for its preservation over the years....the issues of maintenance and plaster conservation have not acquired an appropriate solution. Despite extensive research carried out on this subject, no solution has yet been found to prevent the disintegration of the plaster. In addition, there is no regular maintenance program, and, therefore, the buildings have no chance of resisting natural weathering processes over time. [Peleg 2010:84–85]

Maintenance is not only a problem for the local residents. Property managers, such as Amidar and the Old Acre Development Company, are legally required to maintain the exterior façades of the buildings they administer, the cost of which would be shared with its protected tenants (Assaf 2014:16). This includes regularly repairing any damaged mortar or plaster. “Because the Old City of Acre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site,” began an engineer from the Development Authority, “the Israel Antiquities Authority says that the buildings in the Old City should be covered in plaster to protect the stone walls from environmental elements. However, we can only use approved materials when we conduct repairs. This is the Antiquities Law. This substantially increases the cost of renovations.” He presented a hypothetical example. “Say the Israel Antiquities Authority requires that we use a certain kind of plaster on a wall. This plaster might cost 500 NIS per square meter. In contrast, the price of standard plaster—the kind of plaster that we might use in the New City—costs only 80 NIS per square meter. This plaster that we need to use must be replaced every couple of years. After two years, it

starts falling off the building. The residents do not understand this though. They do not understand that this material does not last long, that it deteriorates, and that it requires continuous maintenance. Because of this, the residents do not think that it is worth it.”

“And then when they look at the Baha’i buildings and see that the plaster on those buildings always looks perfect?” I offered.

“Exactly. It is misleading. The Baha’i re-apply plaster to their buildings every single year. They are able to do that because they have the money.” The budgets of the Development Authority would need to be adjusted to accommodate the application of new coats of plaster every two to three years. A reliable monitoring system would have to be assembled to prioritize maintenance and regularize intervention schedules. So, then, that there are just as many problems with laws as there are with words. Most of the historic structures in the Old City of Acre are left exposed to the elements. Even the office of the Development Authority in Acre showed signs of infrequent maintenance. This, too, is the property of an absentee. The plaster was peeling. Some windows were rusted. Others were boarded up. Interessement devices may be able to interest, but they are not always able to interrupt.

“You know, the plaster I made in Acre is still standing after ten years,” noted the mineralogist. “The Old Acre Development Company does not use it though. They say it is too complicated to mix.”

“What about it makes it so complicated?” I asked.

“I don’t know. I think maybe because I used a lot of different ingredients. But for them, it is too much, and they get confused.”

Companies have since tried to streamline these complications, offering building contractors with ready-made materials. But not everyone is convinced of their efficacy. Khaled described this market to me. “Arco sells lime mortar, but I do not have any trust in their materials. They make a low quality product. I combine my own lime mortar. That is why I am always doing experiments. There is another lime mortar that is used. It is called Weber. This is a mortar for conservation and all you need to do is mix it with water. Nobody knows exactly what the ingredients are, but it causes a lot of damage whenever it is used. Ten years they have been using this material, and it has been causing

damage. The Israel Antiquities Authority approved it though; it is still considered an approved material. It is used for plaster, but the material is much stronger than the stone.”

“What material does the Old Acre Development Company use?” I asked Khaled.

“They have been trying to get Arco out and Weber in. This is the politics of conservation. Weber is a company, but not a local one. I think they are from the European Union. How can you use conservation materials that were created to be used in a different climate? What will be the result when you bring them to another climate and use them here? But I don’t think Arco will succeed in Acre because their materials crumble after two months.”

Simple and easy to use, the lime-based materials developed by Arco and Weber have been approved by the Israel Antiquities Authority and adopted by property managers. These commercial products have helped forge an alliance between property managers and conservation professionals. However, as I illustrated in Chapter 2, it is rarely—if ever—possible to travel through an architectural conservation project alone. Even when property managers are convinced of the merits of lime-based materials and committed to their deployment, it is not always easy to induce building contractors. Just before I concluded my fieldwork in the Old City of Acre, Khaled directed my attention to a recently re-pointed structure. “Last week, a contractor for Amidar just finished re-pointing the building next door. They used cement. Go and see for yourself.” Building contractors may not always respect the commitments of those they represent. Sometimes, this is because contractors have guarantees they are legally required to uphold. The mineralogist first introduced me to these legal requirements. “The lime plaster will not last for a very long time. Sometimes they won’t even last long enough for the guarantee, which in Israel is seven years. To maintain these old building, you have to give more to it. You have to put more into it. This means it becomes very expensive.” In order for property managers to align with the desires of conservation professionals, they must be flexible with the kinds of guarantees contractors are required to provide.

“Do you ever use these materials? Arco or Weber?” I asked Khaled.

“It is like the project I did for the Baha’i. There were three players. There was the Baha’i who was in charge of the project; there was the Old Acre Development Company who provided the materials; and there was me, who performed the work. The Baha’i and

the Old Acre Development Company asked me to sign a contract to guarantee how long the materials would last on the building. The Old Acre Development Company wanted me to use Arco. I told them I will not sign a contract guaranteeing anything if I have to use Arco. The materials will crumble, and then they can sue me. I told them that if they use my combination, then I will sign a contract guaranteeing three years. They went with the Arco materials, so I signed a contract saying that I would not be responsible if the materials do not last.”

Khaled, who often articulated the importance of lime-based materials, even hesitated to apply them to his own workshop. “I will leave the stones exposed. With plaster there are no guarantees. When I work with a client on a house, they always want guarantees, but I cannot give them any.”

“Guarantees in regards to what? The anticipated cost?” I asked.

“In regards to how long the materials will last. I can’t even give them an estimate or a rough guess. It is impossible to tell because we are so close to the sea and each building is unique. But this is very expensive work, so they want assurances.” Contracts. One more interesement device. The durability of lime-based materials was just too unpredictable. If Khaled was going to participate in a conservation project, then he would need something, a piece of paper that could dissolve his commitments as a building contractor to Israeli building laws, that could placate his fear of the court.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

The masonry fabric of the Old City of Acre no longer looks like a passive thing. A thing that does nothing. A thing that takes shape solely because of the work of humans. It is starting to look more and more like a lively and unanticipatable effect, an ongoing “process of holding together and, inevitably or even co-incidentally, not holding together” (Jacobs and Merriman 2011:211–212). I have shown that stones are not the rigid, inert objects they are sometimes imagined to be. They are “solid and hard and (for a period) can endure without ever remaining the same” (Barry 2010:94). This is what makes historic masonry such an interesting material. The infinitesimal movements of moisture and salt provide the basis for a specific kind of stability, a solidity that is the product of certain forms of fluidity (93). My goal has been to illustrate how these movements have (not) been made to matter.

There are human *and* nonhuman actants to consider in the architectural conservation of the Old City of Acre, each of which must be seduced or managed or maintained by other participants. These actants are neither objects nor subjects. They are quasi-causal operators, a type of entity which, “by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuity of being in the right place *at the right time*, makes the difference, makes things happen, becomes the decisive force which catalyzes an event” (Bennett 2010:43). These quasi-causal operators do not always behave. The conservation professionals with whom I spoke in the Old City of Acre came to expect the historic masonry to act unpredictably. They expressed a need to attend to the specificity of each building, for they had learned just how stubbornly reality resists, refuses to abide by theoretical formulas and experimental proximations.

There can be great discrepancies between what a conservation scientist predicts and what actually occurs to a piece of historic masonry. Sometimes, the effects of a conservation treatment are exactly the opposite of what anybody anticipates (Muñoz-Viñas 2005:123). A single stone might exhibit a general problem—a fracture, a deterioration, a patina—but in a very specific way, in a very specific setting. There is a tension, then, between the specific and the general. This tension requires conservation professionals to be inventive. Perhaps even daring. They must do much more than *understand* the properties of stones. They must also find ways to *manage* them—to readily adapt to new situations as they arise, to carefully deal with their surprising unpredictabilities. Architectural conservation entails working *with* a series of case studies. But these are case studies of a particular kind. This is not a discipline wherein its practitioners generalize *to* or *from* individual cases. Each case is nothing more than a case.

Architectural conservation can provide a model for learning how to study the particular. Here, a case is not treated as an illustration *of* a principle, as an exception *to* a rule, as something *more* than an event. A case is an opportunity. It is something with which to engage, to improvise, to tinker. By attending to the idiosyncratic details of a previous situation, conservation professionals can sharpen their analytical skills. They can draw from a previous event in order to wrestle with the specificities of a new situation, all-the-while refining their abilities to solve intractable problems, problems that

have emerged under slightly different circumstances, with slightly different particularities. This is a learning that cannot emanate from textbooks. It is more inspirational than it is instructive. It is a way of relating “what, often surprisingly, worked out well in other sites and situations” (Mol 2017:7). It is a way of adapting the lessons learned to new events, experimenting with new ways to interrupt, new ways to solidify connections between stones and mortars, soluble solutions and capillary pores. This is what it means to grapple with the irreducibility of the historic stones found in the Old City of Acre. Stones whose behavior resists most forms of reductionism, either to the fundamental truths of the materials sciences or to the socio-political dynamics of Jewish-Israeli administration.

This is also what has made a sociology of translations so useful. There are many things that can happen when a historic stone associates with a lime-based plaster. A soft white dust accumulates on tables and chairs. A resident complains about the mess that accrues. A soluble solution evaporates from a microscopic pore. A building contractor revises his legal guarantee. The statements made by and about stones are no different in kind from the statements made by and about property managers and building contractors, local residents and local authorities. These statements are all traces, the differences left behind by an association. There are, undoubtedly, other statements that remain silent, statements that have not acquired the right kinds of allies, the kinds of allies that could enable them to affect the controversy, that could enable them to become *realer* than they already are. A sociology of translations presents an opportunity to study these particulars. Not as illustrations. Not as representations. Not as examples. But as something that can be followed or discarded. Engaged or ignored. Here, the scholarly task is not to draw arrows of causality between *the general* and *the specific*. It is to learn from the ways in which others have tinkered with the traces left behind, stirring new ideas about how (strong and weak) alliances, (few and many) associations, (useful and useless) adaptations might be made.

Historic stones live a lively existence. They align themselves with other entities, some of which work in ways that affect the conduct of others. I am one of these other entities. So is a crystal of salt and a capillary pore, a moisture meter and an environmental scanning electron microscope, a German mineralogist and a building contractor. We all



found ways to articulate with the human and nonhuman participants of these cementitious controversies, with the traces of what would otherwise be silent masses. I spent this chapter in pursuit of these articulations. I looked for moments of displacement, moments when interests were realigned, when objects were redirected, when associations were rearranged. But these moments were just that—moments. I learned that the associations formed with lime-based building materials can be fickle. Lime-based materials have been shown to be pretty good at seducing salts away from the sea breezes, the air-conditioning units, and the capillary forces that encourage them to stay inside a stone. Yet, unlike cement, there are no guarantees that they will endure for more than a few months. They are an interessement device that is built, quite literally, to self-destruct. Failure is part and parcel of its success.

This is a failure that necessitates other interessement devices. Lime-based materials can only enrol soluble solutions with the help of others. Someone needs to purchase the materials, apply the materials, and maintain the materials. The complicity of local residents, property managers, and building contractors is needed just as much as the complicity of salts. And so there are also all of the traces—the words, the demonstrations, the laws, and the contracts—that have been used to convince these entities to forgo cement-based building materials and to adopt their lime-based counterparts. This is where conservation professionals lead some of their longest and most difficult negotiations. This is what needs to be explored next.

#### **CHAPTER 4: FLOWS OF GOVERNANCE AND BODIES OF LAW**

Everything is starting to look fragile. The alliances forged with the interessement devices deployed by conservation professionals never seem to last very long. Lime-based plasters and mortars disintegrate. Conversations are forgotten or ignored. And contracts inevitably come to an end. No matter how convincing or constraining the interessement device, it seems as though the success of architectural conservation can never be assured (Callon 1984:211). It is this brevity—this fragility—that I wish to highlight in this chapter, the delicate ephemerality of associations and alliances, the partial and untenable detours through which entities get linked together. I will do this by continuing my investigation from the previous chapter, studying one interessement device in detail—the Antiquities Law of the State of Israel. A law such as this is never “a pure dictate trumpeted through space and transparently obeyed by the participant actors” (Harman 2009:15). It requires a massive amount of work. It requires detours through other actants, the coordination of a diverse set of props that, when held in place long enough, can (maybe) regulate the actions of others (Strathern 1996:523).

One such prop is a human body—the body of the conservation inspector of the Israel Antiquities Authority. I will spend most of this chapter with her, watching as she patrols the Old City of Acre in search of cement, an illegal building material that helps salt gobble up irreplaceable sandstones, that renders these sandstones less able to carry the loads placed on them. I will study the details of translation that present as she moves from her desk in the Office of Conservation Supervision to the alleys of the Old City of Acre, as she forges relationships with local residents, municipal officials, and historic buildings. These tenuous relations are the things that have enabled her to make detours through other actants, that have enabled her to relate, to persuade, and to interrupt the local residents, the property managers, and the building contractors. They have made it possible for her to liaison with residents about their building applications, guiding them through—and, hopefully, out of—the permit process. And, when none of that works, they have made it possible for her to roam the streets in search of illegal building activities, to confront building contractors, to report infractions to the local police and to the Municipality.

These movements, these relationships, these detours—they were the fleeting moments of state governance. They were the flows that linked the Israel Antiquities Authority to the Old City of Acre. They were the flows through which the Israel Antiquities Authority commanded and controlled its inhabitants from a distance. But even this is not exactly correct, for this chapter is not about *actors* as much as it is about *agencies*. By studying the details of these fleeting moments, I will illustrate the extent to which a government authority is not an Aristotelian substance. It is not something that is distinguishable from its different qualities, an underlying essence that lies beneath trivial surface fluctuations. Rather, it is an event, something that is never distinct from its relations. It is an effect of the connections and the connectors, their scope and their abundance, their fragility and their temporality. It is an ensemble of agencies the figuration of which is often misleading, as a government authority becomes a very different thing with each alliance it forms—even the alliances it forms with a curious anthropologist.

### *The Props of the Law*

The Antiquities Law of the State of Israel (1978, 2000) replaced similar Antiquities Ordinances from the British Mandate. In 1990 the Israel Antiquities Authority became the statutory body charged with enforcing this law, tasked with protecting archaeological objects and monuments found throughout the country. By virtue of its declaration as an antiquities site in 1964, the entire Old City of Acre—including all of its historic buildings—has fallen under the purview of the Antiquities Law and the jurisdiction of the Israel Antiquities Authority. As such, a number of activities are now prohibited, at least without the written approval of the Israel Antiquities Authority. It is illegal, for example, to remove stones, pavements, and buildings; to erect installations or additions; to make any alterations or repairs; and to dump waste or refuse. The law also requires all bodies involved in construction, renovation, and rehabilitation work to maintain professional conservation standards, all in accordance with the instructions and guidelines of the Israel Antiquities Authority. This means that concrete and cement may not be used within the Old City of Acre. It also means that all plaster and bonding materials must be lime-based, with “the texture and the shade replicating the findings and conclusions of the conservation survey” (Giladi 2013:106). Lastly, the law obliges

residents to obtain permission from the Israel Antiquities Authority before introducing modern appliances into their homes. This includes the installation of solar water heaters, water and sewage pipes, antennas and satellite dishes, as well as air-conditioning units. The proposed placement of each of these devices must be concealed from the general public, and it must be detailed in an implementation plan approved by the conservation committee.

In order for an antiquities law to act as an interessement device, it needs help from others. A law, just like any other actant, needs faithful allies who “accept what they are told, identify themselves with its cause, carry out all the functions that are defined for them, and come to its aid without hesitation when they are summoned” (Latour 1988b:199). These include building inspectors and their notebooks, cameras, and computers as well as police officers and their pistols, lawyers and their judges, residents and their ID numbers, legal precedents and their archives. When a law operates as a well-defined state of affairs, when it is able to ensure that the public adheres to its stipulations, we are observing the work of various forces—forces that can extend an antiquities law beyond the piece of paper upon which it is written, all without letting it lose its coherence. Thus, scholars must be careful when they speak about ‘the force of law’, for they should make sure they do not overlook all of the mediators, all of the practical means through which action is “borrowed, distributed, suggested, influenced, dominated, betrayed, translated” (Latour 2005:46). They should make certain that they do not attribute efficacies to it that it has only been lent (Latour 1988b:206). So, then, when I discuss the law, I must do my best to not allow it to become a useful shorthand. I must not rely on the ‘Antiquities Law’ to explain the things that (do not) take place in the Old City of Acre. It is the ‘Antiquities Law’ that needs to be explained.

There is much to learn about legal associations from the ways in which the Department of Antiquities enforced its Antiquities Ordinances during the British Mandate. It might be useful to consider, for a moment, some of these techniques. I will begin with the obvious. There was the task of informing the public about the law and the sites to which it was applicable. The Department of Antiquities would periodically publish an updated schedule of historic monuments and sites in the Palestine Gazette. It would also distribute copies of these lists, exhibiting them in local post offices, district

offices, and police stations. Or, it might require the Inspector of Antiquities to acquire the help of a District Officer in order to distribute notices to all the mukhtars of nearby villages.<sup>71</sup> However, lists can be ignored. They can be defaced, tossed aside, left unread.<sup>72</sup> This is something of which C. N. Johns, Acting Director of Antiquities, became acutely aware. In a letter to the Chief Secretary on 3 May 1947, Johns remarked that producing and distributing a sufficient number of copies of the schedule of historic monuments and sites was not enough to protect antiquities. The recent construction of a military gas plant on an antiquities site suggested to him that “a more direct form of liaison should be instituted.” He proposed providing a set of 1:100,000 maps to a relevant authorities, maps which would identify “all the sites, large and small, some 3,000 in all.”<sup>73</sup>

But problems still remained. The relatively small scale of these maps meant that some sites could not be identified by their names, that some sites could only be marked approximately. This created difficulties for the military authorities, who sometimes struggled to locate antiquity sites and to properly identify a site *as* an antiquity site. Johns presented an alternative, recommending that

the best course would be for the Military Authorities to inform this Department in advance whenever they intend to take over new land, so that, as in Town Planning, some arrangement can be made to safeguard ancient remains. Or alternatively that the District Commissioner’s representative on the sitting board should consult the local Inspector of Antiquities (stationed at Jerusalem, Tel Aviv or Nazareth) to ascertain what historical site might be affected by the proposals of the Military Authorities.<sup>74</sup>

For me, these letters are instructive. They teach me that if the law is to serve as an interessement device, if it is to align the public (or the military) with the interests of the Department of Antiquities, then there must be no ambiguities about what constitutes an antiquity site. This means, then, that there is not always much interessement that is needed. As I will show, many of the actants scattered throughout these accounts seem quite eager to protect ancient remains, to uphold antiquities ordinances. It is here, then,

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<sup>71</sup> Note from the Director of Antiquities to the District Officer (Settlements). 23 April 1940. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D1.4E.87. Israel State Archives.

<sup>72</sup> Letter from the High Commissioner for Palestine to the Secretary of State. 18 September 1943. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.08.26. Israel State Archives.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from C. N. Johns to Chief Secretary. 3 May 1947. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.08.37. Israel State Archives.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

that I begin to depart—ever so slightly—from Michel Callon and his diagram of intersement, his description of a device that *associates* one actor with another through the ways in which it *dissociates* that actor from others. For the moment, I will do something a little different, focusing specifically on the first half, on the mediators required for an alliance to emerge.

Lists, maps, and consultations seemed like a good place for the Department of Antiquities to start. They helped to ensure that the military authorities had the resources to align themselves with the goals of the Department of Antiquities. However, even this may not be enough. In September 1940 an inspector for the Department of Antiquities reported that buildings had been erected on Khan al-Furn, a registered historic site, by the Agricultural Experimental Station in Rehovot without any authorization from the department. The Director of Antiquities urged the Assistant District Commissioner to acknowledge this infringement of Section 18(b) of the Antiquities Ordinance, to order to Agricultural Experimental Station to cease all construction activities at the site, and to require the persons responsible to submit an explanation of their actions to the Department of Antiquities.<sup>75</sup> An administrator from the Agricultural Experimental Station wrote to the District Officer of Settlements and explained that the whole infringement was a simple mistake. They were under the impression that the antiquities site was much smaller than it actually was. “We considered,” began the administrator, “the only place to which the provision of the Antiquities Ordinance apply, a [part of] hill marked No. 9.”<sup>76</sup> This was a piece of land that had been fenced and left untouched, an area where a mosaic floor and traces of old masonry had been discovered. They were unaware that the provisions of the Antiquities Ordinance applied to the *entire* hill—not just the fenced off portion. The Director of Antiquities excused the infringement and instructed his inspector “to demarcate the boundaries of the site on the spot and on a plan of which a copy will be handed to the Administrator of the Station.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Note from the Director of Antiquities to the Assistant District Commissioner. 10 September 1940. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D1.4E.87. Israel State Archives.

<sup>76</sup> Letter from the Administrator of the Agricultural Experimental Station to the District Officer (Settlements). 13 October 1940. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D1.4E.87. Israel State Archives.

<sup>77</sup> Letter from the Director of Antiquities to the Deputy District Commissioner (Ramle). 1 November 1940. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D1.4E.87. Israel State Archives.

The efficacy of lists, maps, and consultations is largely dependent on what successive listeners do with these statements, on the extent to which they comply with their imperatives. This is something many have already learned from Bruno Latour. He has readers consider a hypothetical, a hotel guest and the cumbersome weights attached to hotel room keys. Each time a guest checks-in to a hotel, a hotel manager informs them about one simple policy: leave your room key at the front desk before leaving the hotel. There are a number of ways in which the manager can impart this policy to their guests. They can inform them verbally during check-in, reminding them each time they leave the hotel. But people can forget. Managers can get busy. A manager might also address these problems by inscribing the policy into text, constructing a sign and placing it adjacent to the exit. Still, though, there are no guarantees that the guest will see the sign, understand the sign, and act on the sign. These are some of the different paths through which statements can travel. But the hotel manager is unable to predict the paths guests will take after hearing or reading the policy. Will they leave the key? Or will they take it?

The hotel manager can also “*load* [their] statement in such a way that lots of different customers all behave in the same manner, regardless of their native language or their experience with hotels” (Latour 1991:105). They could, for example, attach a large metal weight to each key, turning it into an annoying object of which guests are delighted to rid themselves. The hotel manager no longer needs to rely on guests and their linguistic abilities, their carefulness, or their sense of moral obligation; they will relinquish their key at the front desk voluntarily, for the keys have become much too cumbersome to carry around town. The hotel key policy, as Latour explains, has been translated; the desire for a light pocket may stand for an entire hotel policy. The two have been made equivalent, albeit with a slight betrayal. The same might be said about the fences installed by the Inspector of Antiquities at Khan al-Furn. The Department of Antiquities was unable to protect historic monuments and sites by merely publishing schedules and distributing them to various government departments. These lists were ignored, vandalized, misread. In short, they were inept allies. But what if the Department of Antiquities takes a detour through another actor, a kind of actor that guides our movements almost everywhere—a fence?

Sometimes this worked. The Department of Antiquities had been frustrated, its goals interrupted by ignorance, by carelessness. It needed to make a detour through another, more reliable actant. Something that could be there even when the Inspector of Antiquities could not. At Khan al-Furn, it enlisted a fence—another fence. The installation of a fence had already prevented the Agricultural Experimental Station from erecting a new building on top of an ancient mosaic. It was hoped that another fence could do the same for the entire hill. That is, as long as it could be too burdensome to dismantle, as long as it could be too troublesome to breach. I want to be careful though, When I speak about interests and goals, about scripts and affordances, about alliances and associations, I must be diligent in my analysis. Talk of ‘interests’ and ‘intentions’ black boxes all of the activities in which actants are already engaged, all of the work involved in *generating* interests (Latour 1996a:33). In other words, it is simply a first-order approximation, one undertaken “in the full knowledge that behind these intentions lie other intentions and behind these lie all the complex heterogeneous resources which both produce and close such black boxes” (Murdoch 1997:748).

With that said, I do not mean to suggest that a fence is simply a tool or an instrument, a neutral carrier, a passive conductor of the department’s intention to protect a historic site. Nor do I mean to insinuate that a fence acts simply “by virtue of its material components” (Latour 1999:177), that it is the fence itself which blocks movements. It would be a mistake to speak of the Department of Antiquities, of the fence, as essences—as subjects or objects with clearly defined, clearly fixed scripts, with interests that are the cause of some effect. What I am trying to talk about is a little bit different. I suggest they be treated, not as essences, but as propositions, which, when articulated, join together into a new proposition, into something else entirely, into a hybrid actant, a department-fence.

After the Inspector of Antiquities unrolls his wire mesh and attaches it to each metal pole, a third agent has emerged—a fusion of the Department of Antiquities and the fence. This new composite agent, the department-fence, can pursue one of three goals. It can return to the first goal, the initial goal of the Department of Antiquities, in which case the fence acts as a tool, as an intermediary in the preservation of an antiquity site. It can also follow the will—the script—of the fence, a materialist story of matter and its



affordances, a story where fences block the movements of others, where fences solidify exclusions. Or, it can pursue a new goal, one that “corresponds to neither agent’s program of action” (Latour 1999:178). Originally, the Department of Antiquities only wanted to protect and preserve historic monuments and sites. However, with a fence, it now wants to exclude. But that is not quite right either, for the Department of Antiquities becomes a different entity once it begins pounding fence posts into the ground. It has become something different altogether—an entity that protects *and* excludes. The same is true of the fence. The fence becomes another object after it has entered into a relationship with the Department of Antiquities. It becomes an obstacle, an impediment. The fence-in-the-warehouse becomes the fence-in-the-field. The goals of each have been translated.

A new link has been created between the Department of Antiquities and a metal fence, “a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies the original two [agents]” (Latour 1999:179). It has now become difficult to identify who, exactly, is acting. Is it the Department of Antiquities? Is it the fence? It is both, and it is neither. This repeats a conclusion I have already made in a previous chapter. Action is an event—an event of things being associated together in new ways. As such, responsibility for action must be shared. It must be attributed and redistributed to many more actors than might otherwise be expected. But what happens when there is no fence to protect an antiquities site? On 26 April 1929 a representative from the Department of Antiquities accompanied Na’im Ephendi Makhoully, an Inspector of Antiquities, to Tel Abu Hawam, a registered antiquities site located near the Nesher Cement Factory. They found that a light railway had been constructed on both sides of the tel, with earth being removed from the mound, placed into trucks, and masses of ancient stones being piled into nearby heaps. At the site, Makhoully met Ali Abdallah Obeid el-Masri, an Egyptian contractor in charge of the work at the tel. He explained to Makhoully that the owner of the tel is Dr. Othman Khamrah, who sold the earth and half the stones to Kamel Abed Shiblaq and Haj Rashid Ibrahim el Ghalayini. These two individuals had then agreed to re-sell the earth to Ali Abdallah Obeid el-Masri, a contractor working on behalf of the Shell Oil Company of Palestine to fill a few select marshes with dirt.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Report from the Department of Antiquities. 29 April 1929. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.07.3C. Israel State Archives.

An investigation ensued to identify the individual(s) responsible for contravening the Antiquities Ordinance. Who should the Department of Antiquities blame? the owner? the contractor? the Shell Oil Company? The latter argued they should not be held accountable for any damage made to the antiquity site. It was the contractor—not the Shell Oil Company—who selected the site from which the earth would be obtained. Nonetheless, the Department of Antiquities remained unconvinced of the Shell Oil Company’s claims to innocence, asserting in their report that the agents of the company should have been aware that their contractor was breaking the law. Their offices, after all, were situated close to the tel, and their agents were in constant contact with the contractor and his work. These agents, the report states, must have known that the tel is an antiquities site, as “some of the antiquities have been removed to their offices.”<sup>79</sup> Given this information, the Department of Antiquities requested that the case be taken seriously and treated as a grave offense—that every effort be made “to bring the prosecution to a successful conclusion and to ensure the infliction of the maximum penalties allowed by law.”<sup>80</sup> For, their reasoning went, if this is not done, if an example is not made, then “no antiquity sites will be safe in the country and the result will be that we shall be unable to give effect to our mandatory responsibilities.”<sup>81</sup>

The Director of Antiquities, E. T. Richmond, requested that Makhouly visit the Deputy Superintendent of Police (D.S.P.) in Haifa in order to bring the necessary charges against the persons concerned in this offense. Richmond instructed Makhouly to show the D.S.P. a copy of his letter and the report attached to it, and to inform the D.S.P. that “Tel Abu Huwam is registered under No. 241 on Page 7 of the Official Gazette No. 51 of the 15th. September 1921 as an Historical Site.”<sup>82</sup> He wanted Makhouly to highlight the fact that “the penalty provided under Section 49 is higher in the case of a registered Historical Site” and that “it is desire to make charges under each of the relevant Sections and obtain the maximum penalty separately under each.”<sup>83</sup> As I follow the traces left by this

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<sup>79</sup> Letter from the Department of Antiquities to the Chief Secretary. 29 April 1929. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.07.3C. Israel State Archives.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Letter from the Director of Antiquities to N. Makhouly. 7 May 1929. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.07.3C. Israel State Archives.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

controversy—that is, the series of letters between the District Commissioner (Haifa) and the Director of Antiquities—I learn that, perhaps, nobody was aware that the tel was an antiquity site. Kamel Abed Shiblaq and Haj Rashid Ibrahim el Ghalayini categorically denied the existence of antiquities at the site, and the District Commissioner asked the Director of Antiquities to consider “the very real difficulty of obtaining access to the schedule of sites published under Section 18(2) of the Antiquities Ordinance.”<sup>84</sup> “The Gazette in question is out of print,” observed the District Commissioner. “[T]he schedule [is] not on exhibition at the District Office, and it is not included in Vol. 2 of Bentwich. At the same time no attempt of any sort is made to mark these sites, so that any interference with them would be at once noticeable.”<sup>85</sup>

This case is telling, for it illuminates another aspect of the law—enforcement. The examples are countless. Consider the Municipality of Tiberias and its alleged infringement of Section 12(5) of the Antiquities Ordinance. The Municipality seemed to have disregarded the conditions set forth by the Director of Antiquities “as to the procedure to be followed in regard to antiquities discovered in the course of Government or municipal public works.”<sup>86</sup> It all began after the Municipality of Tiberias requested permission from the Department of Antiquities to continue levelling work at the site of a new municipal slaughterhouse. With the help of the District Officer (Tiberias), the Mayor had applied to the Department of Antiquities after discovering a large wall of ancient masonry. However, on 14 May 1934, the Inspector of Antiquities reported that the Municipality had failed to comply “with the first condition laid in the above letter. The thick ancient wall reported by me on the first visit (see photograph) was now utterly destroyed and all the stones extracted from it numbering about 50 large ones were removed and put by the fence on the eastern side.”<sup>87</sup>

Paper travelled from one office to another. In a letter dated 8 August 1934, the Assistant District Commissioner (Galilee) assured the Director of Antiquities that the

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<sup>84</sup> Letter from the District Commissioner to the Director of Antiquities. 8 May 1929. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.07.3C. Israel State Archives.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from the Director of Antiquities to the Chief Secretary. 29 May 1934. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.07.4D. Israel State Archives.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

Mayor “has expressed his regret that an antiquity has been destroyed” and “maintains that the destruction was not deliberate.”<sup>88</sup> According to the Mayor, if there had been any intention to deliberately destroy an antiquity, then they would not have delayed “the work for a month in order to apply to your Department for permission to do the proposed work.”<sup>89</sup> With this information, the Assistant District Commissioner recommended that it is, perhaps, “undesirable to bring an action against the Municipality.”<sup>90</sup> The Director of Antiquities vehemently disagreed, drawing everyone’s attention to Section 14(8) of the Antiquities Ordinance. “[A]ny person who maliciously or *negligently* destroys...any antiquity shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment not exceeding 12 months or to a fine not exceeding LP. 100 or to both these penalties.”<sup>91</sup> The Director continued, stating that “It would in fact be on grounds of negligence that any legal action taken by this Department would be based,” for the destruction of antiquities by negligence is no less damaging to archaeological interests than their destruction by malice.”<sup>92</sup>

What can the Director of Antiquities do? Can he walk into the Municipality of Tiberias, knock on the Mayor’s door, and place him under arrest? Can he escort the Mayor in handcuffs to a local police station, locking him in a cell for twelve months? Maybe. But there was an entire judicial apparatus designed to administer punishments for legal transgressions. These are the sites through which the Department of Antiquities needed to make another series of detours. Sometimes this was a problem, such as when the actions taken by Magistrates were “of a character unlikely to deter offenders.”<sup>93</sup> On 8 April 1936 Yousef el-Mustarabi was tried before the Magistrate at Zikhron Ya’qov on the charge of quarrying stones from the ancient aqueduct at Caesarea. He was convicted with a fine of 500 mils. Makhouly, the Inspector of Antiquities, characterized the punishment

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<sup>88</sup> Letter from the Assistant District Commissioner (Galilee) to the Director of Antiquities. 8 August 1934. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.07.4D. Israel State Archives.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Letter from the Director of Antiquities to the Chief Secretary. 20 August 1934. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.07.4D. Israel State Archives.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Letter from the Director of Antiquities to the Chief Secretary. 21 August 1934. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.08.6E. Israel State Archives.

as “very light” in comparison to “the serious damage done to the aqueduct.”<sup>94</sup> His concern was that such light punishments would, in the future, do more harm than good. “Instead of helping to discontinue the habit of making damage to ancient monuments,” light punishments will “encourage people to increase its practice because of the profit they get by selling the stones.”<sup>95</sup> The Magistrate defended his leniency, highlighting a few of the factors he considered when formulating his sentence: the accused pleaded guilty; it was his first offense; and he was a poor, illiterate fellah.<sup>96</sup>

Confessions, legal records, personal characteristics. These act too. They pulled the Magistrate in another direction, away from the Department of Antiquities and its reliance on penalties severe enough to act as a deterrence. The task of the Magistrate was not to proclaim, unequivocally, the truth or falsehood of the statement “Yousef el-Mustarabi is guilty.” The judge did not act as an epistemologist, identifying ‘the truth’ that could allow the words of a verdict to correspond with an actual state of affairs. Something different happened, a different kind of relation. This is important, for it changes the question asked by the judge. The guiltiness of Yousef el-Mustarabi became something that was made up of many items—many propositions—and the ways in which they were made to articulate with one another.

But I have skipped a step. How was Yousef el-Mustarabi made to appear before a judge? In 1935 the Antiquities (Enclosures) Ordinance authorized employees of the Department of Antiquities “to arrest or detain without a warrant, any person found stealing or doing damage, or reasonably suspected of having stolen or having done any damage to any antiquity.”<sup>97</sup> The only caveat was that any person detained should be “handed over as soon as possible to a Police Officer.”<sup>98</sup> I can now piece together the legal process from start to finish. I can watch as the sub-program ‘Antiquities must be protected’ gets interrupted, taking a detour through a second sub-program, ‘Laws must be

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<sup>94</sup> Letter from N. Makhouly to the Director of Antiquities. 17 April 1936. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.08.6E. Israel State Archives.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Letter from the Acting Chief Justice to the High Commissioner for Palestine. 5 December 1936. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.08.6E. Israel State Archives.

<sup>97</sup> Antiquities (Enclosures) Ordinance, 1935. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.07.61. Israel State Archives.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

enforced'. A quick perusal through the British Mandate records in the Israel State Archives unleashes a slew of documents left over from this detour, one of which is a letter from an Inspector of Antiquities to the Director of Antiquities dated 10 May 1937. The Inspector writes that the Antiquities Guard at Caesarea, Husein Ali Hannawai, caught two individuals "quarrying and breaking stones from the Roman Aqueduct of Caesarea near Tall Mubarak."<sup>99</sup> These two individuals claimed to be "quarrying stones from that part of the aqueduct" on orders from Mr. Revalovit, a supervisor for the Public Works Department (Haifa). The Antiquities Guard reported the incident to the Police at Zikhron, who then dispatched Policeman No. 282 to accompany the Antiquities Guard on an inspection of the damage. Given its seriousness, the Inspector of Antiquities strongly recommended the prosecution of any and all persons responsible.

Policeman No. 282 entered the scene after the law had already been broken, after antiquities had already been damaged. Here, then, begins another deviation, another detour, this time through a Magistrate court. 'Laws must be enforced' gets translated into 'individuals must be held responsible for their (in)actions'. (I am using the term 'individuals' loosely. This sub-program does not just apply to humans. It also pertains to government departments and their mandatory duties and responsibilities.) Each of these sub-programs combines into a composite goal: 'protect antiquities by arresting, convicting, and sentencing individuals responsible for their damage'. Such an action is "the common achievement of each of the agents bent by the process of successive translation" (Latour 1999:181). Sometimes, though, the original goal can get lost in the maze of sub-programs. This can be seen clearly at the aqueduct in Caesarea, when the Director of Public Works informed the Department of Antiquities that his department planned to disregard the requirement that public works be suspended if antiquities are discovered. "In the case of the Police Posts which are being constructed by this department under the Police Building Programme," began the Director of Public Works, "it will not be possible to comply strictly with the terms of paragraph 3 of the notice i.e.

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<sup>99</sup> Letter from the Inspector of Antiquities to the Director of Antiquities. 10 May 1937. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D0.49.E5. Israel State Archives.

the work will not be suspended on account of discovery of antiquities.”<sup>100</sup> The police have their own sub-program, one that has been able to divert the composite program of action—at least temporarily. After all, police need stations, a place to put their patrol cars, their jail cells, and their records. The composite program cannot resume until all of these are put in place.

It is necessary to read these cases slowly and carefully. As I move from Tel Abu Hawam to Tiberias to Caesarea, I see the coordination of sub-programs, their composition into programs of action that become the common achievement of each agent. It has become exceedingly difficult to identify who, exactly, performs any action. Is it the Department of Antiquities? The Deputy Superintendent of Police? The Magistrate? Is it the schedule of historic monuments and sites? The inspection reports? The confessions? The penalties? Yes. Once again, action is not a property of any one thing; it is a property of entities *as they associate*. It is the outcome of two or more sub-programs nestling into one another. The Department of Antiquities wanted to safeguard all that is ancient and historic. It wanted to prevent any kind of irreversible destruction to the remnants of the past. It began by dispatching messengers who travelled from government building to government building, distributing for public inspection lists of registered historic monuments and sites. But they soon learned that this was not enough. They needed guards, inspectors, and fences. They needed an enforcement apparatus to identify vandalism or theft and to report, arrest, or punish those responsible. They needed something to forge ties with the law by severing ties with the illegal. This is what made everything so fragile. There were too many actants at work, but also not enough.

### ***Mediating Governance: How Detours Are Made Possible***

Everything comes together. And not quite. But I do not want to get caught up in noncoherence just yet. There will be plenty of that later. For now, there is still more to learn about translation, about how an antiquities authority is “allowed, authorized, enabled, afforded by others,” all of whom are “in the process of exchanging competences, offering one another new possibilities, new goals, new functions” (Latour 1999:182). From the remnants of British Mandate records, I have learned that an Inspector of

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<sup>100</sup> Letter from the Director of Public Works to the Director of Antiquities. 10 May 1940. Electronic record number 00071706.81.D0.49.E5. Israel State Archives.

Antiquities requires at least two things: a mode of transit and a mode of swift communication. This is how the Department of Antiquities made its detours through fences, through police stations, through court houses. This is how it linked antiquities to authorities.

If an inspector was stationed in Nazareth during the British Mandate, then they needed a horse, argued the Director of Antiquities in a letter to the Chief Secretary on 29 September 1947, for they were “required to spend five days each week inspecting archaeological sites in the sub-district of Acre, Safad, Nazareth, Tiberias, Haifa and Beisan.”<sup>101</sup> This was especially true if they were newly appointed; an Inspector of Antiquities “should get to know the country intimately,” which can best be done “by carrying out his inspections on horseback.”<sup>102</sup> However, this also meant an Inspector of Antiquities needed a telephone in their home. They were always on the move, spending more time travelling from antiquity site to antiquity site than they did in their offices. More often than not, cases occurred in which important messages failed to reach inspectors at their offices owing to their absence on inspections. But, with a telephone installed at their private residence, an inspector could be reached after office hours. Messages would no longer need to sit in the office of an inspector, scribbled on a piece of paper, waiting patiently and quietly for his eventual return. And, in emergencies, messages delivered as electrical signals through a series of telephone cables could travel much more quickly than those “brought on foot from a police station.”<sup>103</sup> Trunk calls to the residence of an inspector regarding the damage, the theft, or the discovery of antiquities could receive a prompt response.

This was the argument. The successful coordination between telephones and horses, between inspectors and police officers, between magistrates and jail cells—this rabble of “morals, words, truncheons, hopes, administrations, walls, telexes, files, finance, ulcers” is what made the Antiquities Law strong (Latour 1988b:204). The Department of Antiquities could only command and control as long as it remained

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<sup>101</sup> Letter from the Director of Antiquities to the Chief Secretary. 29 September 1947. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.31.98. Israel State Archives.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Letter from the Director of Antiquities to the Chief Secretary. 18 July 1945. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.FA.D0. Israel State Archives.



connected to regional offices and civil servants, to residents and antiquity sites—as long as it could swiftly and efficiently transport its reports, its equipment, and its employees from one site to another, from one office to another. I am using the terms ‘command’ and ‘control’ somewhat loosely. As I have just shown, the work orders and the administrative requests that flow into and out of the Department of Antiquities were nowhere near as binding as those dispatched from the police, the courts, or even the Department of Public Works. Nonetheless, these are the mechanics of power, a mechanics that is less enabling (Foucault 1995) than it is relating (Law 1991).

These relations are often the duller of sorts, occurring so frequently in the most mundane of places—in bureaus and on horses, in reports and on telephone calls. Yet these are the sites and the conduits of government. These sites and conduits *are* government. And so this is where my attention must turn, to the connections and the connectors, their scope and their abundance, their fragility and their temporality. I want to consider one such connector: the Office of Conservation Supervision in the Old City of Acre. After its establishment in 1990, the Israel Antiquities Authority began formulating policies and enacting laws, all with the goal to preserve the Old City of Acre and its historic masonry fabric. Yossi Broide was its first conservation inspector, the one who “led the charge, promoting the preservation of the city by creating channels of communication with the residents” (Giladi 2013:106).

His reputation preceded him, a personality unmatched by his successors, mythologized in the tales told about him. “Very few people have had the kind of initiative that he had,” began one informant. “He was always going out and making connections and doing things. Maybe because he was so much older. He had already lived a full life. He wasn’t afraid to bang on someone’s door and start talking to them.” For this hagiographer, there was one member in the crowd of actants that truly mattered—Yossi Broide, his drive and his ingenuity. Such a story gives the impression that the Old City of Acre had been reshaped by the enterprising energies of one man. But it also alludes to another story about Yossi, a story of the connections that made him powerful, a story of the techniques and the maneuvers through which he forged relationships with local residents, through which he acquired their trust, through which he responded to their everyday needs as residents in a historic city.

A different conservation inspector now roams the Old City of Acre, and for a few months I roamed around with her. It was the end of September, during a summer that refused to end. I had only just recently met Yedida, a young woman in her early thirties who, for some reason or another, agreed to let me accompany her as she moved within and between government offices, public alleys, and private residences. Others assured me she appreciated the company, that the job of a conservation inspector can be lonely, with many hours spent sitting in a quiet office or meandering through sleepy streets. On this particular day, I settled into the conference table behind her desk, clearing off the soft white plaster dust that had accumulated on it overnight. This was the Office of Conservation Supervision.

I waited as Yedida finalized her preparations for a meeting at al-Jazzar Mosque. She rose from her desk and grabbed a long-sleeved shirt from behind her chair. “We have a meeting with the Mosque,” she began. “Whenever this happens, I try to dress more modestly. That is why I have this shirt. It will cover my arms.” She threw on the blouse over her tank top and left the front unbuttoned, straddling the fine line between propriety and comfort. “I cannot wait for it to stop being so hot,” she murmured, fanning her face with a piece of paper as I closed the office door behind us. Although it was only a short walk from her office to the Mosque, she had just enough time to explain to me the purpose of this meeting. A few weeks prior, on 31 July 2016, an electrical fault sparked a fire in al-Jazzar Mosque, destroying an illegal cabin as well as damaging windows, marble stones, and cement mortar joints. It was an unfortunate event, but it created an opportunity to repair and replace, to rehabilitate the structure using the lime-based materials approved by the Israel Antiquities Authority.

We approached a small staircase and ascended it slowly. “We are the Antiquities Authority,” she announced to an older gentleman stationed at the entrance to the courtyard of the Mosque. He nodded his head, an indication that we could enter. Al-Jazzar Mosque is a quiet place, one of the few sites in the Old City of Acre where one can find trees, shade, tranquility. I followed Yedida to the office of someone whom she described as its caretaker. He invited us for coffee and water, gesturing with an outstretched palm a place for us to sit. We all sat quietly and watched as someone placed a tray of three small cups of coffee on the caretaker’s desk. The coffee was strong. This

was something to which I had not yet become accustomed, leading me to follow each sip of coffee with a sip of water. As I nursed my drink, I listened to Yedida and the caretaker exchange pleasantries about their families. That is, until the contractor tasked with repairing the Mosque entered the room. He was to accompany us to the building to inspect the damage and the progress of its rehabilitation.

After the meeting, as we walked back to her office, Yedida summarized her thoughts and impressions regarding the renovation work. Then she added something else, a comment I did not anticipate. “Did you think the water tasted weird?”

“Yes,” I replied. “But I can’t really say what it was about it that tasted different.”

“I know, me neither. It tasted a little bit like, I don’t know, maybe like liquorice. Weird, right? Anyways, I try to always maintain good relations with the people in the Mosque. I always drink their coffee and make time to talk to them. That can be a problem though. You can’t refuse an offer for coffee here. Sometimes I end up drinking, like, ten cups a day. But whenever it is a holiday, I always try to call and wish them well. It’s important to maintain good relations.” With these brief words, Yedida revealed her own anthropologizing, a kind of anthropological practice that has often been ignored by scholars, by those more intent on thinking about anthropology as a body of knowledge than as a mode of practical action.

These scholars are hardly to blame. Anthropological research is a body of knowledge that sketches a landscape filled with bodies. Classed and gendered, racialized and ethnicized, aged and disabled, the constitution of bodies *as certain kinds* has been a recurring theme throughout the discipline. The task of the anthropologist has been to uncover the sets of relations that construct and sustain the similarities and differences between bodies, creating a space through which scholars can vividly depict a world filled with all sorts of injustices and inequalities. This is no simple task. The recognition of a world filled with different kinds of bodies has not always been easy. As John Law (1991) recounts, scholars have often been slow to recognize race, class, and gender, while the ages and the (dis)abilities of bodies persist unnoticed by even the most thorough ethnographers.

Bodies, however, are not merely the objects of anthropological study. They are also its tools. In *An Anthropology of Architecture* (2013), Victor Buchli alludes to the

discipline's emerging preoccupation with embodied emplacement, a preoccupation that arose during the 1980s alongside the popularization of feminist and phenomenological approaches (137). The body of the anthropologist became a privileged site through which (situated) meanings, experiences, and knowledges could be produced. One does not have to reach too far within the history of anthropology to locate the precursors of these concerns. In particular, I am reminded of the scholars often patronizingly referred to as the 'daughters' of 'Papa' Franz Boas: Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Zora Neale Hurston.

Barbara Babcock (1995) attributed Ruth Benedict's fondness for texts and secondary data to her deafness, a condition that made ethnographic fieldwork incredibly difficult (110). But the body was not just a hindrance to social scientific pursuits—it was the thing that made research possible (Haraway 1988, 1996; Schaffer and Shapin 1985). This fact is made clear by the ethnographic texts and fieldnotes produced by these three scholars. Distinguished by their particular styles of writing and by the richness of their reflexivity, these texts stand as testimonies to a “prescience in understanding the subjective role of the observer” (Lutkehaus 1995:196). I begin with Zora Neale Hurston, an anthropologist who deviated from the ethnographic conventions of her colleagues, blending subjective analyses with innovative literary strategies in ways that allowed her to acknowledge her own interpretive power. During the 1940s, Hurston became noteworthy for presenting herself as an actor in her ethnographic texts; she would reveal, without hesitation, the extent to which she was “a part of the cultural scene she observe[d]” (Hernandez 1995:156). These stylistic maneuvers allowed her to actively confront—rather than subdue—her own subjective interpretations and agentive interventions, an ethnographic technique that challenged the standard paragons of ‘objective’ social science research during the middle of the twentieth century.

Hurston was not alone. Margaret Mead also gestured towards the importance of reflexivity in anthropological fieldwork, of carefully considering the effects the body of an anthropologist can have in the production of knowledge. In *Male and Female* (1975), Mead comments on the phrase “from where I sit” in order to highlight the fact that “no person ever sees more than part of the truth, that the contribution of one sex, or one culture, or one scientific discipline that may itself cross both sex and cultural lines, is

always partial, and must always wait upon the contribution of others for a fuller truth” (21). As such, it was important for Mead to underline her positionality, as it was essential to incorporate into the canon(s) of anthropological scholarship the analyses of differently gendered bodies, to acknowledge the embodied dimensions of experience and their associated claims to ethnographic authority.

This, however, is not quite the kind of anthropological practice I have in mind when I think about Yedida, for its emphasis is a little too much on how bodies come to *know* the world, and a little too less on how bodies *move, interact, engage*. Perhaps it is time to think about the methodological mainstay of anthropological research: participant observation. This technique has had a long, variegated relationship to anthropology, rising to prominence in the discipline alongside the (mythical) career of Bronislaw Malinowski (Stocking 1992). Participant observation can refer to a diverse range of research practices, all of which might be deployed “with varying levels of theoretical engagement, in academic and applied research contexts” (Pink 2009:8). And it was Malinowski who presented one of the most commonly cited explications of the method.

I refer, specifically, to the famous first chapter of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), wherein Malinowski articulates a procedure for studying human behavior and social organization in a scientific, objective manner. According to Malinowski, this is only possible by immersing oneself in tribal life and culture; the ethnographer “ought to put himself in good conditions of work, that is, in the main, to live without other white men, right among the natives” (6). Such close association with ‘the natives’ would allow the ethnographer to come to know them, to become familiar with their beliefs and customs in a manner more intimate than that achieved by veranda interviews. But it would also allow something else. As Malinowski recounts,

I began to take part, in a way, in the village life, to look forward to the important or festive events, to take personal interest in the gossip and the developments of the small village occurrences; to wake up every morning to a day, presenting itself to me more or less as it does to the native...Quarrels, jokes, family scenes, events usually trivial, sometimes dramatic but always significant, formed the atmosphere of my daily life, as well as of theirs. [Malinowski 1922:7]

Just like an anthropologist, the body of a conservation inspector is emplaced. She moves from one site to another, taking part in the imponderabilia of everyday life. There is quite an extensive history to these kinds of movements in the anthropology of

Palestine. *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (2006) by Gil Eyal offers a productive entrypoint for their study. He tells readers about a specific cohort of individuals, dubbed the ‘Arabists’, who developed a key form of expertise about the ‘Arab’ population(s) in Palestine before 1948. These were Jewish settlers born in Palestine, fluent in the local Palestinian dialect, and deftly knowledgeable about the nuances and intricacies of Palestinian village life. They often served as employees of Zionist paramilitary intelligence services and were valued for their ability to speak, act, and even ‘think’ like Palestinian Arabs (Shavit 2013:119).

Their authority derived from their everyday encounters with Palestinians, from their close proximity to Palestinian everyday life. They conducted “iterative-inductive research” in a manner that involved “direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions” (O’Reilly 2005:3; Furani and Rabinowitz 2011:476). Eyal describes this form of expertise in detail. He highlights the ways in which it centered on the collection of trusted informants, sometimes crystallizing into “a practical technique [for] brewing and exploiting internal conflicts and divisions in the Arab village” (2006:83). Usually, though, the role of an Arabist was to conciliate practical problems between Jewish settlers and the indigenous Palestinian population(s); as “merchants, farmers or guards of Jewish settlements,” the Arabists “were in regular contact with Palestinian Arabs due to their work, and thus functioned as local ‘notables’ mediating neighborly relations in frontier areas, distant from the central British colonial authority” (661).

I want to be more specific. What did this kind of work actually entail? Shimshon Mashbetz, an assistant of the famous Arabist, Ezra Danin, provides some answers. Recounting a course he organized in Haifa for Arabists in 1940, Mashbetz describes the extent to which its content focused on *how* to deal with local conflicts between Jewish settlements and their Palestinian neighbors—on *how* “to prevent friction stemming from ignorance of Arab life” (Black and Morris 1991:22). Ian Black and Benny Morris offer an example of the type of work for which these courses were designed to prepare their students:

[David] Karon [an Arabist] proved his worth shortly afterwards when the guards at Kfar Menachem shot dead an Arab gathering hay in the kibbutz fields one night. The young Shai [pre-state intelligence organization] man, known by then to the Arabs as Daoud, played a key role in the formal *sulha* (reconciliation) with the dead man's family and village. Rice and meat for the festive meal were provided by the Jewish Agency and Eliahu Sasson came down from Jerusalem with a message of peace and good- neighbourliness. [22]

Arabists were to serve as advisers and guides for the Zionist politico-military leadership, deploying their relationships, their practical knowledge, and their emplaced bodies in order to skillfully mediate and negotiate the interests of these different, often times segregated, communities. This form of expertise functioned as a technique for acquiring political or logistical support from the various Palestinian villages, as it allowed a fledgling state apparatus to generate and stabilize (new) alliances between Palestinians and Jewish settlers.

This, I argue, is the same kind of work Yedida performed in the Old City of Acre. Our visit to al-Jazzar Mosque is a perfect example. It was the way she modified her outfit, the way she shared coffee and conversation with the caretaker, the way she always remembers to extend her greetings on religious holidays. For Yedida, these social interactions, these public courtesies, were an important part of her job as a conservation inspector. "This is something my manager is really good at," she admired. "I really like him, and you can tell people in the community like him too. He is good at his job because he is able to interact with the community, and they are not afraid of him." These statements are probably true. Whenever I accompanied him on walks into the Old City of Acre, many residents readily greeted him. Others wished him a peaceful sabbath. Some even invited him to view their illegal renovations. Just like the Arabists, Yedida and her supervisor moved through the Old City of Acre with an effortless grace, dexterously finessing their way through buildings and through conversations, all in a manner that allowed them to build relationships, to establish alliances, to negotiate conflicts between its residents and its architectural conservation.

It was not until the end of my fieldwork that I began to appreciate the importance of these relationships. I watched as a group of conservators from the Israel Antiquities Authority moved from archival documents to lists, from lists to databases, from databases to historic structures. There was just one small problem, a tiny hiccup stalling their entire

project. It became increasingly apparent that these conservators would have a difficult time gaining access to the historic structures they wanted to study. They would need an intermediary, one they hoped to find in Mohammad, a well-known and well-respected resident who has cultivated ties with the public through his work in a local community center. A conservation architect from this team had arranged a meeting with him in his office. After we had settled into our seats, Mohammad entered the room, carrying a tray with three large water bottles. He sat behind his desk and listened as the conservation architect explained their project—their need to enter into the homes of residents in order to document the status of each building.

She handed him a list of the buildings they would need to examine. He began studying the list, using a bright pink highlighter to annotate it. “How many buildings do you think it will be possible for us to enter?” asked the conservation architect.

“There is nobody living in some of these buildings,” replied Mohammad. He lifted his gaze from the list and redirected it towards her. “They are empty. They will be locked. There will be nobody to let you in. You will need to talk to Amidar or the Old Acre Development Company in order to get the keys.”

“Okay. And the others?”

“It will be difficult. What do I say if they think this is for Amidar? If they think you will go and tell Amidar about the things you see inside their homes?” Mohammad asked.

“Tell them that we are the Antiquities Authority. No. Not Authority. Just Antiquities,” the conservation architect laughed. Mohammad smiled and shrugged his shoulders. She pointed to her chest and inquired, “What if I wear one of our shirts with our logo that says ‘Antiquities Authority’?” She then added, half jokingly, “No. What if I wear a sign that says ‘Antiquities. Not Amidar’?”

“Does this mean Elias will have to do it all?” one conservator interjected. She was referring to the one Palestinian in the group, a young professional whose family used to live in the Old City of Acre. The question went unanswered. Everyone gathered their belongings and quietly exited the office. After the meeting, the project coordinator briefed me on the discussion. “He is not really optimistic at all,” she began. “The problem is the residents hesitate to let us into their apartments because they fear we may be doing



estimates and assessing the size so that we can go to Amidar and try to buy the property. Recently this has been happening a lot in the Old City. This is all because the residents do not really own their houses. You know this right? Of course. So a lot of houses have been sold in the last few years—to Jews, to entrepreneurs.” A project brought to a standstill, shelved indefinitely, all because of a failed connection, a severed conduit, a blocked detour.

The Israel Antiquities Authority is well-aware of the importance—of the necessity—of forging alliances with the residents of the Old City of Acre. Its employees are experienced, if not always the most skilled, network-builders. They know that they cannot even begin their work if they are unable to move freely throughout its alleys, throughout its buildings. They have learned from the mistakes of municipal officials who, I have been told, cannot effectively do their jobs because they are too afraid to leave their cars, too afraid to wander its inner alleys without police escort. These are the officials who have failed to establish working relationships with the local residents, who have become targets of harassment, of frustration. It is these friendships, these relationships, that make detours possible. Very little can begin without these residential allies.

***The Details of Translation: Who to Discipline?***

Yedida and I ambled through the market, weaving our way through throngs of residents, tourists, and merchants. The stone pavement was slick, the scent of fish intermingled with those of herbs and spices, and the shouts of fishmongers diverted my attention from left to right. “If you look above over there, you can see an illegal addition. They added a third story.” She did not point. She did not index the building with her finger, her hand, or her head. It was such a quiet, discreet observation. I am surprised I even noticed it at all amidst all the clamorings of commerce. Before I could ask her about the building and how she spotted it, a resident barreled towards us on an electric bicycle, halting right next to Yedida. He stood and he greeted her, a short formality before divulging a problem with his building application. He was having difficulties finding an architect to do the conservation documentation for a renovation project he had planned. As the resident rode away, swerving through the crowd of market-goers, Yedida turned to me and confessed, “I do not know what to do about this. I am still trying to figure it out.”

Such interruptions frequently occurred on our walks through the Old City of Acre. Our conversations adopted a certain rhythm, a staccato cadence composed of stops and starts, stops and starts. Initially, I found these punctuations frustrating. I had questions that needed answers and answers that needed questions. It was not until later that I began to see these interruptions as something else entirely. They were not interruptions to her work, to her movements from one office to another. They *were* her work. But that is not quite right either. After all, what *is* Yedida? I have spoken about her as if we already know. She is the thing that does a doing. She is the thing that completes an action. In practically all of my accounts thus far, that which does an action has usually been presented “with some flesh and features that make them have some form or shape, no matter how vague” (Latour 2005:53).

This is an important thing to note, as it sits at the center of many debates within the discipline of anthropology. It is easy to engage in clumsy discussions about actants and agencies, overcoding the metalanguages of the people we study with our own social explanations. I am no exception to this. I have often critiqued newspaper articles for their lack of precision, such as when they assert that it was ‘the Federal Reserve System’, not ‘Ben Bernanke’ or ‘the Open Market Desk of the New York Fed’, that lowered the federal funds rate. Anthropological projects are frequently just as corrective, designed to set the record straight, to clarify misunderstandings and inaccuracies, to undermine the negative effects of false consciousness. Consider, for example, the way Patrick Wolfe describes settler colonialism. In a short, simple sentence, readers are corrected. Settler colonialism is “a structure not an event” (2006:388). Such a statement can leave readers quibbling endlessly about *which* figurations are *actually* responsible (McGee 2014:50). Is settler colonialism caused by a (haphazard, well-organized) event that destroyed and replaced all that is indigenous? Or, is settler colonialism caused by a logics of elimination, an organizational grammar, an underlying *langue*? The first figuration (an event) is definitely different from the second figuration (a logics), but they both give a shape to the many agencies that eliminate natives and replace them with settlers.

Social scientific accounts do not *need* figures. After all, accounts of agency are accounts “of action, of something being done, of changes and transformations in things, people or a state of affairs” (Doncu 2016:1035). While figures provide a kind of

shorthand, a way to ensure that an analysis is no more cumbersome than it needs to be, figures might actually be analytically undesirable. As anthropologists spend their time correcting their interlocutors and the figures they deploy, they never get a chance to explore the *figured agency* equated with these figures. They never get to explore the range of actants at work, the ways in which entities change with each association made (McGee 2014:50). What, then, are the figured agencies associated with the figures that populate my accounts of architectural conservation? It is impossible to know, for sure, exactly how many things “are simultaneously at work in any given individual” (Latour 2005:54). Yedida—the person, the inspector—is a *figuration* of many agencies (employment records, bank accounts, identification cards, automobiles, friendships, telephones, e-mails). Her body gives a figure—a face and a voice—to ‘Yedida’. And, sometimes, her body does the same for all of the events and occasions, the translations and mediations that perform a government entity. The same can also be said for the Office of Conservation Supervision. There are moments when these rooms in Khan as-Shawarda give shape to the ensemble of agencies that *is* the Israel Antiquities Authority, endowing an unspecified form with specific characteristics. These ensembles of agencies are the very things that I have been trying to describe.

In order to preserve the Old City of Acre, in order to uphold the Antiquities Law of the State of Israel, the Director of the Israel Antiquities Authority must take detours through the Office of Conservation Supervision. This is an office that can do many things. It is an office that can liaise in many different ways. What, then, will this detour look like? What ensemble of agencies will this office figure? The Office of Conservation Supervision might expand its community outreach and education efforts, perhaps utilizing the resources of the International Conservation Center to present lectures on every facet of the Antiquities Law of the State of Israel—all of the procedures, the techniques, and the policies associated with architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. However, it is unlikely that every single resident interested in modifying their apartment will be able—will be willing—to attend such a lecture series. It is also unlikely that every single one of these residents will be able—will be willing—to learn everything there is to learn about architectural conservation.

A different strategy has been selected, a liaison technique that is a little more modest. The Office of Conservation Supervision has substituted for these residents “another delegated human character” (Latour 1988a:300)—a conservation inspector. Now, only one human actor—not thousands—would need to become a disciplined expert on architectural conservation. There is no longer the need for a resident to bother memorizing every single technical detail, every single bureaucratic convention associated with architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. This is now a task for the conservation inspector. She can synthesize all of the latest legislation, all of the newest techniques, all of the amended procedures, and she can present to each applicant only that which is relevant for their particular project. There is no longer a need for *everyone* to know *everything*. Their problems have become Yedida’s problems, puzzles for her to figure out.

A resident wants to add a balcony to their apartment? There is no need for them to worry about the specifications and guidelines for preserving painted ceilings. All they need to do is follow the guidelines listed in the specifications for balconies. Yedida can e-mail those to them. A resident wants to add an external staircase to their apartment? Yedida can meet with them outside their apartment and brainstorm solutions, that way they do not have to go through the rigmarole of submitting a series of unfeasible proposals. An entrepreneur wants to transform the roof of his restaurant into an additional seating area? Yedida can help them find a place for the external staircase. She can also search in the archives for historical photographs of the structure. There might be something in the archives that can guide his project, maybe a picture that shows that the structure used to have a second story. This might help the applicant make a convincing argument to the conservation committee based on the principle of restoring to the status quo.

These are just some of the ways a conservation inspector can help. The Office of Conservation Supervision recognizes that this is not always enough. “There are all sorts of problems with conservation here in Acre,” began Yedida. She knows that the bureaucracy of architectural conservation is logistically complicated, financially draining, and excessively time-consuming. She knows that many of the local residents are socio-economically disadvantaged, that their livelihoods depend on modest payments from the

National Insurance Institute of Israel—that many are elderly, that many are sick, that many are unable to work. She also knows that the Old City of Acre became a historic monument without the consent of its residents, ushering into their everyday lives all sorts of possibilities and uncertainties. “This leads the residents to build and renovate illegally. I try to be mindful of this. I try to find creative solutions so that people do not need to go through the conservation committee to do their project. For example, if someone wants to install an air-conditioning unit, they need approval from the conservation committee. This takes a long time and costs a lot of money. I will recommend they try to install it on the roof instead of on a wall that is visible from the alley. That way they do not need to go through the committee.” But not everyone walks into the Office of Conservation Supervision. Something else is needed before this place can become an *obligatory* point of passage—an intersement device that interrupts, just as much as it persuades.

***Anthropology, the State, and their Parallels***

We stood in Fisherman’s Square. The morning air was still fresh, the square already sun-drenched. This was the designated gathering place for this month’s conservation committee meeting. “I hate these meetings,” Yedida grumbled, taking a drag on her cigarette. Her cell phone rang before she could continue. It was another committee member, asking to verify the location of the meeting. As usual, Yedida and her colleagues from the Israel Antiquities Authority were the only ones to arrive on time. We waited, finding a small piece of shade under which to stand, a shadow cast by a large border police van. It kept us away from the sun and the traffic, just as it brought us closer to the police station. A young border guard sat slouched in the driver’s seat and watched a movie on his cell phone—headphones in, face down, borders secure. “Everyone is always late. There is a lot we need to get through this month, and we do not have much time,” Yedida explained anxiously. The meeting was scheduled to begin twenty minutes ago.

While I was watching the border police, Yedida was watching the Old City. “Look,” she nodded in the direction of a nearby restaurant. “On the roof over there. There is a man doing illegal building.” I scanned the horizon. It took me much longer than it took Yedida to spot a pair of white overalls stacking cement cinder blocks, slowly and methodically erecting a short wall on the edge of a rooftop terrace. Yedida reached into

her back pocket, retrieved her cell phone, and began taking photographs of the (crime) scene. This was my introduction into conservation *inspection*. Everything seemed too serendipitous. If the other members of the conservation committee had not be so late and if the shade from the border police van had not been positioned just so, would Yedida have had the time to notice the white overalls, the cement cinder blocks, and all their illegality?

This is an answer we cannot possibly know. Nonetheless, the question inspires another question, a question about knowledge production, about physical movements, about the circulation of government bodies. In *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (2001), Nadia Abu El-Haj scrutinizes the discipline of archaeology, explicating the micro-dynamics of its practices as well as the artifacts, histories, and geographies they help to produce. By examining archaeological *practice*, her analysis extends beyond a delineation of the role archaeological *knowledge* has played in the production of a cohesive, Jewish-Israeli national imagination. A focus on the processes, rather than on the contents, of archaeology has allowed her to highlight the ways in which the *excavation* of material culture can have very real, very tangible effects within ‘wider’ ‘social’ and ‘political’ fields. As she so evocatively describes, the bulldozers deployed in archaeological excavations have quite literally erased the (historical) presence of Palestinians, destroying and discarding anything and everything that has not been deemed ‘archaeology’ or ‘material culture’.

Abu El-Haj instructs readers to conceptualize anthropology as a matrix of knowledge *and* practice, which has come to be “endowed with multiple meanings and harnessed for different purposes by various social actors and institutions” (2001:21). In Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), this matrix has manifested a world filled with institutionalized distinctions. These anthropologically-informed systems of classification have been no stranger to scholarly analyses about the occupation, offering a productive opportunity for studying the relationship(s) between specific forms of knowledge production, specific techniques of population management, and specific mechanisms of (settler) colonial surveillance. One might, for example, consider the regime of identification cards that populate everyday life throughout Israel and the OPT.

These low-tech material artifacts, particularly the numerical codes inscribed within them, fix “identity to a bureaucratic need” (Tawil-Souri 2010:219). They render populations legible (Scott 1998) in ways that allow the Israeli state to store information about its (Palestinian) subjects, to regulate their spatial distribution, to control their day-to-day movements (Torpey 1998).

Others have illuminated the extent to which the routine and systematic collection of personal information can actually create that which it purports to describe, constructing the Palestinian population in ways that constitute new demographic realities (Hacking 2002; Lyon 2010). This approach takes seriously the production, not just the deployment, of state (anthropological) knowledge. One popular topic of inquiry has been the Israeli census, with scholars confronting the possibility that the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics has played a key role in “the formation and definition of Israel’s citizenry, determining who [is] to be included and who excluded” (Leibler 2010:253). The argument is that the employees of the Census Bureau do not merely *represent* or *describe* a clearly-defined Palestinian or Israeli population. Rather, their practices of “sorting, categorizing, and describing” play an integral part in creating “the very population that is being observed and recorded” (Fischbach 2010:298). Census records have the power

to transform the very objects they enumerate and/or describe. The question then becomes: beyond the obvious degree to which data and information helped Britain [and, by extension, Israel] rule Palestine, did such surveillance transform the basic nature of Arab life in Palestine as a result? The two major ways in which data collecting theoretically could have impacted Palestinian society were census and land records. Did the way that Mandatory authorities conceptualized Palestinians in census registrations—as religious communities and/or as ‘Arabs’—affect the actual contours of Palestinian society, particularly Palestinians’ own discourse about ‘self’? [Fischbach 2010:306–307]

In *State Practices and Zionist Images: Shaping Economic Development in Arab Towns in Israel* (2006), David Wesley responds affirmatively to this question, illustrating in detail the power of the Israeli census. He confronts a discrepancy within its statistical charts, a discrepancy that obfuscates the demographic homogeneity of the ‘natural’ regions of the Galilee. According to the census conducted in 1995, the Palestinians of the Galilee constituted a minority; in three of the four Galilee sub-districts, Jewish-Israelis appear to have numerical superiority over Palestinian-Israelis. However, Wesley insightfully demonstrates the extent to which the boundaries of these sub-districts of the

Galilee are “little more than statistical creatures,” as each “take[s] a chunk of the Arab-dominated (numerically) heartland, attaching it to an area of Jewish numerical superiority” (2006:26–27). The Israeli census, stated bluntly, transformed the Palestinian population(s) of the Galilee into a minority, replete with all the not-so-pleasant aftereffects of minority status.

But it is not just the content of identification cards and census charts that enables states to control or subjugate their populations. State practices—and *just* state practices, not their associated knowledges—have a similar effect. In “Exclusionary Surveillance and Spatial Uncertainty in the Occupied Palestinian Territories” (2010), Ariel Handel analyzes surveillance practices in the OPT, asking: why does the Israeli military issue so few permits to Palestinians? what do Israeli military checkpoints actually check? what do Israeli soldiers see and write down at these checkpoints? He concludes that the primary purpose of identification cards and checkpoints is *not* to collect data or conduct surveillance. These are not sites that satisfy the presumed need of the state to produce as many points of friction as possible, to produce inspection points through which its subjects must pass, through which its subjects can be studied, followed, embraced (264). As Handel observes, these checkpoints are simply not designed for this purpose. They are “improvised facilities, lacking computers or even operation diaries” (268). No information is written down at these checkpoints, and “no data are catalogued or transmitted.” Their purpose, then, is simply to block, to stop Palestinian movement, regardless of what their identification documents say or do not say.

Each of these scholars provokes me to think critically about the relationship between state practices and state forms of knowledge. But it is Handel, in particular, who cautions me to carefully consider—rather than assume—the extent to which state knowledge actually influences the everyday practices of a (settler) colonial government. His text inspires me to see what happens when we direct our scholarly attention to these practices—just these practices. Every day, Yedida collected scores of data about the buildings in the Old City of Acre, most of which took the form of photographs that she uploaded from her phone to her computer. I will have much to say about these activities in the next chapter. For now, though, I want to focus on the *movements*, the *stases*, that accompany these data collection practices (Bier 2017). Yedida is an entity that can move



through narrow alleys, that can knock on doors, that can enter into the homes of residents. These movements, these excursions through public and private space, link the Israel Antiquities Authority to the Old City of Acre, momentarily extending its governance into the nooks and crannies of everyday life. But how does this work? How does Yedida patrol this historic city?

***The Details of Translation: How to Discipline?***

“It is quiet today,” observed the conservation inspector. “Let’s go for a walk.” I quickly gathered my notebook and my pen and followed her out of the Office of Conservation Supervision. This was one of her (almost) daily inspection tours of the Old City of Acre. This time, we avoided the market, walking along an alley that brought us to a recently rehabilitated building—the Jewish National Fund Western Galilee Tourist Information Center. “The conservation work here has just finished. They did a nice job. The JNF offered to also do exterior renovations for the neighbors on the top floor. This is one way they got the residents to support the project. It also means the entire façade of the building is the same, so it looks nicer. I also like the cages they used for the air-conditioning and the pipes.” She quickly took a photograph of the building and its air-conditioning unit with her cell phone, and we continued on our tour.

“I am nervous about this next project. It is a clinic, and they are doing renovations. Here it is.” She paused and examined the exterior. “The owner of the clinic recently installed these metal windows and doors. But they are not the correct materials, and they do not look very nice. You can see there he used cement [to attach them]. I am trying to talk to the owner about following the conservation guidelines.” Her concerns mixed the technical with the aesthetic. “He also wants to paint the exterior plaster yellow and the doors and windows bright blue, the same blue as his sign. I am worried about what this will look like. I do not think it will look very good. The Arabs seem to like the brighter colors though. I prefer something more quiet, like the gray or the light blue you see on the Efendi Hotel or the International Conservation Center. So I am trying to convince him to change the color.” We stepped inside the clinic and met the doctor in his office. I watched as Yedida spoke with him, first inside the clinic, then outside the clinic. Their debate over the proposed color scheme appeared amicable, with smiles emerging more than once or twice throughout the conversation.

And then we departed. We stopped briefly at a property owned by a Jewish-Israeli entrepreneur, a figure well-known to Yedida and her colleagues on account of the many apartments he has purchased and rehabilitated into small guest houses. “This property has been undergoing renovations since I started working in the Old City. I do not know why it is taking so long. It’s strange.” We descended a short staircase and entered the building. There was a worker inside, plastering a wall near the back of the room. “The owner wants to make this a common room for the guests,” Yedida explained as she circled the interior. She examined the labels on a stack of building materials, bags of cement piled neatly on four wooden pallets. She turned to the worker. “There is white cement here.”

“Yes,” he replied. “It is for the floor.”

“Okay. That’s okay.” Yedida clarified her question for me. “When I visit a project site, I look to see what kinds of materials they are using. I will look at the bags of materials and see what they are.” She points to one stack of bags. “These bags here are okay, but the bags over there are white cement. Usually that is not okay, but he said they are using it for the floor, so it is okay. Sometimes, though, they try to use it on the walls. If you see these bags of cement in an alley, then you can know there is probably illegal building going on somewhere nearby. Anyways, let’s go.”

We left the building and began walking south along Ha-Haganah Street, making our way towards the lighthouse. I remembered thinking that this was an unusual day. Typically on these inspection tours, we would encounter locked doors, with nobody around to let us examine renovations in progress. “I received a text message this morning about illegal construction done over the weekend,” remarked Yedida.

“Is that normal? Who texts you?” I asked.

“Yes. I get them from people visiting. I usually get text messages on Friday night about illegal construction happening in the Old City. This is when illegal building usually happens, over the weekend or over the holidays when we are not here to see it. Sometimes I will send the police over to stop the work. The police have good relations with the community, and whenever I need them in an emergency, I can call them, and they always come and help me right away. The problem is that it takes time for the Municipality to issue a ‘stop work’ order. By the time the police receive it, they are usually already finished with the construction.” I would soon learn who sent the

incriminating text message. It was an acquaintance of mine, the project coordinator for the architectural documentation of St. Andrew's Church. "Did you see what happened this weekend?" he asked me fervently. "The illegal renovation on the windows. Look! The cement awnings."

Towards the beginning of this chapter, I showed how the Director of the Department of Antiquities during the British Mandate found ways "to bring into play associations *that last longer than the interactions that formed them*" (Callon and Latour 1981:283). He replaced unsettled alliances with lists of historic sites and inspectors of antiquities. The problem, however, was that lists and inspectors, when all alone, are hardly constraining or convincing. Lists, posted in government buildings, were ignored or misread. Inspectors, always on patrol, could never be everywhere at once. So, then, other detours were needed, regular movements through fences, reports, police officers, and magistrate courts. With these in place, the Director of Antiquities could sleep easier. He might not ever be able to persuade people to protect antiquities, but with these new alliances, he might be able to interrupt that which leads people to destroy them. His actions, long past and far removed, could still be active.

The Department of Antiquities found new ways to enfold humans and nonhumans, to align individuals with "the hidden and despised social masses who make up our morality" (Latour 1992b:227). There is nothing new about this. If one looks hard enough, they can see it almost everywhere. Bruno Latour, for example, has us consider seat belts and the red icon that flashes on dashboards, the alarms that beep incessantly and annoyingly—two things that keep drivers at peace with the law. According to Latour, it has become exceedingly difficult, exceedingly maddening, to drive without wearing a seatbelt. "I cannot be bad anymore. I, plus the car, plus the dozens of patented engineers, plus the police are making me be moral" (Latour 1992b:226). Breaking the law—that is, driving without a seatbelt—has become such a hassle. But drivers still have options, at least three options. They can buckle their seatbelt, an action which immediately stops the beeps. They can stay annoyed, maybe turning up the radio loud enough to drown out the beeps. Or, they can locate and disable all the conduits that transport a pulsating signal from a seat buckle to the car's computer—to the thing that translates the electrical current into an annoying ding (Eco 1976). Seat belt sensors are not merely a passive tool, a

dominating force that needs to be controlled. They have become a part of us. They are us. They help make us who we are.

This may not be the best example. Maybe someone has an older car, one that makes it difficult to imagine the ding, ding, ding. It is helpful to think through another. Imagine, for a moment, an automobile driver. Now, imagine all of the speed limit signs, police cars, and speed bumps they inevitably encounter on their journey from point A to point B. Three techniques designed to transition a driver from one that is reckless to one that is disciplined. But why all three? Why are three techniques necessary? Well, they are not always necessary. For many individuals, a simple speed limit sign is enough to slow them down, having cultivated a body that has learned to be affected in particular ways. The thought of speeding, of endangering a pedestrian or another driver, is quite simply heart breaking. For others, a second device is needed: a patrol car. I cannot count the number of times my pulse has quickened, my foot has shifted from the gas pedal to the brake pedal, after finding a police car, tucked behind some foliage, with a radar gun pointed at me. My fear is not a broken heart. I fear a broken bank. Speeding tickets are too expensive. Their accumulation is too time consuming. There are revoked licenses and court appearances to consider.

The problem, though, is that police officers have other duties. They cannot always be parked in the bushes, waiting for unsuspecting speeders. They get dispatched to robberies. They take breaks. They eat lunches. They fall asleep. Civil engineers have devised a new actant to take their place, one that is smoother and rounder, that resides on roads day and night, that never gets bored or distracted. Speed bumps—what the French refer to as a sleeping policeman. They do not break hearts or bank accounts. They break suspensions.

The driver modifies his behavior through the mediation of the speed bump: he falls back from morality to force. But from an observer's point of view it does not matter through which channel a given behavior is attained. From her window the chancellor sees that cars are slowing down, respecting her injunction, and for her that is enough. [Latour 1999:186]

A clever thing has just happened. The presence of a speed limit sign, a police officer, or a speed bump has translated the goal of a motorist into something else, prompting them to slow down so as not to harm others, so as not to receive a ticket, so as not to damage their automobile's suspension. All the while, the enunciator(s) of these technical acts has

disappeared from the scene. They have found someone or something to reliably act “as lieu-tenant, holding the enunciator’s place” (Latour 1999:188).

How could something like this work in the Old City of Acre? The options are limitless, if not always practical. The Israel Antiquities Authority could place the Old City of Acre behind a giant fence, protecting its historic buildings by limiting access. Or, it could install a guard at every entrance, one that checks automobiles and suitcases, all to ensure that illegal building materials do not enter the historic site. A museum city. A cordoned city. These strategies are not unimaginable. They are not something with which the Old City of Acre is unfamiliar. Nonetheless, a different option has been selected. They have roused the sleeping police officer, for (s)he is still needed, at least for the Israel Antiquities Authority. I want to examine how (s)he acts and convinces, how (s)he extends associations through—despite—the ephemerality of her movements, for this is what an inspector so often does—*move*.

The Director of the Israel Antiquities Authority has delegated the protection of the historic fabric of the Old City of Acre to a human actant—to a conservation inspector, to something that can wander through its narrow alleys, to something that can network with its residents. She patrols the Old City of Acre, just like a beat cop. Instead of a gun or a baton, she is armed with a camera. Instead of a radio transceiver, she is equipped with a cell phone. She interrupts just as much as she assists. She is, as one colleague joked, the Sheriff of this town, a job made simpler by the work of others—the buildings that have been demolished to make way for access roads and public squares, the subterranean Crusader city that supports the compressive stress of the historic city above it. The paved roads and cleared alleys also rely on the invisible, everyday work of drainage systems, garbage collectors, and other such entities. What would happen if all these other actants suddenly stopped acting? If the streets became flooded with sewage? barricaded with trash? blocked by new construction? What would happen if the subterranean city crumbled? The physical movements of the conservation inspector would slow, perhaps eventually coming to an end. This is a powerful reminder that it is not the physical infrastructures, the cables, the radio frequencies that link entities together, but the flows, the pulses, the bodies that move, that circulate through them.

But there is no need to wait for the garbage collectors, the drainage system, or the subterranean city to go on strike. Yedida and her physical movements throughout the Old City of Acre end everyday at five in the afternoon, every week on Thursday. This is the problem with conservation inspection. It is too temporary. Her physical movements are far too ephemeral, a flow that must trace anew, with each patrol, a chain of associations between buildings, residents, and offices. Yedida cannot be everywhere at once, and the residents know this. They wait until she has left the office for the day or for the week, lugging stones and materials around in the middle of the night. When she returns to work the next morning and begins her inspection tour, the damage has already been done. She must look for traces, for leftover bags of cement, for other signs of new construction. What she can see, though, is limited to what is visible from the street. Even though she can enter into places cars cannot, she cannot always enter into everything. Doors are locked. Illegal projects go completely undetected. This is why friendships are so important. It helps if there are residents in the Old City of Acre or visitors to the Old City of Acre who are willing and able to alert the conservation inspector to the illegal building activities that she cannot be there to witness.

Still, Yedida needs to enroll “a *little more* than relationships, alliances and friendships” (Callon and Latour 1981:284). She cannot always stop the illegal building activities that she encounters, but she can transform these encounters into other kinds of materials. She can turn them into awkward confrontations, regularly admonishing building contractors for their use of cement-based materials, regularly critiquing local residents for their aesthetic decisions. She can become a real-life seat belt alarm. “Sometimes I have to get into arguments with the local residents. It can get really uncomfortable,” intimated Yedida. And so she preferred to shift the “weak and fast-decaying ties” made by her physical interactions with the illegal into “*other types* of links” (Latour 2005:66), inspiring a chain of events not too different from a speeding ticket: a series of annoyances, costly annoyances. More often than not, I watched as she enlisted other bodies (the police, the Municipality) and other materials (photographs, reports), turning these brief encounters into legal proceedings.

Yedida is made powerful by “the well-equipped armies that surround [her], the scribes and the recording equipment that serve [her],” a “whole gamut of tools,

regulations, walls and objects” (Callon and Latour 1981:284). These are the things that allow her to transform her observations of illegal building activities into photographs, into reports that she can then pass along to her supervisors, to the local police station, to the Acre Municipality. This is how she transforms a world made entirely of local interactions into something durable, something transportable—into something that can hold together for longer than a moment. Site visits turn into photographs, photographs turn into reports, reports turn into illegal building citations, illegal building citations turn into court appearances, monetary fines, or demolition orders. The conservation inspector that aligns herself with awkward confrontations is something completely different from the conservation inspector that aligns herself with this ensemble of other materials. Either way, a conservation inspector is not physically larger or inherently more powerful than the residents of the Old City of Acre. What made Yedida seem larger, more powerful, was a certain type of *movement* through it, one where ephemeral flows transformed into annoying interruptions, where short-lived encounters transformed into durable reports, immutable mobiles that could circulate between the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Acre Municipality, that could link residents and buildings to an entire administrative bureaucracy.

### ***Concluding Thoughts***

Yedida escorted the conservation committee effortlessly throughout the Old City of Acre, arranging for them to enter buildings slated for renovation. “Let’s go. Let’s go!” yelled the Director of the Conservation Department of the Israel Antiquities Authority. He was trying to keep the conservation committee on schedule, for there were many buildings they needed to visit and inspect. We walked into a quiet courtyard tucked away from a busy alley. Potted green plants and packed clotheslines made the space feel much cooler than it actually was. The courtyard was shared by a few apartments. Exactly how many, I could not tell. As I waited for the conservation committee to clarify their confusions, I turned around and saw a woman at the entrance to the courtyard. She wore a light brown hijab. She stood, not much taller than me, with her arms crossed in front of her. Are we in her way? Does she need to get through us? After watching the committee members deliberate for a few minutes, she walked over to me and asked, in Hebrew, who we were. I tried my best to explain to her that this was the conservation committee for the

Old City of Acre, that they were in the process of reviewing an application, but that I was not yet sure exactly which apartment or building they were visiting.

“Oh, okay. I see. I recently bought an apartment. Right there,” she responded in perfect English, pointing to a small door that opens under the staircase of another apartment. “It is small, but it is five rooms and we are submitting an application to the conservation committee. We are waiting for them to make a decision.”

“Well, these are the people that will be reviewing your application.”

“This is them?” she replied, smiling. “So they are probably reviewing another application right now? Okay. Thank you for your time.”

By the time she left, everyone on the conservation committee had also left, walking into the apartment under review. I quickly skipped up the stairs, following them into the building where I encountered Yedida and an older, black al-amira clad woman standing in the entryway. Before I knew it, I was following this woman, the owner, up a small metal staircase to a second apartment. She entered the kitchen and quickly returned with a cold bottle of water. “You will drink water. You will drink water. I will get you water.” An engineer from the Municipality initially refused. Once, then twice. She eventually consented after one of the representatives from the Old Acre Development Company accepted a small cup. I accompanied everyone to the roof of the building. I watched as the committee members scattered all over, looking down into the courtyards adjacent to the building, moving their arms to indicate to each other blocked views, formulating their opinions on whether or not she should be allowed to add another level to her apartment.

“You will drink water.” I was reminded of my conversation with Yedida after our visit to al-Jazzar Mosque, the anthropological insights she gathered about the Old City of Acre and its residents, about the social importance of accepting ‘Arab’ hospitality. There are many parallels between the practices of civil servants and the practices of anthropologists. We both do our jobs with “fragmentary and situated knowledge, by inhabiting multiple roles, harboring complex motivations, and perpetually transgressing boundaries and reconciling (or not) different moral/cultural codes” (Jauregui 2013:145). Throughout this chapter, I sought to offer a preliminary analysis of the political immediacy of bureaucratic bodies in the Old City of Acre, studying the extent to which



the bodily *movements* of bureaucrats—not just their finished texts or their polished reports—have participated in the enactment of state governance. The same, I think, can be said about anthropological bodies.

During fieldwork for this dissertation, I began to recognize my own participation in the solidification of these networks of governance, especially the role they play in the territorialization of the State of Israel. Even as I strived to act ethically and morally, I began interacting in the Old City of Acre in new ways, unwittingly helping to forge alliances between the Israel Antiquities Authority and its residents. There was the time when an acquaintance of mine, a young conservation professional, wanted to view the workshop of a local stonemason. She did not know where it was, so I offered to escort her to it. We sat on small wooden chairs, drinking the small cups of coffee provided by our host. It is here that she met a resident, an individual with grand plans to renovate his apartment—if only he could receive some financial support from Amidar.

“Which building is it?”

“It’s 18010/123, near Khan al-Umdan.”

“Ah, yes. I know it. It has a beautiful painted wooden ceiling. I know this building because of an inventory project we are doing. It is in the block that I was assigned. You really should do an architectural documentation of the structure before you do any renovations. You can go to the Antiquities Authority.” There I sat, a middleman between a building and architectural conservation, an intermediary between a local resident and the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Other times, my complicity manifested in even more minute ways. As Yedida commuted to the Old City of Acre, the flows of her body (re)produced, ever so quietly, Israeli state governance *as an effect*. Her movements fastened different sites together into a single social, archival, and infrastructural network, constituting the geographic contours of the State of Israel via the “established skein of journeys through which [it gets] experienced by its functionaries” (Anderson 2006:117). The Old City of Acre became a kind of Jewish-Israeli space, a kind of space in which Jewish-Israeli experts had some sort of legitimate stake or interest. This was made possible, in part, by a network of roads, which allowed bureaucrats residing in Jewish neighborhoods to swiftly and easily travel to and from a place like Acre, a place where they could form close relationships with its

(Palestinian) inhabitants and their homes. By commuting everyday by train from Haifa to Acre, I did the same. By commuting from Jerusalem to Acre, so did Yedida's supervisors.

Paraphrasing from Gay Hawkins, I argue that these observations open different lines of thinking about the relations between ethics, affect, and government (2010:121). What if the government was theorized as something more than just a phobic object, an entity that exerts power over others? What if the government was also recognized as something with which we are all caught up? As something that gets dematerialized and rematerialized through the different alignments and associations it makes with ourselves and with others? When the Israel Antiquities Authority adds to society a series of new agents—moisture, salts, lime-based building materials—it compromises “the freedom of all other agents by displacing their interests” (Latour 1988b:122). There are now regulations against using cement-based building materials and renovating apartments without approval from the Office of Conservation Supervision. There are now conservation guidelines that must be followed as well as frequent patrols and inspections to verify compliance. There are now reports to the Acre Municipality and telephone calls to the local police station. It is certainly possible to interpret these events as saying something about the proliferation of governmentality, about the extension of government into the nooks and crannies of everyday life.

I prefer another interpretation. The guidelines, the reports, the telephone calls, the patrols. These are the bodies of law through which the Israel Antiquities Authority dictates to local residents, property managers, and building contractors new duties, duties that require them to change their construction practices, to obtain approval for their projects, to submit to periodic inspections. But these are such fragile dictates. There are so many opportunities for things to go wrong, for alignments to fail, for events to unfold sloppily. Sometimes there are locked doors and blocked antennas. Sometimes there are unread messages and tired inspectors. Sometimes there are holidays and weekends. Sometimes there are uninformed contractors and indifferent residents. Techniques of amity, annoyance, and apprehension have helped the Israel Antiquities Authority equate the conservation of buildings with the governance of bodies. But this requires the slow crafting of tenuous alliances, alliances which are never assured and never guaranteed.

This is why figurations can be so misleading. There is the Israel Antiquities Authority. With the assistance of a photograph, I can visualize it as a building. (This is probably the most common way in which a government authority acquires a form, a shape, a texture.) Its walls enclose a complex ensemble of various human actants. (Architects, administrators, custodians, managers.) But before any of these actants can work, they require other nonhuman actants. (Desks and chairs, coffee pots and copy machines, computers and papers—all of which arrive through the assistance of couriers, trucks, roads, and gas stations.) It is clear, then, that the Israel Antiquities Authority is not just an office or the materialities that circulate within it. Its existence as a large, powerful organization is dependent, in part, on an extensive conglomeration of all the things that allow its employees, its reports, its conversations to travel—that allow the Israel Antiquities Authority to mingle with other government ministries and departments, with local authorities and local residents.

The associations that emerge from these minglings are not extensions *added to* the Israel Antiquities Authority. They are not additions to a pre-existing body. They are elements that actively give shape to it, that alter its capacities. Put differently, the Israel Antiquities Authority is not a fully formed entity in possession of certain innate powers. These powers, these capacities, emerge through the alignments it makes with other entities, alignments that shape it, that render its capabilities. What is interesting about this proposition is that each association and each alliance changes that which has been brought together. The Israel Antiquities Authority becomes an entirely different entity depending on the detours it makes, the relationships it builds. It becomes a very different thing when it forges friendships with local residents versus when it forges friendships with police officers or metal fences or curious anthropologists. This is what I mean when I saw that the government is contingent and uncertain. Different ensembles of agencies can all fall under the same name, rendering the Israel Antiquities Authority a multiple object, an object that reverberates with other entities (and not just on them), an object that can change (even as it remains the same).

## CHAPTER 5: STATIONARY DISPLACEMENTS

His face was unforgettable. A piercing gaze softened by a collection of wrinkles, the remnants of stories you could only imagine. His name was Hadem. He was tall and he was skinny. Yet he spoke with his whole body, a forcefulness that allowed him to contort Euclidean space, that allowed his thin stature to fill the Office of Conservation Supervision. He never bothered to knock before entering this room. And on one day, at the end of October, he grew even larger. His words flew loud and fast, too fast for me to follow, for he kept repeating a word in Hebrew whose meaning I had never learned.

“What is he talking about? He wants to build something for food?” I asked.

“No, a tent.” Yedida clarified, returning to her computer after he left. She performed a quick search on Google Images and selected a photograph. “He wants to install a tent like this for his customers in the winter. It is a problem because the kind he wants to install looks like something from a circus. It does not look very good.” Anyone proficient in Hebrew would, I hope, excuse my confusion, my misunderstanding of a soft ‘*hey*’ for a hard ‘*kaf*’. After all, it would have made sense for Hadem to talk about food; he owned a restaurant in the Old City of Acre, a small cafe situated in Khan as-Shawarda, adjacent to the Office of Conservation Supervision.

The door swung open. It was Hadem again. “Come and see. I will show you. Come!” he commanded. Yedida rose from her desk, moving a little slower than usual. We followed behind him, stopping in front of his restaurant. “The tent will be here,” he began. “This is where it will open and close.” Next, he traced an imaginary outline of the tent with his body. “It will go from here to here to here, about five meters.” He was no stranger to Yedida and her supervisor, a character about whom rumors tended to spread. “I am told he is a kind of mafia guy,” explained one employee from the Israel Antiquities Authority. “I want to formally meet him. Just to see what he is like. To hear from him directly. To see what he is like behind the glass door.”

The rains had finally come to the Old City of Acre, a signal that winter would soon begin. Hadem was prepared. Earlier in the week, he had installed a large white tent for his customers, a little something to keep them warm and dry during the wet winter months. The Acre Municipality, however, cited it as an illegal structure, requiring him to dismantle the tent and apply for a permit, something for which he would also need the

approval of the Office of Conservation Supervision. After he left, Yedida composed an e-mail to her supervisor in Jerusalem, attaching the photograph she found from Google as an illustration. “Hadem gives me such a headache sometimes,” she sighed. “For two years now, he has been adding and adding to his restaurant. It blocks the public path. And now he wants to do more. He wants to put up this giant tent. I told him that this is not really a matter for the Israel Antiquities Authority. It is a matter for the Municipality. I also tried to tell him that the tent would look really bad. So now I will send a report to my supervisor and the Director of the Conservation Department, just so they know. I need a break. I think I am having a heart attack and it is only Sunday.” She grabbed a cigarette and a lighter, threw on her leather jacket, and left the office.

Yedida was not the only one charged with monitoring the Old City of Acre. The Acre Municipality had its own building inspectors, individuals tasked with roaming its neighborhoods, its streets, and its alleys, identifying any and all municipal building violations. I spent an hour with one of these building inspectors, sitting across from him in his office at the Municipality. With kind eyes, a gentle voice, and a reservoir of patience, he explained to me the practical details of his job, a job that appeared incompatible with his mannerisms, a job that required a tolerance for boot-faced confrontations with building contractors and local residents. “The Municipality employs three building inspectors. Each inspector has their own [geographical] region of responsibility. Our job is to make a tour of our region, either in a car or on foot—well, in the Old City, you *must* go by foot, since it is impossible to go by car. If I see something—someone building—I will ask them if they have a building permit. If he says yes, then I will ask to see it. If he says no, then I will take photographs of the construction, and I will go to my boss. I will tell him about the situation, and he will give me guidance on what to do next.”

He picked up a red binder from the corner of his desk and opened it. “This is an example of a case file.” He quickly leafed through its pages, pausing at a colored satellite image printed on a sheet of paper. “Someone has constructed a wall around two properties, but they did not have a permit.” He pointed to a series of red lines that had been digitally inscribed on the image, illustrating with his finger the boundaries of the properties and the locations of the illegal walls. He continued to riffle through the pages

of the binder, this time stopping at an information sheet printed from the website of the Land Registry Office. “This is how I identify the owner of the property. I go to this website, and it has all of the information.” He flipped to the last page—a scanned copy of someone’s driver’s license—and then closed the binder. “Once I have taken the photographs and collected all of this information, then I send the owner a document, ordering him to cease and desist all construction work. This document is signed by the court. If the construction is dangerous, then we will issue a demolition order.”

“How do you send the document? By mail?” I asked.

“The document is delivered by hand. The owner must sign for it. I am required to make three attempts to deliver it, in addition to placing a notice on the building. If this does not work, then I send the document by registered mail. This does not happen often. Usually someone is always there—the owner, the contractor, a worker.”

As I sat in his office, I could not help but notice the quantity of paper that surrounded us. They stood in stacks and in piles, in red binders and in pink folders. And then I started to think about the Office of Conservation Supervision. Front and center, there was a computer (the device through which composition takes place) and a desk (the surface on which materials are spread in preparation for writing). There was also a conference table littered with application forms, rough notes, lists and outlines, letters and photographs. There were shelves crammed with architectural documentations, conservation reports, and building applications. There was a pinboard poked by tacks holding two items Yedida referenced quickly and frequently while sitting in her chair—a calendar and a giant map of the Old City of Acre. The short-lived encounters between bureaucrats, buildings, and bodies that I traced in the previous chapter transformed into the papers that blanket the shelves, the counters, and the tables of these government offices. These were the immutable mobiles that have flattened out the Old City of Acre, casting it into something that could be seen in one fell swoop, into something that could connect one object to another, into something that could move from one place to another.

In this chapter, I will enter into the offices of architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. I will follow the sheets of paper that accompany civil servants as they travel from one government building to another, piecing together the journeys of these paper artifacts as they sit on shelves, as they project onto screens, as they pass from the hands

of bureaucrats to the hands of local residents, their architects, and their lawyers. These trails are mundane. At times, they are boring. Yet, if one examines them closely and carefully, if one patiently considers these bureaucratic documents, it is possible to learn something about the ways in which these flimsy sheets of paper act as complex technologies of rule, as one of the many heterogeneous materials that enable centers of calculation to act as *centers* of calculation. This is the important part, for a ‘center of calculation’ is a special kind of figuration, a topologically multiple object that concretizes government as a Cartesian *and* a network object, that renders government coherently distinct and distinctly coherent. But this is a collective coherence, an autonomy that exists only so long as a center of calculation maintains the right kinds of relations with other entities, relations that can remain stable, that can be held in place, that can be made durable.

***Starting Small: Building Numbers, Lists, and Dirty Hands***

I will begin with a tentative analysis of the small. The archive in the Office of Conservation Supervision was compact (Figure 1). It consisted of two large wooden shelves, upon which sat a series of black magazine holders. These holders contained a variety of photographs, paper documents, and architectural plans, assorted by building number and grouped into plastic sheet protectors. This archival furniture was the endpoint of an elaborate series of documentary practices, practices that transfigured measuring techniques into categories, into bureaucratic objects like buildings and blocks and their numbers (see Chapter 1). It was also “the perfect intermediary between hardware (since it shelters) and software (since it classifies)” (Latour 1999:35–36).

Michel Foucault (1970) and his followers have helped scholars think about this kind of archival equipment as a technology of governance (Elden 2007). They have shown how cartographic and statistical techniques for organizing and classifying bureaucratic materials have allowed states and their agents to “plunge into domains that were previously [only] crudely known” (Hull 2012:165), creating an aggregated “synoptic view of a selective reality” (Scott 1998:11), a view that made possible “a high degree of schematic knowledge, control and manipulation.” It is clear, then, that the power of archives and their records has long been recognized. So much so, that it has now become commonplace to say that archives even “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” (Schwartz and Cook 2002:2).

These readings configure archives as sites of extraction, as tools for converting a selective range of ‘social facts’ into qualified knowledge. This is a configuration which suggests that archives are, perhaps, just as entailing as they are presupposing, for they facilitate the creation—not just the recognition—of new realities (Stoler 2002:22). This, then, is how things are made, for this is how things are made *legible*. It is an enormous feat, really. I will paraphrase from Bruno Latour when I say that it is impossible to talk about something like ‘the economy’, ‘the population’, or ‘the city’ by simply looking at ‘them’. They are “plainly invisible, as long as cohorts of enquierers and inspectors have not filled in long questionnaires, as long as the answers have not been punched onto cards, treated by computers, analyzed in this gigantic laboratory” (Latour 1986:15).

This is what has happened in the Old City of Acre, at least to its monuments, its historic buildings, and its residents. Consider, as an example, the creative survey apparatus designed by the Old Acre Development Company in October 1994 to measure the population of the Old City of Acre, one that allowed it to use the ‘wet’ contents of garbage cans to estimate the number of people living there (Peleg 2010:35). Archives, like the one in the Office of Conservation Supervision, have become a way for the employees of the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Old Acre Development Company, the Acre Municipality, and the Development Authority to ‘see’ the Old City of Acre. In many ways, this might appear counter-intuitive. How is it that one can ‘see’ something only when they “stop looking at nature and look exclusively and obsessively at prints and flat inscriptions” (Latour 1990:39)? How is it that this simple drift from the three-dimensional to the two-dimensional renders ‘things’ less confusing?

This is something I watched in the spring of 2017, when the Israel Antiquities Authority initiated a project to inventory the status of every single painted wooden ceiling in the Old City of Acre. There were ten of us packed into the Office of Conservation Supervision. We sat around its giant conference table, documents spread out around us, some to the right, some to the left. Most stared into their laptop computers, the same Google Sheets projected onto every screen, replete with its neon yellow and green highlights (Figure 2). Our task had been made simple: (1) review the survey cards



for each structure in our assigned block; (2) create a list, using information from the survey cards, of each structure likely to have a painted wooden ceiling; (3) search the archives and retrieve files for each structure on the list; and (4) examine the files for any documents created after 2002 (the date of the initial survey), noting any information that might suggest something about the current status of the painted wooden ceilings.

Amit had already assembled a list of buildings on a small, yellow sheet of paper (Figure 3). My assignment was to search and collect, to sift through each black magazine holder and locate all the documents I could find about each structure on his list. I was told to remove the papers from their plastic cases and begin skimming, searching for dated letters, dated stamps—anything that might indicate a document was produced after 2002. I would pass each document that met our criteria to Amit, as it was his job to interpret. “Look. This building 12/34. In 2002 they changed the ceiling from a cement ceiling to a wooden ceiling. Maybe this happened because of the survey?”

I shrugged my shoulders, “Maybe?”

He paused and then asked, “Are there any other documents for this building? There is one here that says they made a gallery and raised the ceiling. There may be something there. I will write it down and we will try to visit it. I just can’t find a warrant for these changes, so it is unclear what happened.”

“I don’t think so,” I replied. “Although this file also has the documents for 12/43 in it. It looks like things have been misfiled. I should check the others to see if anything else has been misfiled.” I remember immediately regretting my commitment. What if more than one document had been misplaced? This could turn into a much bigger project than it already was. I quickly learned that in order for anyone to array and to muster these resources, the archives needed to be well-kept, with proper labels in place and specimens that do not easily move (Latour 1999:16).

The room was quiet, with participants slowly navigating through each file, gently flipping each page. I watched as they glanced from one document to another, cross-referencing the lists in their notebooks, annotating the spreadsheet on their computers. Here it is, the Israel Antiquities Authority “*getting to grips with* the information in question” (Sellen and Harper 2003:103). “Okay, what about building number 45? There is something not right about this.” Amit stood and walked to Yedida’s desk, studying the

large map of the Old City of Acre she had pinned to the wall, his index finger gliding over its surface, pausing at one building and then another. He returned to his seat. “The ceiling for this structure had been dismantled, but the document identifies it as building 45 and 46. I will make a note that this is a building we will need to see. When I go home I will enter the images we have for each building into the spreadsheet. There I have a mouse and it will be easier. Right now I need to wash my hands. They are dirty from the pages.”

A list. It is such a quiet graphic genre, particularly when it is written. There is a certain visuality to it, a series of isolated linguistic units that are “ordered outside the frame of a sentence” (Hull 2012:200). Wait. Isolated is not quite the right word. Although these linguistic units are disconnected from other syntactical elements, this separation does not mean that they are alone. For even though these strings of words contain little semantic content, they perform important work (Bogost 2011; de Goede et al. 2016; Goody 1977). These tiny marks tied together a collection of other documents, other entities labelled with the same sequence of numbers. This is what was encountered in the Office of Conservation Supervision—a series of building numbers, a series of items to be annotated and correlated. But with what? With more and more elements (official maps, architectural plans, digital photographs), with more and more details (dangerous building notices, illegal building citations, approved building applications). This is how the Israel Antiquities Authority slowly learned about what a building *is*, what a painted ceiling *is*, what the Old City of Acre *is*. It dealt with figurations, adding more and more data to its spreadsheet, stopping only when it thought it knew enough, enough to take the number of a building for its entire catalog of elements and details. It quickly became apparent that these figurations were much smaller than their parts (Latour et al. 2012).

Amit’s list of buildings, a series of numbers scribbled on a piece of paper. Its insertion into a larger electronic dataset, one filled with the photographs, the plans, and the descriptive annotations collected from archival and field surveys. There are certain things that can be done with these inscriptions that cannot be done with a ceiling, a building, a city. First, they are mobile. These sheets of paper, thin and light, are easy to grasp and to carry. These are things they can take with them to their offices in the International Conservation Center, to their apartments in Haifa. The electronic databases

can be accessed from any computer with an Internet connection and an invitation. More importantly, though, is the fact that when they take these papers with them from one place to another, when they access the database from one site to another, their shapes do not change. They are, in short, immutable—immutable mobiles.

But before I can continue, there are a few things I need to clarify. Any discussion of immutable mobiles requires its interlocutors to make certain assertions about objects *and* about spaces. Consider, for a moment, the digital photographs captured by Yedida during her inspections of the Old City of Acre. Immutable mobiles are something Yedida knew well. She dealt with them every single day. Whenever she stumbled across an illegal building during her tours through the Old City of Acre, she would rouse her smartphone and snap a photograph, turning a transient encounter into something a little more permanent, into something she could take with her back to the Office of Conservation Supervision. In order to take one of these photographs, Yedida would press a button on her smartphone, which quickly opened and closed a shutter, briefly exposing the camera's aperture and allowing light to enter through its lens. Inside this digital camera, there is a small piece of equipment, an image sensor that measures the color and the brightness of all incoming light rays and converts these measurements into electrical signals. These electrical signals travel through an analogue/digital converter, which turns these signals into binary code, into a string of numbers that can be stored on a memory card and read by a computer.

As Yedida travels through the Old City of Acre, documenting with her smartphone one illegal building after another, she carries with her an object, a shape defined in terms of three orthogonal dimensions. As long as there are no physical deformations in the microscopic transistors of the smartphone's memory card, as long as its relative three-dimensional coordinates hold steady, then the digital photograph can remain fixed—even as it moves through geographical space. A digital photograph, however, is not just an object that exists in Euclidean space. It also exists in network space. A digital photograph is an *effect* of network relations, an object that holds together only so long as its “relations also hold together and do not change their shape” (Law 2002b:91). Put differently, it is a *network object*, an object whose shape is defined and maintained by “the relative syntactical positions of relevant entities” (95). Photographers,

shutters and apertures, sensors and memory cards, binary codes, computers and their softwares, wires and wireless connections, all of these entities must be enrolled and stay enrolled. If someone is to point to an object and call it a digital photograph, then *all* of these entities must “hold in place *functionally*” (95). If one circuit breaks or if one mechanism fails, then the digital photograph will start to degrade, lose its form, and turn into something else (93).

Yedida’s digital photographs are topologically multiple. They inhabit both Euclidean and network spaces, “holding together physically in one, and functionally or syntactically in the other” (Law 2002b:95). However, they only *move* within Euclidean space; they remain immobile within network space. This is important, for it is this “*immobility within network space which affords their displacement within Euclidean space*” (96). This is *how* a digital photograph becomes an immutable mobile. This framework can be extended to paper documents, to electronic correspondences, and to digital databases, albeit with a few details adjusted here and there. Yet all of these immutable mobiles are immutable mobiles of a specific kind, for they have transformed the Office of Conservation Supervision into a small laboratory where painted ceilings and historic buildings, where illegal renovations and wary residents “can be connected together just because their scale and nature has been averaged out” (Latour 1986:25). Each of these entities has been flattened out, transformed into objects that can be reproduced, re-shuffled, and re-combined, that can be brought together, placed side-by-side—just a few inches apart. This is how, in one fell swoop, a handful of ordinary individuals has been able to *see* the painted ceilings, the historic buildings, the Old City of Acre. There are, of course, still dark corners, hidden features that these conservation professionals would need to visit in person. But, for the most part, they could see what they needed to see without leaving their chairs. All they needed to do was move their computer mice a few centimeters here, a few centimeters there, and click open their invitation to a shared Google Sheet.

### ***Centers of Calculation***

Standing at the conference table in the Office of Conservation Supervision, Yedida and her supervisor were bent over an architectural plan, using a pencil to index its particulars, to clarify its details, and to scribble their concerns. On a separate sheet of

paper, Yedida noted the recommendations of her supervisor, summarizing his conclusions for the document she would prepare for the members of the conservation committee. And then they stopped, suddenly and quietly. It was a little before ten in the morning, and everyone started gathering their belongings. “Is it okay if Caitlin comes with us?” Yedida asked her supervisor.

“Yes, that is no problem,” he replied.

“Wait, Yedida, what is happening? Where are we going? I asked.

“We are going to visit the Municipality,” she began to explain as she collected her things. “Sometimes we will take a building application to the Municipality to try to make the application process go faster. Even if the conservation committee approves an application, they still need to get approval from the Municipality. They are two separate processes—a lot of people do not know this. It can take a very long time to get approval from the Municipality. In Israel it can be very difficult to get approval for any building. They recently tried to make it easier. For example, now it does not take as long for them to make a decision. I think they have something like 45 days to review your application, and then they are required to tell you whether or not your application was approved or denied. So sometimes we take the applications to the Municipality to see if we can get approval for the applicant, that way it is easier for them.”

We left the Office of Conservation Supervision. Yedida carried the architectural plans for the building application. Her supervisor carried the keys to his car. We walked a short distance to a nearby parking lot, one located just outside the Old City, and piled into his white sedan. The Municipality is not far. I would guess that it might take someone just as long to drive there as to walk. But it was summer, a temperature that lengthened distances, that slowed down time. Still, what does it mean to say that ‘the Municipality’ is not far? What does it mean to talk about *the* Municipality? These were the questions I thought as I climbed its steps, as I glanced up and studied its brutalist exterior. Another figuration. It would be easy to take for granted the idea that ‘the Municipality’ is a macro-actor that exists somewhere out there, dominating the Old City of Acre from its comfortable distance in the New City of Acre. After all, there it was, right in front of me. I could point to it. I could touch it. I could go inside of it. However, I have just learned to

not confuse Euclidean objects with network objects, Euclidean spaces with network spaces—no matter how much they might overlap.

It was clear Yedida had been here many times before. She guided us through the building without any hesitation, without any assistance. Anyone familiar with the architectural layout of the Acre Municipality might appreciate her spatial command of the building. It is a notoriously difficult structure to navigate, despite its simplicity. The building is a large rectangle, yet each floor and each hallway looks exactly the same, with little to no signage providing directional guidance. It is easy to spot the few visitors wandering its corridors; they usually look confused, and they usually ask for directions. We stood outside the office of the Municipal Architect, the official with whom we were scheduled to meet. His secretary invited us to sit and to wait, that he would be ready to see us shortly. So we did. On a three-seater bench pushed up against the wall in the middle of a narrow hallway. Nobody said anything. One stared at the blank wall in front of us. Another twiddled her thumbs. A moment of bureaucratic stand-by, one that would repeat itself after the Municipal Architect invited us into his office.

The office was clean, but sparse. A row of cabinets lined the wall next to me, while a series of shelves lined the wall opposite me. The shelves held a few books and binders, a couple of nick-nacks. Behind me, a giant satellite photograph of the City of Acre filled the whole wall from floor to ceiling. Yedida placed the building application on his desk and unfolded it, a single sheet of paper covering the entire surface. Not long after their conversation commenced, the Municipal Architect received a call on his cellular phone and left the room. We sat, once again, waiting in silence. Eventually, he returned. He apologized, explaining that he needed to leave, but that he had arranged for us to meet with the Director of Licensing and Construction, an individual whose office sat behind a biometrically locked door, whose office commanded a room full of plan checkers, women huddled over building applications, scrutinizing their details. But unlike these women, the Director of Licensing and Construction barely looked at the application. He sat back in his chair, glancing only when Yedida's supervisor pointed to a specific part of it. "It is like I said before," sighed Yedida as we left the Municipality. "It does not seem like the Municipality really cares about the Old City. I think we could do

whatever we wanted and approve whatever applications we wanted. They would not even notice. They never come here.”

The architectural plans of a building application moved through the Office of Conservation Supervision and found themselves in the Acre Municipality, unfolded on the desk of the Director of Licensing and Construction. The Israel Antiquities Authority also found itself in the Acre Municipality, waiting patiently in its hallways, paused in moments of bureaucratic stand-by. Sketches and drawings—these are the documents that facilitated, however half-heartedly, conversations between these two government authorities. Susan Leigh Star and James Griesemer (1989) instruct readers to treat such documents as *boundary objects*, objects that serve as a means to communicate across disparate work groups, objects that help to manage the contradictions that emerge when different social worlds collide. Such an approach would require us to consider each actor and the different perspectives from which they encounter a building application. I want to think through this briefly, through a quick study of the protocol from a meeting of the conservation committee on 8 June 2010.

As I read these meeting minutes, I learn that a building application can have an entirely different meaning for the Israel Antiquities Authority than it can for the Acre Municipality. In response to a proposal for the renovation of a historic structure into a community center, Raanan Kislev (the Director of the Conservation Department of the Israel Antiquities Authority) expressed concerns about the application, arguing that “it is not clear enough what the façades will look like after the proposed addition.”<sup>104</sup> He states that the applicant must submit more detailed drawings about the proposed design as well as a description of the materials to be used. Meanwhile, the Acre Municipality highlighted a specific safety requirement (a staircase for an emergency exit) and how this requirement might affect the property rights of a local entrepreneur. The world of architectural conservation could now collide with the world of public safety, the world of private property.

Are architectural plans boundary objects? Has the building application brought together individuals that reside in different social worlds? Perhaps. But I need to be

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<sup>104</sup> Protocol to a Meeting of the Conservation Committee. 8 June 2010. Accessed from [http://www.akko.muni.il/\\_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/shimur.doc](http://www.akko.muni.il/_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/shimur.doc) on 15 March 2018.

careful. Questions like this can easily lead me to unwittingly reinforcing a division between the Acre Municipality and the Israel Antiquities Authority, almost as if the two were distinct entities, discrete groups with unique perspectives that have been informed by their individual histories, interests, and roles. Very soon, I would probably realize that these two perspectives are not enough to *really* understand the situation. To be *really* thorough, I should include the Old Acre Development Company as well, maybe even the residents. In doing so, I would have multiplied the number of observers, all without confronting the actual object being observed—the building application. The building application would have become harder and harder to find, receding behind a variety of interpretations until it is nowhere to be found (Mol 2002).

But there is something else about these questions that are not quite right. Building applications do not just connect one bureaucrat to another, one office to another. They are not simply intermediaries, “*things* that draw actors into relationships with one another” (Callon 1990:134). Saying so would require me to forget everything I have thus far learned about actants and action—everything about the ways in which detours and translations, associations and alliances, change that which is being aligned. I want to pause for a moment at a meeting of the conservation committee, for there is more to examine than the reported speech found in a protocol. I attended two of these meetings during my fieldwork in the Old City of Acre, both of which took place in a small conference room in the International Conservation Center, a building with a long history of assorted uses—a private residence, a youth hostel, a set for an Israeli television show.

In his historic assessment of the structure, James Cocks learned that on 16 August 1969, the Old Acre Development Company purchased partial ownership of the building from Labiba Ha’wa. Two-thirds to be exact (Cocks 2007:38). Partial ownership is not unusual in the Old City of Acre. It is, rather, the norm. This can render ownership rights and responsibilities a complex legal affair, especially when structures have been deemed dangerous. In the case of the International Conservation Center, this partial ownership agreement granted the Old Acre Development Company the ability to control all rental arrangements. It could rent the structure to whomever it wanted. Perhaps this helps to explain the building’s transformation into a youth hostel, subsidized by the Old Acre Development Company and operated by the National Israeli Youth Hostel Association—



all in line with the goal to encourage tourism to the Old City of Acre. But I have been a clumsy narrator. The International Conservation Center (the building) did not become the International Conservation Center (the institution) until much later. The Israel Antiquities Authority purchased from the Ha'wa family their (one-third) ownership stake in the building for \$200,000. Part of this new arrangement also involved the Acre Municipality, which agreed to pay all the utilities and property taxes for the building, provided that it became a training center for architectural conservation.

This is where I sat. On a rickety plastic chair, tucked into a corner of this small, air-conditioned conference room. I was both naive and enthusiastic when I first began attending these meetings. "Finally," I thought, "I will get to see the *real* action. I will get to see where the big and important decisions are made. I will get to see *how* they are made. This is my chance to see what is *really* happening in the Old City of Acre." This is the place where a select group of engineers, architects, tourism planners, and conservation professionals would meet each month to review, evaluate, and approve building applications submitted by entrepreneurs, residents, and government institutions. This select group included representatives from the Old Acre Development Company, the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Society for Preservation of Israeli Heritage Sites, and the Acre Municipality.

I thought I could see everything from where I sat. I could see the piles of pretzels, cookies, and cakes, all neatly arranged on plastic plates in the center of the conference table. I could also see the giant bottles of water and soda, as well as the small plastic cups in which their contents would be poured. I could watch Yedida as she switched on a laptop computer, ensuring its proper connection to an overhead projector. I could listen as the Municipal Engineer—the chair of the conservation committee—called the meeting to order, a declaration that momentarily silenced all side conversations.

After a few brief introductory remarks by the Municipal Engineer, a conservation architect from the Israel Antiquities Authority rose from his chair. He quickly walked to the door, opened it, and called for Hadem to enter the room. Hadem, however, was not alone. He entered the conference room with three other individuals—a lawyer, an architect, and an associate. Meanwhile, Yedida hurriedly searched through the files on her computer. She was looking for the digitized version of the architectural plans of his

building application. These were the drawings on which the members of the conservation committee would direct “their attention and their communications with one another” (Henderson 1991:456). After locating the correct document, she projected onto the large screen at the front of the room an architectural rendering of the proposed tent. The architectural plan was accompanied by a bright pink folder which Yedida had placed in the center of the table, a folder from the Department of Licensing and Construction which contained a series of photographs of the (illegal) tent in-situ.

The lawyer sat in a chair at the table. The architect stood by the screen. The two others lingered against the wall. The architect began by explaining the architectural plan, an explanation that added a touch of surrealism to the proceedings. These particular plans did not require much clarification. They depicted, quite simply, a large rectangle, an overhead perspective of the size of the tent and its proposed placement. The plan contained little else—no information about its height, no information about its façades. The photographs would perform this work. This was the tent, fashioned into a form that allowed it to enter into this bureaucratic space. And with it, an opportunity for instantaneous interaction had been created, one where the conservation committee could directly ask the architect and the applicant questions about the proposal and receive an immediate response.

After all of the relevant technical details had been clarified, the applicant’s lawyer began to speak, reading from a sheet of paper a statement she had prepared. She spoke slowly and deliberately, occasionally pausing to ask Hadem to stop interjecting comments to the committee. Every now and then someone would stand and reach for a cookie. Every now and then someone else would ask for the bottle of water. Photographs of the tent passed back and forth, from one participant to another.

“She is the legal counsel for Hadem. She used to be a lawyer for the Municipality. Now she does private practice,” Yedida whispered to me.

An almost invisible figure, Yedida performed multiple tasks. She ensured the conservation committee had something to look at—an architectural plan, a photograph, an application. She also recorded the minutes, jotting down on a piece of paper statements from its different participants. These were heated arguments that she transcribed. People spoke loud, and they spoke fast. People interrupted, and they

interjected. Conciliators turned into agitators. All the while, Yedida sat quietly, translating this chaotic mess into polished prose. Through all of this, I began to see that building applications were not simply intermediaries. They were not simply objects that linked entities together. Here, on this day, in this conference room, something had happened that did not happen in our meeting with the Municipal Architect, in our meeting with the Director of Licensing and Construction. Building applications became *mediators*, modifying and distorting the various entities with which they came into contact. The conservation committee became *something else*. It became a center of calculation, a place where a few select individuals could “act at a distance on unfamiliar events, places and people” (Latour 1987:223). The remainder of this chapter examines how this happened.

### *The Center of Calculation*

After the lawyer completed her statement, Hadem and his entourage left the room. They closed the door behind them, slowly enough for me to glimpse the other applicants pacing the lobby of the International Conservation Center, patiently waiting for their turn to present their proposals to the conservation committee. In that quick glimpse, I learned something about centers of calculation and the modes of ordering they entail. Thus far, my examination of centers of calculation has focused on *calculation*, on the ways in which certain buildings, discussions, and events have been made mobile, stable, and combinable. I have studied the accumulation, compilation, and organization of seemingly insignificant documents and datasets. I have studied the placement of these materials on conference tables and computer screens, sites where civil servants can monitor different types of happenings and act upon “the flow of immutable mobiles coming in from and departing from the periphery” (Law 1994:104). Taking a cue from James Scott (1998), I have learned to think critically about the role of maps, surveys, and censuses as technologies of control. I have learned that the power to see at a glance, “the power to make visible, is the power to control” (Levin 1993:7).

But in order for the conservation committee to be a ‘center of calculation’, it must be a *center*. It must be “distinguished and set aside from others” (Law 1994:146), demarcated as a distinct point, a separate realm—the opposite of a periphery. This is obvious. Almost too obvious. This line of inquiry into *centers* of calculation has fit in

nicely with much theoretical work on ‘the State’, especially analyses that envision ‘the State’ as a *thing*, as “an impersonal organism with inherent authority whose attributes can be transmitted over space” (Wilson 2001:315). This shift in emphasis also articulates nicely with recent ethnographic explorations into bureaucratic spaces, studies that have examined the procedures of inclusion and exclusion that guide most—if not all—government activities (Feldman 2008; Gupta 2012; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Harvey and Knox 2015; Hull 2012). From these texts, scholars learn that it is not uncommon for access to bureaucratic spaces to be regulated. Certain categories of individuals are, of course, restricted from government offices—from specific rooms, from specific files. But so are certain kinds of sounds and smells—even animals.

At least, this was the case during the British Mandate. In a letter to Lieutenant Colonel M. Charteris, dated 6 November 1944, the Chief Secretary of the Mandate Government expressed a complaint about the loud noise caused by “the large number of soldiers who use the main entrance to my office and the flights of stairs leading up from our entrance to your headquarters.”<sup>105</sup> Recognizing the impossibility of eliminating “the clatter of heavy boots on jerry-built stairs,” the Chief Secretary requested that all “singing, whistling and shouting” be kept to a minimum.<sup>106</sup> In another letter, the Chief Secretary asks that the Health Department “be good enough to investigate the disagreeable stink which permeates the corridors and staircases of this office.”<sup>107</sup> He continues, describing the smell as similar to a “badly kept public lavatory,” a stench so unpleasant that “it must be unhealthy for the staff to work in such an atmosphere.”<sup>108</sup> My favorite, though, is a letter from 18 December 1939 to the Sanitary Controller, reporting that “the basement of the part of the [King David Hotel] occupied by the Registry of the C.S.O. (Rooms Nos 41–46) is suffering from the activities of mice or rats. Floor damage

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<sup>105</sup> Letter from the Chief Secretary to Lieutenant Colonel M. Charteris. 6 November 1944. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.C5.C2. Israel State Archives.

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

<sup>107</sup> Letter from the Chief Secretary to the Chief Clerk. 19 March 1944. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.C5.C2. Israel State Archives.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

has been done to the doorway of Room 44 and during the last few weeks many mice have been seen in all rooms quoted.”<sup>109</sup>

I want to focus, however, on the “pragmatics of managing file circulation and accessibility,” on the “regulations governing availability of files, procedures guiding the circulation of files, and layouts organizing offices to control exposure of files” (Feldman 2008:52). Government documents are typically guided by principles of publicity, principles that identify and categorize documents on a sliding scale from ‘public’ to ‘secret’. This is a scale I encountered frequently during the course of my fieldwork. I would often ask Yedida for copies of files. Sometimes she would consent, offering to copy them to my flash drive. Other times, she would decline, claiming that a particular document was “for insiders only.” (One of her colleagues even intimated to me that I might be a spy from the Ministry of Culture, something he used as justification for limiting my access to engineering documentations.) Either way, the publicity of these files was intimately intertwined with the practices of file storage. Sometimes these practices involved password protected computers and high-tech encrypted flash drives. Usually, though, they involved the arrangement of chairs, desk, and shelves as well as the placement of doors, walls, and buzzers. These were the materials that helped to define “a space and style of interaction among people, whether civil servants or members of the public” (32).

In the past, when speaking about the layouts of government offices, my goal had been to posit a particular explanatory scheme of cause and effect (Davis 2016). In this scheme, architecture did not merely reflect society. It was also a material “equally capable of affecting people’s behaviour and shaping societies” (Yaneva 2012:33–34). I studied government spaces in order to examine the ways in which their layouts served, in part, to define ‘the public’ and ‘the secret’. This, I thought, would allow me to illustrate how architecture does not just assist civil servants in their efforts to maintain control over access to classified government files. It also helps to *produce* their secrecy. I was not alone. In fact, I was inspired by Ilana Feldman, who has also highlighted the importance of office architecture in the governing practices of British Mandate officials. In particular,

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<sup>109</sup> Letter to the Sanitary Controller. 18 December 1939. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.C5.C2. Israel State Archives.

she draws attention to the worries that arose after a British Mandate Land Registry Office moved into a new government building in 1941:

Room No. 2, the archives room, 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. [2008:107]

She interprets these comments as evincing a concern with the protection of classified documents from any accidental exposure to a milling about public. Architecture, as a technology, could manage *and* distinguish the boundaries between civil servants and the public. It could regulate access *and* create divisions between ‘public’ and ‘classified’ spaces, contributing to the construction of ‘the government’ as a discrete object, an object separate from that which it governs. For these British Mandate officials, this was the form government needed to acquire. It needed to become a bounded entity to which only certain individuals had direct, unmediated access. It needed, in short, to acquire a particular *kind of reality*—a reality that was topologically (not just ontologically) multiple, a reality that existed in Euclidean *and* network space.

But my analysis had moved too fast. I had wanted to discard understandings of ‘the government’ that appealed to its inertia and its stability, as if there already existed somewhere “a stock of connections whose capital could be eroded only over a long time” (Latour 2005:35). However, in doing so, I remained locked in a search for *who* or *what* was responsible for bringing into being a certain state of affairs, a certain kind of reality. My argument needed constant revision: what is the relationship between architecture and society? which is the cause? which is the effect? which direction does the arrow of causality point? My results were always the same. I would identify a few elements, a few causes that, upon further inspection, always seemed to be better described as *consequences*. I needed to ask a different question, for I never felt sufficiently equipped to tackle how ‘the government’ comes into being. I needed a project that was much more modest, one less concerned with identifying how one entity is correlated with, is produced by, another entity. I needed a project that would display the work of bringing entities together, that would display the changes that happen when different elements are

rendered equivalent (Latour 1988c:163). This is a project that would describe how different versions of government are performed. It is a project that would describe how ‘the government’ becomes something else entirely when it aligns with desks and chairs, shelves and counters, doors and walls.

Direct access to the conservation committee of the Old City of Acre is possible. But it is limited. Most residents in the Old City of Acre never step into that conference room. They never review the applications that are placed on its conference table. And, when they do, it is because they have been invited. It is because they have business there. The door that opens and closes, the walls that contain and restrain—these are a few of the materials with which the conservation committee has aligned itself, materials that have rendered the conservation committee a *center* of calculation, a space distinct from a periphery. These, of course, are not the only materials, nor are any of these materials necessarily crucial. If the ceiling of this conference room in the International Conservation Center happened to collapse, the conservation committee would be obliged to re-establish itself in another room—perhaps turning the lobby into a new conference space. But it would be one through which the public might walk, one the public might disturb, annoy, interrupt, interject. And what if the computer that Yedida used broke? What if the documents that she projected went missing? What if Yedida, the conservation inspector, quit? What would happen if the telephone lines were severed? If nobody ever submitted an application? If the members of the conservation committee were unable to travel to the Old City of Acre? unable to meet each other on the same day, at the same time? Would there still be a conservation committee? Maybe. But, as I will argue, it would not be a *center* of calculation, for it would not be *coherent* enough, nor would it be *entangled* enough. It would have become something else entirely.

A center is a precarious achievement, an outcome of things being made to come together in certain ways. This can be difficult to think. It requires that one considers all of the alignments needed in geometric *and* network space. It is important to not forget that these two forms of spatiality often intersect. This is something John Law has helped me to remember, particularly when he points out that “volumes (for instance vessels), regions (for instance countries) and measurements of distance (for instance from Lisbon to Calicut) *get made by network means*” (2002b:97). So, then, when I think about how a

center of calculation performs as a *center*, it is important to keep in mind that a center is just like Portugal or a Portuguese vessel. Both are only unbroken Euclidean shapes if they are also unbroken network shapes.

### *A Coherent Center*

I want to return to the conservation committee and its deliberations over Hadem's tent. Except 'deliberation' is not quite the right word. A fiery uproar, a cacophony of opinions, these are, perhaps, more fitting characterizations. Everyone in the room spoke simultaneously, with multiple conversations occurring all at once. Some were one-sided. Others were not. Some spoke quietly. Others yelled. Yedida turned to me, smiled, and shrugged her shoulders. Eventually, someone spoke loud enough, with enough forcefulness, to seize the attention of all the others. Slowly, slowly, a consensus began to form, a decision to allow Hadem to install some kind of structure for his customers in the winter (as per Israeli law)—just not *that* particular tent. Conservation architects from the Israel Antiquities Authority were to coordinate with the applicant in order to help him design a temporary winter installation, one that would be congruent (aesthetically, materially) with the historic cityscape.

However, verbal speech can be fragile in its ephemerality (see Chapter 2). Spoken conversations leave "little in the way of records" (Johnson 2011:79). So, Yedida would write, in pen on a sheet of paper embossed with the logo of the Israel Antiquities Authority. She would note the name of the speaker and the content of their remarks. She would number each page after it had been filled, then flip it over to begin again. Sometimes, at the end of these negotiations, the chair of the conservation committee would turn to Yedida and begin summarizing the committee's decisions. The chair would speak slowly, and Yedida would write quickly. These were the notes that would help Yedida compose a protocol of the meeting, a document she would spend the next day compiling. This was the text to which Yedida would refer during her subsequent interactions with the applicants.

These protocols are unexceptional. The document itself is generally quotidian in its form, formulaic in its layout. However, as I flip through its pages, it becomes difficult to forget just "how much unity is achieved (or not) through coordination in practice" (Hull 2012:166). This coordination has much to do with the relationship between entities



and voices, something for which many social scientists have looked to Erving Goffman. In *Forms of Talk* (1981), Goffman re-examines the “unstated presuppositions about spoken interaction” (128). It is often taken for granted that there are human entities and that these entities *have* voices—that they *should have* voices. Paraphrasing from Goffman, the idea is that individuals speak their own thoughts on a matter, expressing their own feelings while others listen. And, over the course of an interaction, “the roles of speaker and hearer will be interchanged in support of a statement-reply format” (129).

Goffman complicates this understanding of spoken interaction by directing attention to the *production format* of an utterance. He encourages scholars to question their assumptions about speakers, assumptions that treat the individual who animates a statement—the individual who engages in acoustic activity—as the same individual who authors its words and stakes out a position through them (145). In short, he teaches scholars that they must be careful not to presume that the animator, the author, and the principal of an utterance are the same person. This can be a useful analytic for studying the protocols of the conservation committee, as it allows one to think critically about *who* or *what* is *really* speaking when someone or something speaks. These protocols contain multiple voices, the reported speech of different members of the conservation committee. But there are elisions, elisions which Goffman helps to elucidate. Raanan Kislev, for example, speaks on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, animating statements authored by absent conservation architects. Similarly, at the end of its deliberations, the members of the conservation committee also collapse into a single voice. The protocol presents “the committee’s decision,” obfuscating its range of authors in a swift erasure of the contested contributions of its individual participants. This is the decision that the conservation inspector animates at her desk in the Office of Conservation Supervision.

It is here, though, that I also want to add something a little different. My goal has never been to uncover who *actually* sits behind a particular statement. It has never been to search for murky figures, the individual agents who should be identified and held accountable for their (in)actions. I want to add to this analysis a small reversal, something a little less exciting. How has the conservation committee become a place where decisions can be readily rendered univocal, where the statements of many authors can be readily animated in a single turn of phrase? How is the conservation committee made into

a *coherent* center of calculation? How are the different speakers of which it is composed able to *come together* and *stay together* across time and space?

The conservation committee is composed of representatives from a variety of institutions, the activities, the goals, and the priorities of which differ greatly, a kind of noncoherence that is impossible to ignore as soon as these individuals are placed in a room together. One can think about this noncoherence as a reflection of various ‘logics’—the logics of care, the logics of administration, the logics of finance—that “need to be held apart so that they do not get in the way of one another” (Law et al. 2013:181). As long as the Old Acre Development Company, the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the Acre Municipality “live separate lives and never meet, then the issue of coherence or its absence never arises” (180). This is usually the case. A lot of work takes place to ensure that noncoherent practices are kept apart. The paperwork that must be done, the buildings that must be renovated, the permits that must be issued, the sewage systems that must be maintained, the accounts that must be balanced, the tourists that must be accommodated—an assortment of tasks that are completed at different times, in different places, by different individuals. This is important. Before one can talk about all of the coordination required to bring entities together, they should at least mention all of the effort it takes to hold things apart.

What happens, then, when the conservation committee meets each month? This is a site where noncoherence is recognized, but where difference—where messiness—is domesticated. The conservation committee is “a more or less secluded space from which most forms of difference are excluded” (Law et al. 2013:180). Neither you nor I can speak there. Neither can the residents nor the janitor of the Acre Municipality. We cannot offer recommendations. We cannot vote. As I previously observed with Hadem, his attempts to speak were met with a series of annoyed hushes. Some, of course, might say that this is not strictly true. The residents of the Old City of Acre have a representative on the conservation committee—Adham Jamal, a Deputy Mayor of the Acre Municipality. However, this arrangement is, perhaps, a not-so-obvious form of denial, one that limits participation and, presumably, “the degree of variety and amount of dissent” likely to exist within the conservation committee. Suddenly, it has become not as difficult for the conservation committee to come to its decisions, for these techniques of representation,

of domestication, have made it easier to align “the efforts of a large number of people so that they act as one” (Hull 2012:129). “We won!” exclaimed Yedida’s supervisor after a meeting of the conservation committee, a victory announcement after a battle from which many opponents had already been removed.

But how do these alignments *hold together*? British Mandate registries had one technique: the subject file. The beginning of each file contained a minute sheet, a place for civil servants to issue circulation orders and write notes about their work (Alfoui 2007:209). These numbered minutes “consisted of short descriptions of the attached material, with comments by the officials to whom the paper was circulated. The correspondence and papers were attached in chronological order, and each item marked with a number, which was noted next to the related minute” (Lovering 2010:10). This is how subject files were made. These minute sheets and the registry practices that surrounded them served as instruments of stable reference. They protected officials by ensuring all inquiries received timely responses that conformed with any relevant policies or previous decisions.

I never encountered registries in the Old City of Acre. I did, however, observe the need for the forms of accountability such records secured. On the evening of 24 February 2003, Naseera’s house in the Old City of Acre burst into flames. “I was in the shower when the fire broke out,” she explained to me. “The house was destroyed. It became dangerous. They brought engineers from the Municipality and they installed wooden supports inside the house. The Old Acre Development Company said these supports would cost us 5,000 NIS. It took the Old Acre Development Company three years to finish repairing the house. They charged us 100,000 NIS for these repairs, but they didn’t even repair it nicely. They left the walls exposed and did not plaster them. They even stole things, like the original historic tiles.”

“Did you confront them about this? How did they respond?” I asked.

“When we asked the Old Acre Development Company about this, they said that it was not their fault. They said they contract the repair work to a company and that if anyone stole the tiles, it would have been them—not the Old Acre Development Company. But the Old Acre Development Company steals from a lot of houses. Anyways, we took the Old Acre Development Company to court because we didn’t think

we should have to pay 105,000 NIS for these repairs. We won the case because the Old Acre Development Company did not have proper documentation to prove that the repairs cost 105,000 NIS. They didn't document the expenses for the renovations. We just had to pay 10,000 NIS for the lawyer.”

Written records can provide a kind of temporal coherence, allowing a center of calculation to exist—to command and to control—across time. I spent many hours watching Yedida at her desk as she drafted protocols and agendas, documents that adhered to uniform templates. I watched as she copy-pasted previous decisions of the conservation committee from an old protocol to a new agenda. I watched as she transferred text from one agenda to another. This, she explained, was necessary. Before each meeting of the conservation committee, Yedida would circulate an agenda designed to introduce the committee members to each application, to remind them of any previous decisions they had already made on an application, and to inform them of the Israel Antiquities Authority's recommendations for each application.

Yedida stood in “the midst of events involving files” (Hull 2012:119), events the details of which nobody could be expected to remember. Although she was often familiar with the interactions that produced relatively recent portions of each file, she rarely relied on just her memory. I remember one applicant visiting the Office of Conservation Supervision in order to receive a stamp for an approved application. He handed the architectural plans to Yedida, who unfolded them onto the conference table behind her desk. She studied them closely, using her finger to trace over each diagram. And then she paused. “I think this right here is from an older version,” she said to the applicant. “The windows are different.” She turned to her computer and opened an electronic version of the approved plans. “Yes. See? Look.” She pointed with her mouse, showing the architect how the windows in the electronic version differed from the windows in the document he had brought. The architect laughed and apologized, “I picked up the wrong stack. I will be back with the correct one.”

Functionaries may forget important details. They may leave their jobs. Or, they may be required to address topics that first emerged before they were hired. This is why records and their accompanying stamps and signatures have been so important. “Usually you do not go to the Municipality and the conservation committee for interior design

projects,” a Jewish-Israeli architect based in Tel Aviv explained to me. “My clients, however, wanted to change a few windows and doors. This would affect the façades, and every change to a façade needs a permit. So now the project is stuck.”

“How is it stuck?” I asked.

“Well, right now, there are two separate apartments. The owner wants to convert them into one apartment. The owner wants to bring it back to how it originally was in the 1930s. I found a permit from 1941 to reinforce this floor. This was something that was very common at the time because of the war; many people had permits to reinforce their houses because of the bomb. We wanted to bring the building back to this plan from 1941, which has a stamp from the Municipality. The problem is that the Municipality in Tel Aviv doesn’t really have a path for projects like this to go through. It doesn’t know how to deal with interior design projects for historic buildings that try to bring the façade to its original state. When I began this project, I consulted the Municipal Architect. They didn’t know what to do. I had to go to a bunch of different departments to figure out which path I should take, trying to get advice as to how I should proceed. The conservation committee and the Licensing Department said they cannot approve what we want to do unless we go through the normal application process. That could take years. They say the problem is that the permit from 1941 doesn’t have the ‘right’ stamp, and no department will take responsibility for an application that doesn’t have the right stamp. Nobody will give us approval to use the application from 1941.”

“So what will you do?”

“There is someone I know in the Licensing Department. I asked for her advice about what I should do. She told me that she thinks it would be best if I went ahead with the project instead of going through the application process. I just received an e-mail last week from the Licensing Department.” She paused and searched on her computer for the e-mail. “Okay. The e-mail says that the Supervision Department says they do not recognize the license number as a permit, even though the Licensing Department said they can recognize it.” She smiled and shook her head. “In this case, we have two options. We can go ahead and do the renovations and bring the building back to its original state. I have created a layout that will allow for flexibility in case this doesn’t work. For example, if the Municipality says we need to remove this curved part here,

then it will not affect the kitchen or the bathroom. It will only make the room smaller. In other words, I am making a plan that will allow us to proceed and that will not be affected too much if the Municipality decides we cannot return the building to the 1941 plan.”

“What happens if they try to punish you for not getting the proper permits?”

“We will go to court and tell them that we are bringing the building back to its original state. The changes that are there now are the changes that do not have approvals! So what can they do? I mean, we are trying to bring it back to its original state.”

“Do you know what you will do?”

“I have given the client our options. We can either go through with the project without the permits or we can try to get the permits which can take two or three years. The client is now consulting with lawyers in order to better understand the consequences of building without a permit. The frustrating part is that we could have just not said anything and done the project and probably nothing would have happened. But because we tried to do it the proper way, we have run into all of these problems. Each time I ask the Municipality a question about what to do, it increases their awareness of our project, a project that if we had just gone and done the project without permits wouldn't have caused any problems.”

Signatures and stamps, the graphic signs that anchor written discourse to specific human bodies and physical events, paint the various documents that pass through each government office. The former establishes a semiotic relation between “a specific individual and a specific graphic form, produced, crucially, by an ostensibly inimitable biomechanical act, signing” (Hull 2012:131). The latter indexes this relation through “the physical control of the artifact capable of producing the image.” Without the correct stamp, without the proper signature, past decisions could not be made to hold together with present projects. They could not be made to cohere with the present. A center of calculation from the British Mandate could no longer act at a distance. This is an important reminder, a reminder that there are no guarantees that a center of calculation will cohere for as long as some may wish. The durability of its inscriptions may not always be enough, for it is quite easy for signed documents to “turn back into scraps of paper” (Latour 1996a:45). These inscriptions must be made to populate contemporary

databases, to fit into contemporary filing systems—they must be made to be taken up by others.

### *An Entangled Enough Center of Calculation*

One day after lunch, Yedida placed a series of telephone calls to each member of the conservation committee, reminding them about the upcoming meeting, when and where they should gather. “Hello, this is Yedida from the Israel Antiquities Authority,” she began each message. “The conservation committee will meet tomorrow at 9:30 in the morning in Fisherman’s Square.” A copy of the meeting’s agenda accompanied each telephone call, a packet of information that, as we have already seen, summarized the technical details of each application, the recommendations of the Israel Antiquities Authority, as well as all previous decisions the committee had already made about the proposal. Paper and voices—two mediums that encourage thought about *durability* and *mobility*, *centering* and *periphery-ing*.

In the previous section, I tried to demonstrate that some materials last better than others, that some materials travel better than others. I showed, for example, that if “social ordering depended on voices alone, it would be a very local affair” (Law 1994:102). Voices have never been known to last for long, nor have they been known to travel far. Telephones and answering machines can, of course, extend voices through time and space. However, in the Old City of Acre, paper documents appeared to be the preferred medium, even with all their imperfections—the ease with which they can be lost, destroyed, misinterpreted, ignored. In this section, I want to continue my examination of the ways in which a center of calculation becomes a *center* of calculation. This time, I want to focus on the manner in which paper documents extend that which is ephemeral through space, forging lines of connection between buildings, bureaucrats, and bodies. These are lines that are more or less long, more or less dense. They need to be, especially since it is the accumulation, the elongation, and the stabilization of these associations that render paper documents effectual. This is how the conservation committee becomes a *center* of calculation, an entity that can command and control from a distance.

The last chapter studied the ways in which bodies and bodily movements work to align different human and nonhuman actants. The problem, though, was that bodies “can only reach so far—and once they are out of your sight you can’t be sure that they will do

what you have told them” (Law 1994:102). Voices are weak. Bodies are unreliable. Texts, however, can wander great distances. They tend to last, offering an ordering effect “that spreads across time and space” (102). There is nothing deterministic about what I have just said. That is, as long as readers keep in mind that *durability* and *mobility* are network effects. Texts, just like historic masonry walls, stay solid only if they are monitored and maintained. Texts, just like automobiles, travel only if the right infrastructures exist, only if there are paths and signs that can guide movements accordingly.

“How do you notify applicants about the decisions made at the conservation committee meetings?” I asked Yedida.

“I tell them in person or over the phone. They usually want something in writing, so I will also send them an e-mail or a letter. That way they can have a paper document,” she replied. But that is not all. Each approved application is signed and stamped by the conservation inspector, a simple taciturn medium that documents “the official career of the artifact in time, space, and organizational order” (Hull 2012:121). The files that are kept in the Office of Conservation Supervision are referred to occasionally by others to verify whether or not a construction project taking place inside the Old City of Acre has been approved by the conservation committee. “The Municipality does not always know whether or not we have approved a building application,” Yedida remarked. “Sometimes they lose their copy and need to see ours. This is why I have two paper copies and one electronic copy.”

If it was to command and to control, then the decisions of the conservation committee needed to be picked up by others—particularly by the Acre Municipality. But in order for this to happen, there needed to be a whole assortment of materials that could link buildings, bureaucrats, and bodies together. In the Old City of Acre, the different types of files scattered throughout the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Old Acre Development Company, the Development Authority, and the Acre Municipality have performed this work, bringing functionaries together into willing or unwilling alliances. Consider the following example. On 4 July 2012, a building inspector from the Acre Municipality delivered a notice to Amidar regarding an illegal building offense in the Old City of Acre, summoning the organization to the Municipality for an investigative



interview.<sup>110</sup> According to the document, a municipal building inspector conducted a tour of building 18012/45 and discovered that a series of additions had been made to the structure without the approval of the Municipality. The notice continues,

According to our examination, the work and/or the use are carried out unlawfully and/or in deviation from the permit and/or in exceptional use, and it is considered an offense against the Planning and Building Law (Section 204 of the Planning and Building Law, 5725–1965).

We regard you as prima facie responsible for carrying out the above offenses (under Section 208 of the above law).

Therefore, you are required to remove the illegal construction above and/or to stop the aforementioned illegal act within 14 days, or alternatively—to arrange the issue of obtaining the appropriate approvals in the Committee.

In addition, in accordance with the authority vested in me under section 257a, I am informing you that on 21/08/12 at 11:30 you must report to the Department of Licensing and Construction on the second floor of the Municipality at 35 Weizmann for an investigation and for submitting your version of events.<sup>111</sup>

Seven days later, Amidar issued the following response:

1. Based on an examination of the findings that we have in the above section, the plot is jointly managed with the Old Acre Development Company.
2. Unfortunately, the notice in your letter did not specify which part of the plot the construction occupies and who performed it, so that I can relate to and examine the subject in depth.
3. It is not possible for me to carry out the required examination, and it is very unfortunate that you did not involve us in the field inspection or visit, or alternatively, would turn to us and coordinate the individuals responsible for the area.
4. In view of the above, a tour should be arranged urgently, with the cooperation of the Old Acre Development Company, to examine your claim regarding the additions to the building.<sup>112</sup>

I want to highlight the second bullet point of this response. Amidar rejected the notice from the Municipality because it failed to contain enough information about the plot—enough information to allow Amidar to link an illegal activity with a name, with a human body, with an entity that could be fined or jailed. Responsibility could not be appropriately allocated.

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<sup>110</sup> Tender for Proposals for Renting Property in Old Acre in 180█/45. Old Acre Development Company. March 2014.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

“How can someone find out who lives in each building?” I asked an employee of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

“First I went to the archives and looked through that for information, but it wasn’t always very accurate, probably. The information they have there is from application submissions,” she explained.

“Like for a building permit?”

“Yes, exactly. So sometimes the most up-to-date information would be like, from 1994. So I also called the Old Acre Development Company, you know, because they own a lot of buildings in the Old City. And I just asked them.”

“You just asked them, ‘Who lives in building number XX/XXX?’”

“Yes. Then they told me for all the buildings on my list that they manage. But in general, you know, there are authorities that own the buildings—like Amidar, for example—and then you just ask for the information and they will give it to you—if they want.”

A municipal building inspector locates a building with a recent addition. He identifies a series of landmarks, objects in the landscape that can give him his bearings. He uses these bearings to reference a map, to identify the number of the building. This is the alignment that allows him to search through the archives in the Acre Municipality or the Israel Antiquities Authority, to locate any documents that might authorize the building activities, that might establish continuity between a construction project and a conservation committee. But, as the correspondence indicates, the municipal building inspector missed a step. In his efforts to connect a physical building to a property manager, he overlooked the database, the well-kept index, that could provide him with a chain of reference linking an illegal addition to a protected tenant. This is a database that has been made possible by the uniformity and regularity of building numbers, tiny inscriptions affixed to physical structures, illegal notices, and lease agreements. A small iconic similarity that can facilitate paths that weave back and forth between objects and documents. These are paths that can link together different kinds of entities that have been labelled with the same sequence of digits, that can link together different kinds of entities that have been plastered with the same imprints.

A small resemblance has connected that which is different (Stäheli 2016:17). A building number has allowed a historic structure to circulate through a government office, to align itself with a list of the names of tenants. Now, a bureaucrat armed with the number ‘18012/45’ can travel from a physical building in the Old City of Acre, to a dataset in the office of Amidar, and then to an individual resident. That is, to a human body, to something that can be taken to court, that can be stripped of its freedom, its bank account, its driver’s license—everything which makes it a person. Without such well-kept indexes, it makes little difference what the conservation committee decides in the conference room in the International Conservation Center. The conservation committee will no longer be able to command and control from afar, for it will have lost too many of its (legal) associations, too many of the allies that make its (legal) proclamations matter. A municipal building inspector will be unable to make its timely detours through the courts, effectively losing one of the few associations that has helped him keep local residents and entrepreneurs aligned with the law. All of this is an important reminder that “the material culture of bureaucracy and empire is not found in pomp and circumstance, nor even in the first instance of the point of a gun, but rather at the point of a list” (Bowker and Star 2000:137). It is an important reminder that governing paper is part and parcel of governing a city (Hull 2012:1).

### *Concluding Thoughts*

David Wesley states that “it is difficult to observe critical moments in the politics of bureaucratic access—those moments at which a telephone call is placed, a note passed across the table at a meeting, or a sentence or two exchanged before the meeting commences” (2006:14). This is probably true. However, I was mistaken when I thought my attendance at the monthly meetings of the conservation committee would allow me to see what was *really* happening in the Old City of Acre. I soon started to feel as though these meetings were precisely where the action was not. After all, there were conservation projects that I missed and interviews that I could have scheduled. But these misgivings were also a mistake. My whole frame of reference was wrong. It was not important whether or not I had *finally* found the place in which agency *actually* takes place, for it quickly became apparent that action is not located *somewhere in particular*. Like in a center of calculation.

I spent many hours with the conservation committee in its conference room in the International Conservation Center. I shared this space with an exhausted conservation inspector. I joined her on her breaks, where she nursed her anxieties and her headaches with hand-rolled cigarettes. I sat next to her and watched as government bureaucrats whispered requests for a bottle of water or a plate of cookies. These moments highlight just how strange agency can be. It can be uncanny and unremarkable. It can be “twisted, caught up in things, passive, or exhausted” (Stewart 2007:86). It can be full of pauses and distractions. Spills. Crumbs. There is little that this ordinary space—and the ordinary people within it—can achieve on its own. A center of calculation is only a *center* of calculation because action has been distributed to walls that hinder access. To stamps that recall decisions. To databases that catalog residents. To telephones that communicate recommendations.

Paper often does this work of distribution. It invites the individual members of the conservation committee to the monthly meetings. It carries the stamps of approval that remind inspectors of past decisions. It bears the building numbers that link rental agreements with illegal building citations. Paper aligns actants to each other across time and across space. By restoring visibility to these alignments, by looking *at* paper documents rather than *through* them, I hope to have shown how a government committee is a topographically multiple object, an entity that exists in Cartesian *and* network space, an entity that coheres only so long as it maintains the right kinds of relations. In this way, I hope to have shown how a government committee is an *accomplishment*, one that is never fully guaranteed, but that can, if everything is arranged just right, enable a few ordinary individuals in a few ordinary offices to oversee the entire Old City of Acre, to govern something that appears to be far bigger than themselves. So, then, what might happen if things are not arranged just right?

## CHAPTER 6: MANAGING FAILURE

On 10 September 1942 a sitting board convened at the district offices in Acre. Here, representatives from the Department of Medical Services, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Land Settlement, the Department of Land Registration, the Department of Surveys, the Department of Antiquities, the Palestine Police Force, and the District Commissioner's Office gathered to discuss the reuse of an old police station in the Old City of Acre. Situated near the Central Prison and al-Jazzar Mosque, the site had been allocated by "the Central Housing Committee to the Inspector General for the accommodation of criminal lunatics."<sup>113</sup> More specifically, the site was to become an exercise yard for these inmates. I want to begin this chapter by taking a moment to recount the details of this project, for it shared a certain commonality with many attempts to conserve the historic buildings in the Old City of Acre. It was a dream that never came into fruition. It was, quite simply, a failure—an abandonment. As readers travel through this narrative, my only request is that they try to stop themselves from pointing fingers, from trying to assign blame to a specific department, bureaucrat, or event. Failures, as I will illustrate, are nothing but collective.

The land for this exercise yard was owned by the Muslim Waqf, a religious trust that had built four small shops on the plot just a few years before. Constructed of smooth white stone, these stores had been rented to local entrepreneurs, while the remaining area of the plot had been leased to a local bus company. In the report of the sitting board, readers are told that the structures on this lot constituted an eyesore. The color of the stones clashed with those of the surrounding buildings. The verandahs made of corrugated iron contrasted starkly with the historic cityscape. According to its members, the construction of an exercise yard for mentally ill inmates was a unique opportunity to rectify a view that had been marred and, at the same time, to protect "against further vandalism this most beautiful of all corners of Acre."<sup>114</sup>

But before the sitting board could continue, it needed to acquire the property—through lease or through purchase. The members of the sitting board weighed their

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<sup>113</sup> Report of the Sitting Board to examine and report on a site for an exercise yard to be attached to the criminal lunatic section of the Central Prison, Acre. 19 October 1942. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.7A.C2. Israel State Archives.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

options carefully. The design proposed for the exercise yard included “a high prison wall of a permanent nature,” a wall that would encompass this isolated parcel of Waqf property and physically incorporate it within the surrounding State domain.<sup>115</sup> The concern was that the wall would last longer than the exercise yard, indefinitely solidifying a temporary reconfiguration of space. Even if alternative accommodation could eventually be found for the criminal lunatics,

and even if the whole Central Prison is moved elsewhere, the block of Government buildings is likely always to be used for the purpose of some Government institution or other and the site now under consideration is likely, in view of its position and of the wall, to remain incorporated in this block.<sup>116</sup>

Thus, according to the report, any short-term lease arrangements would be entirely inappropriate, for the wall would redefine the plot in a somewhat irreversible manner. The second option—to purchase—only needed cursory consideration. This is because it was never really much of an option. Waqf authorities are not permitted to dispose of Waqf land by sale. Nor are they inclined to grant long-term leases. Expropriation would be necessary.

Sketches and surveys needed to be prepared. Boundaries needed to be determined. Property values needed to be assessed. Formalities of land acquisition needed to be initiated—notices published, time-frames established. Designs needed to be finalized, stone-type selected and fencing-style decided. And tenants needed to be removed. Without these actions, the Department of Public Works could not begin its work. Timing was important. The Director of the Department of Public Works had his own assemblage to coordinate. Any delay in the completion of these tasks would require the District Engineer “to abandon his commitments and to dissolve the labour force with which he was preparing forthwith to start this work.”<sup>117</sup> This brings me to my favorite part of the story, for the present occupants declined to relinquish possession of the plot to the Director of Public Works. The garage owners who occupied the land simply refused to leave.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Letter from the Acting Director of Public Works to the Director of Medical Services and the Inspector-General of Police. 18 July 1944. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.7A.C2. Israel State Archives.

What could anyone do? Negotiations for the acquisition of a site were not the concern of the Department of Public Works. As its Acting Director explained, “In normal cases sites are handed over to me for vacant occupation by the Director of Land Registration.”<sup>118</sup> One possibility was to petition the court for an order of possession under Section 8 of the Land (Acquisition for Public Purposes) Ordinance. The Director of Land Settlement requested from the District Commissioner the names of all the individuals who refused to leave the property. He also asked for a statement by an officer attesting to the fact that “the owners and occupiers of the land were requested to give up possession but refused.”<sup>119</sup> It was hoped that this would be enough to acquire the support of a judge and, consequently, the police. Except it was not. Four applications to the court for an order of possession had been dismissed on the tiniest of technicalities: papers had not been signed by the appropriate individuals.

The exercise yard was never built. The shops were never demolished. The only work that had been successfully completed was an unusual project for the Department of Public Works: the restoration of a historic wall, a wall that was to form the northern boundary of the exercise yard. Meanwhile, the District Commissioner (Galilee) had been reconsidering the merits of the whole project. “If it is not too late in the day to intervene,” he began in a letter to the Chief Secretary, “I would ask that the whole question of incorporating the site at the criminal lunatics section be reviewed.”<sup>120</sup> The District Commissioner held the view that “the interests of the town should be placed above those of the criminal lunatic section,” because “sooner or later a proper mental hospital must be built and for this the present site is wholly unsuitable.”<sup>121</sup> Two years later, the project was officially abandoned.

Projects like this are unique. Not because they are rare, but because they are fictions seeking to come true. Unlike my investigations of an architectural plan, of a compressive stress, of a lime-based mortar, the Big Important Questions surrounding the

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<sup>118</sup> Letter from the Acting Director of Public Works to the Inspector-General of Police. 19 April 1945. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.7A.C2. Israel State Archives.

<sup>119</sup> Letter from the Director of Land Settlement to the District Commissioner (Galilee and Acre). 5 January 1945. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.7A.C2. Israel State Archives.

<sup>120</sup> Letter from the District Commissioner (Galilee) to the Chief Secretary. 23 May 1945. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.7A.C2. Israel State Archives.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

exercise yard for criminal lunatics have nothing to do with realism or relativism, with facts and their social construction. Everyone knows that the members of a sitting board were creating fictions, inventing a landscape on paper that did not yet exist. They differed from novelists in only one respect. Inevitably, their project would “gradually veer in one direction or another. Either it [would] remain a project in the file drawers” or it would be “transformed into an object” (Latour 1996a:24). In this case, “it came close to becoming, it nearly became, it might have become, an object, an institution.” But it did not. It turned into too much of a mess. So it stayed in the archives as a technological fiction. And I was left wondering why.

Was it due to a need for some kind of managerial intervention? Was the problem that the different departments of the Mandatory government could not get a grip on the way they were handling the project? Were things just not organized? Was there not enough inter-agency coordination and cooperation? The answer to all of these questions is, probably, yes. Papers failed to get signed. Notices failed to get submitted. This is the obvious conclusion, for it correlates so well with how I have described the efficacy of centers of calculation. Throughout this dissertation, I have positioned architectural conservation as a network and conservation architects as network builders, as individuals who protect historic buildings through the ways in which they successfully marshal together “assemblies of people and assemblages of things” (de Laet and Mol 2000:227). This has been helpful. It has brought attention to *the multitudes*, reminding readers that heroes (and villains) are never alone in their offices, that heroes (and villains) never revolutionize society solely through the power of their intellect or their charisma.

I can treat the sitting board as a center of calculation. But this treatment is an act. It is an intervention. It is “something that may be done—or left undone” (Mol 2002:6). But *what* does it *do*? To start, it positions the British Mandate government as a tightly coiled organization, one that controls different sectors of society from afar through the movements of immutable mobiles. It also suggests that this tight coil is fragile. At any moment, a big organization, a big business, a big government may “come tumbling down if the network which it fronts and for which it speaks is not kept in line” (Law 1994:101). There are always accidents (Hall 2003; Vaughan 1989) and breakdowns (Bennett 2005). There are also strikes (Lanzara and Patriotta 2007). These are moments when, all of a



sudden, “completely silent intermediaries become full-blown mediators” (Latour 2005:81).

This kind of talk about centers of calculation can be a liberating proposition. As scholars think about the types of bonds that link entities together, their quantities and their distributions, readers can begin to theorize *action*. If I pull one string, will everything unravel? If I cut one thread, will everything come tumbling down? If I sever one tiny conduit, will everything come to a halt? Maybe. However, I am not convinced that this kind of managerialist approach adequately prepares me to study the kinds of messy objects and messy realities that I have depicted in the Old City of Acre. The problem stems, in part, from my own performance of actor-network theory, a performance that relied on a coherent center, on a general that commands an army, on an engineer that organizes the masses. I have, perhaps, led readers too quickly to the conclusion that something like a sitting board *can* dominate. That it *has* power (Barad 2007:178). That it *transports* power from a center to a periphery, as if power was a commodity that could be delivered through a series of predictable threads (Mathews 2011:239–240). I worry, then, that I have not adequately stressed that sitting boards do not *command* and *control*. No. They translate. And, quite often, they do this unsuccessfully.

I am not the first to express these concerns. Marianne de Laet and Annemarie Mol, for example, have argued that

[E]ven if Latour’s work shifts Pasteur out of the centre by pointing to the network he needs, it also suggests (or has been read as suggesting) that innovation, even if it turns out to be the work of a large army, *does* need a general in order to spread out. This Machiavellian reading of Latour says that technologies depend on a power-seeking strategist who, given a laboratory, plots to change the world. [2000:227]

Strategy. Planned action. Chains of command. These are the terms actor-network theory teaches its practitioners to use. Latour has, of course, warned his students to be cautious when they utilize a word like ‘strategy’. For him, this term can color actors as overly rational. I agree. It is a term that is unable to account for the events, the mediations, and the surprises that emerge. (This is why ‘displacement’ and ‘translation’ are more appropriate terms.) Nonetheless, in my efforts to *not* confuse the force of an actor with that which has been attributed to it, I have merely subverted—not necessarily

overthrown—the notion of a leader, the notion of a center. I am still left with skillful, heterogeneous engineers, much like the Pasteurians who strategically place themselves in relation to the forces of hygiene, who “go out to meet them, then move in the same direction, then, pretending to direct them, deflect them very slightly by adding an element that is crucial for them, namely the laboratory” (Latour 1988b:60). The Pasteurians of the world are still geniuses, just not the kind of geniuses many of us had previously been imagining.

This chapter will examine a series of failed projects in the Old City of Acre. I will begin with a network of typhoid-infested sewers, damaged in ways that unleashed an epidemic throughout an interconnected neighborhood. A big mess caused by a tiny pipe, a haphazard intervention, an inadequate information base. Partly a problem of perception, this messiness did not emerge until the local authorities zoomed in closer to the details of disparate practices—to the hospital records, the corroded drains, the damaged chlorinating plants. But it was also a problem of analytics, an inability to see beyond the surface, to address the deeper unity, the underlying coherence, that hid beneath the streets, inside the pipes, within the water supply. A messy problem was identified and resolved through simplifications. Simplifications made this reality easier to handle. Simplifications allowed technical experts to plot a course *through* the muddle.

Nonetheless, I worry that it is too easy to read the conversations about this epidemic as condemnations, as frustrated diatribes on the work of unskilled engineers and inadequate network-builders. Readers can too readily leave with a sense that this messy epidemic was caused by a failure to order. A failure to manage, to maintain, to coordinate. Such readings present an *either-or* kind of world, one where infrastructural networks *either* hang together (neatly) *or* they fall apart (messily). There is just one small problem. Quite often, order and disorder coexist simultaneously. The material systems that organize the circulation of water, sewage, and electricity are a perfect example of the ways in which messiness can be made *through* an attempt to order. A collective dependence on these silent infrastructures has generated vulnerabilities, possibilities for disorder that otherwise would not exist. This is a messiness that governments must be able to accurately predict, consistently regulate, and reliably mitigate. This is a *both-and*

kind of world, one filled with ambiguities, uncertainties, and contradictions. It is a world where things hang together *and* fall apart.

In this chapter, I want to experiment with different readings and writings on messiness. These are readings that I learned by listening to the local authorities in the Old City of Acre. There, messiness was seldom treated as a problem, as something to fight against, as something to keep in check. I witnessed few attempts to *reduce* or *resolve* messy complexities, to identify *who* or *what* might be responsible for a failed project or a thwarted program. Messiness was not something to explain away as the consequence of neglect, as the failure to coordinate. The local authorities had formulated much more creative ways to handle messiness. For them, it was something to be confronted. It was something with which to wrestle. Through which to navigate. It was something to make useful. I want to do the same.

The way I want to handle messiness carries with it all kinds of assumptions about reality. It refuses to treat reality as something that can be ordered in a single, coherent manner. (Remember: it has never been my intention to present a *more* convincing argument about the Old City of Acre. I am not here to present cohesive narratives or consistent storylines. This is not the place for finished portraits.) In the pages that follow, I will continue my discussion of architectural conservation and its administration in the Old City of Acre. This time, I will let reality multiply. Which is to say—I will examine the ways in which the government can be more than one but less than many. At one moment, readers will encounter government as a series of development projects. At another moment, it will become a custodian of circulating matter. Over here, it will materialize as an entity that conserves the physicality of historic buildings. Over there, it will appear as an institution concerned with the health and safety of a population. The government is an object that can take on different shapes, that can acquire different forms.

Sometimes this multiplicity could be unsettling. There were all sorts of moments when these different forms of government were not coordinated into one, moments when the government was left messy and incoherent. Partially strung together. Partially dissolved. I am interested in the collateral realities that have emerged through these moments. I am thinking about the types of inequalities that have appeared in the play of

fractional coherence, the sorts of contradictions that have emerged through the resolutions of qualified consensus, the forms of governance that have emanated from the collaborations of unreliable allies. The local authorities in the Old City of Acre have learned that everything does not necessarily need to come together perfectly in order for the government to command its residents and to control its buildings. The heterogeneous engineers that have been tasked with managing the Old City of Acre can succeed *even as they fail*. No. *Because* they have failed. Studying these complexities requires that I loosen the threads that I have learned to follow as a student of actor-network theory. Just like the local authorities in the Old City of Acre, I will need to learn how to handle (not resolve) the moments of noncoherence. I will need to learn how to grapple with the (partial) fluidities and the (partial) ambivalences that have (sometimes) kept networks of governance in place (Law and Singleton 2005:341).

### ***Investigating Failures: Typhoid***

During the summer of 1944, a serious epidemic of typhoid gripped the Old City of Acre. This was not the first time typhoid appeared in the city; in 1926, there were at least two cases of typhoid fever that had been under the treatment of a medical officer at the Acre Hospital. Yet it is not its ubiquity or its pervasiveness that I find interesting. It is the fact that each time typhoid visited the Old City of Acre, it was accompanied by a campaign to identify its source. Sewage systems were surveyed for leaks. Water supplies were tested for contamination. The bacterium, *Salmonella enterica* serotype Typhi, needed to be controlled—its movements contained, its dispersion limited. How was this to be done? The best way anyone knew how. Government authorities sought to address the faults in their knowledge as well as the faults in how they had gone about implementing that knowledge.

Their investigation concluded that the typhoid epidemic of 1944 was not caused by any kind of general pollution of the water supply at its source.<sup>122</sup> Common sense appeared to agree with this assessment, for if the bacterium had entered into the source, then the distribution of the cases would have been localized across the entire community. These cases of typhoid occurred in groups, and most of these groups lived in

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<sup>122</sup> Letter from the Director of Medical Services to the Chief Secretary. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.7A.28. Israel State Archives.

neighborhoods with at least one corroded pipe. The answer was clear. The verdict definitive. The typhoid epidemic was due to “a number of small contaminations arising in branch pipes which were corroded and contaminated from the sewage soaked ground in which they were laid.”<sup>123</sup> Such a big mess caused by a handful of dilapidated pipes. The distribution of the water lines and the condition of the drainage pipes in the Old City of Acre needed a thorough examination and a swift repair. No time should be wasted, for their rehabilitation was the only way “to prevent a recurrence of typhoid next year.”<sup>124</sup>

I am reminded of a petition I found in the Israel State Archives, a petition submitted to the High Commissioner of Palestine on 18 November 1946. Its author presents a series of complaints made by the residents of the Old City of Acre, grievances concerning the deplorable extent to which the Mandatory authorities had neglected the historic town—especially in regards to its sanitation. “Acre has been known, since olden times, for its fresh water,” the petition begins. “Its water has now become, unfortunately, contaminated and a leading factor in the spread of diseases, particularly typhoid.”<sup>125</sup> And if that was not enough, the petition continues, informing its readers that “there are certain quarters in Acre which have no drainage system,” a problem that has become a “danger to public health.”<sup>126</sup> The petitioner blames the Municipal Commission in Acre and its indifferent incompetence. He argues that all of these issues could have easily been addressed, if only the “Government had asked the Municipality to prepare schemes for civic development and granted the Municipality the necessary loans.”<sup>127</sup> He concludes his remarks by instructing the High Commissioner of Palestine to “conduct an investigation into the matter and instruct the Authorities concerned in the town to embark on those vital schemes after obtaining the necessary loans for them.”<sup>128</sup>

He was not the only one to make such an observation. The District Commissioner also noted that the drainage system in the Old City of Acre

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Petition from Nadeem ‘Izzat Qiblawi of Acre to the Chief Secretary. 18 November 1946. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.34.31. Israel State Archives.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

is thoroughly unsatisfactory. It is the Old Turkish system fallen into ruin and patched up from time to time without plan. Many of the drains are blocked; the sewage disappears, no one knows where, and the result, it is reported by the Municipal Engineer, is worse than if no system existed at all. The sewage in places escapes from the drains and collects under buildings; this is said to account in part for the continual collapse of many of the old buildings. The increasing danger which a drainage system in such a decaying condition presents to the health of the community is obvious.”<sup>129</sup>

Both the petitioner and the District Commissioner demanded a certain ethic of care, one in which governing authorities managed the sanitary needs of the public. By this point in time, the British had become leading pioneers in the field of sanitary reforms. They had devised exportable strategies for providing clean water and removing human waste. They had designed invisible infrastructures that could act as quiet intermediaries, a physical network that could facilitate the flow of matter and the circulation of bodies, that could link government authorities with their inhabitants.

It is only recently that anthropologists have learned to take seriously the inconspicuous infrastructures that surround them. I am talking about the “good, usable systems” that “disappear almost by definition” (Bowker and Star 2000:33). These are things that are usually taken for granted until they fall apart, until they break down (Chu 2014; Wynne 1988). As social scientists, we are better equipped to “see computers not cables, light not electricity, taps and water but not pipes and sewers,” to study technologies rather than the “objects that create the grounds on which [they] operate” (Larkin 2013:329; Star 1999). And when we do think about infrastructure, it is typically in terms of the kinds of services they provide. We might, for example, relate them in a standard Foucauldian fashion to the rise of ‘population’ as an administrative category, as an administrative concern. We might study all the processes by which infrastructures govern the conduct of a population, ensuring its health, its prosperity, and its freedom (Gupta 2001:67).

This is, undoubtedly, a limited view of infrastructures. It presumes a “clear, linear relationship between an underlying system and the phenomenal world to which it gives rise” (Larkin 2013:328). Yet it has proved fruitful. It has allowed some to study the

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<sup>129</sup> Letter from the District Commissioner to the Chief Secretary. 28 May 1943. Electronic record number 00071706.81.8D.34.F3. Israel State Archives.

asphalt roads of London, how they created an eerie soundlessness, soundproofing the city from the noise of carriage wheels traversing over cobblestones (Otter 2008). It has helped others recognize the usefulness of electricity and its deployment by the police, where streetlights enhanced the vision of police officers in ways that enabled the surveillance of communities at night (Joyce 2003; Shamir 2013). Now it is easier to think about the freedom to move, the freedom to associate. Now it is easier to think about how infrastructures remove a few of the unacknowledged impediments to these freedoms: distance and darkness, diseases and illnesses, cesspools and stench (Helman 2004).

This consideration of infrastructures has also drawn attention to the ways in which pipes, cables, and wires *mediate* exchanges—often over great distances—in a manner that binds human and nonhuman actants together into complex networks. These assemblages have been shown to constitute place (Feldman 2008). They have also been shown to enact certain subjectivities (von Schnitzler 2008). This, readers are told, is what infrastructures do. They bind people and governments into localities, literally tying a place together through a network of pipes and flowing water. They connect government to its citizens, annotating their relationships into particular styles. In this way, the everyday act of turning on a faucet or flushing a toilet invokes a dense conglomeration of entities, an assemblage that does more than merely provide water and waste disposal. These acts increase the number of sites where government officials might meet ordinary residents, and the technical devices that accompany these services shape the form and content of these encounters. Water meters, for example, inscribe certain *scripts* that “both prefigure particular users and entail injunctions to act in a particular way” (von Schnitzler 2008:912). Where the provision of services precedes payment, monthly billing cycles enact ethical and fiscal relationships between municipalities and households. The meters that turn water usage into a number. The employees that attend to these instruments. The offices that process this information into bills. All of this work establishes a relationship based on trust and mutual obligation, one that makes room for negotiating, for pleading, for arguing with functionaries when services are denied, when services are insufficient, when services are inadequate.

In the Old City of Acre, all of this work has asserted an unequivocal clarity about *who* or *what* is responsible when things go wrong—when drains break or pipes leak.

Documents from the British Mandate regarding the typhoid epidemic in Acre are unambiguous. The chlorinating plant used to treat the water supply had been out of order for three weeks. The municipal mechanic would need to travel to Haifa in order to obtain the necessary parts for its repair. The municipal authorities had been improperly mending holes in the water pipes “by plugging them with wood and not soldering or welding,”<sup>130</sup> a practice that had allowed sewage to seep into the water supply. This would need to stop. According to these documents, the state of the sewers were a disgrace, and the authorities should have known this. Their condition “should have been properly monitored, recorded, and reflexively reviewed” and “appropriate corrective action should have been taken” (Law 2010:7). The problem (typhoid) had a cause (untreated water, leaky pipes) and a perpetrator (the Municipality). Finally. Someone to blame for this set of lapses and failures. If only the Municipality had its poop together (literally), none of this would have happened. If only there had been *better* governance.

Investigations into failure tell particular stories about order and mess. These are stories where messiness is the absence of order, where messiness is a failure to control, an inability to maintain. Messiness is a problem to fight against, something to be driven away through consistent work and careful coordination. These stories confirm the assumption that reality can be ordered in a single, centered, and coherent manner—that problems are the result of faulty knowledge and faulty practices (Mathews 2011:1–2). Better knowledge of the drains, better working techniques—these were the adjustments needed to better attune municipal authorities to reality. All of this would have helped prevent a deadly bacteria from swimming into the water supply. But what about all of those moments where our attempts to order actually lead to the possibility of disorder (gardens, trash cans, indexes)? Messiness, perhaps, is not strictly the *absence* of order, the *absence* of action. Messiness is not strictly a failure. It is something *made* through acts of ordering, through the ways in which realities are enacted.

I want to think through an example by returning to the Old City of Acre. I will begin in the Knesset—in a meeting of the Labour, Welfare, and Health Committee that convened on 4 December 2000. David Harari, the CEO of the Old Acre Development

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<sup>130</sup> Minute note from the District Commissioner. 25 September 1944. Electronic record number 00071706.81.CF.7A.28. Israel State Archives.



Company, began his remarks with a description of his organization, a description readers have already encountered (see Chapter 2).

The Company saw itself as dealing with all areas, and not just in tourism, because it is impossible to develop an old city in the field of tourism while ignoring everything that surrounds it. If the city is polluted, if there is no infrastructure, if a river flows through the streets, if the city cannot be maintained, then no one will want to come to the site even if you build the most beautiful and attractive hotel.<sup>131</sup>

This is how the Old Acre Development Company found itself rehabilitating the physical infrastructure of the Old City of Acre. This is how it found itself passing out notices to the residents about temporary street closures, constructing new pumping stations for the transport of water and sewage, digging trenches for the installation of electrical wires, and adorning the alleys with stone pavements and street lamps.

David Harari reminded the Knesset that the Old Acre Development Company completes these projects as a “budgeted company.”<sup>132</sup> It is not “a company that is an economic company that has a linear budget, that is, an equal budget throughout the year, but a budget that is shifting.” As such, the Old Acre Development Company is not responsible for maintaining the Old City of Acre, nor is it responsible for its cleanliness. “I am not a local authority and I do not collect taxes,” Harari explained. “I am a government company that builds projects and delivers them.” This means that after he finishes an infrastructural project, he then gives it “to the local authority. The role of the local authority, after it has acquired the infrastructure, will be to continue to maintain it over time.”

It is widely acknowledged that ‘the government’ is not a single, unitary actor (Allen 1999; Bruyneel 2007; Hansen and Stepputat 2001). Still, it has been tempting to theorize it as a large and complex organization, a “humorless machine” (Herzfeld 1991:4), a coherent system composed of different branches, departments, and levels that all work together—or don’t. It has been tempting, in short, to fragment government without multiplying it, to study each sector and the ways in which it relates to other sectors, to a particular aspect of the population or the territory. But in this Knesset meeting, something had been done through words, through words that perform

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<sup>131</sup> Protocol Number 235. Labor, Welfare, and Health Committee. Fifteenth Knesset. 4 December 2000.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

‘government’ as a series of development projects. The workers that install new pipes. The engineers that draft new plans. The administrators that collect timesheets. The desks and the chairs, the flyers and the letters, the contracts and the budgets. This is government, however diffuse it might be. All of these actants participate in the events that ‘do’ government.

Somewhere else, though, government is something else entirely—the Old City of Acre is something else entirely. In the Acre Municipality, the Old City of Acre is not a series of development projects. It is not a network of pipes. Nor is it a series of hotels and tourist attractions. It is a population, one that should be managed and administered, one whose health and safety should be ensured. As the Acre Municipality sweeps the streets of the Old City of Acre, as it pumps water through its pipes, as it collects taxes from its inhabitants, government acquires another actuality, another shape. Government is no longer a series of projects. It is a relationship—an ethics of care.

Often, these two different enactments of government go together seamlessly. And there are stories anthropologists can tell about these going-togethers. Consider, for example, a time when the Acre Municipality requested the assistance of the Old Acre Development Company in the maintenance of the Old City. A number of complaints had been sent to the Municipality criticizing that the Old City of Acre had become a dirty and a neglected place. In response, the Mayor facilitated an arrangement between the Municipality and the Old Acre Development Company, one in which the Old Acre Development Company would agree to maintain the Old City of Acre at the expense of the Municipality.<sup>133</sup> The Old Acre Development Company would contract out maintenance services to a company, treating it no differently from all of its other development projects. Coordination through translation, two versions of government being made to go together.

But this is not the only way different versions of government can be made to go together, for there are all sorts of moments when these two different versions of government clash. Sometimes these problems are easy to resolve, but it requires a kind of coordination that allows different versions of government to exist side-by-side. Here is an

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

example, an example where the Old City of Acre is not made to have a single government. On 29 December 2009, a visitor to the Old City of Acre fell while walking along a public path on the southern portion of the historic sea wall.<sup>134</sup> She was making her way to the Doniana restaurant when she encountered a hole and lost her footing. After bringing her complaint to court, the Acre Municipality and the Old Acre Development Company agreed to settle the plaintiff's claim with a payment of NIS 40,000. It was the duty of the judge to decide which of the two defendants would pay the compensation and at what rate. Already, it is clear that one version of government has overridden another—the version of government wherein government is a relationship, wherein government is an entity obligated to safeguard the health and safety of the population. One reality has won, but that does not mean the other has disappeared.

The Acre Municipality alleged that the Old Acre Development Company was responsible for maintaining all public thoroughfares in the Old City, including the one where the plaintiff fell. As such, the Old Acre Development Company should be compelled to compensate the plaintiff. After all, argued the Municipality, the nuisance was located on the historic wall, the development and maintenance of which the Old Acre Development Company was responsible. However, the Old Acre Development Company repeated its refrain, arguing that it was “a government company that is solely responsible for the development of the Old City according to specific projects that are budgeted for the development work.”<sup>135</sup> The Old Acre Development Company, as one employee testified, is not allowed to deal with the maintenance of public roads and paths, even if they are located in the Old City. The Ministry of Tourism had not budgeted the Company for routine maintenance. This is the responsibility of the Municipality.

In order to reach a verdict, the judge weighed the testimonies surrounding each of these opinions, testimonies from witnesses who unbracketed the histories of former commitments and past agreements. “I believe that the full responsibility for the damage caused to the plaintiff should be given to the Municipality,” the judge declared. The development work of the Old Acre Development Company “does not contradict the

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<sup>134</sup> Protocol of court proceedings against the Acre Municipality and the Old Acre Development Company. Case Number 6968-11-11. Tel Aviv Magistrate Court. 8 March 2016.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

presumption that arises from the provisions of sections 235 and 249 of the Municipalities Ordinance, which affirm the duty of the Municipality to ensure the maintenance of ‘roads’ that are not on private property.”<sup>136</sup> One form of government was privileged (government as an ethics of care). And the other (government as a development project)? Absolved of any financial obligations. Unless the Acre Municipality could find an authorized witness, someone who could provide sufficient evidence that the responsibility of maintenance in the Old City of Acre had been transferred to the Old Acre Development Company, then the two forms of government would continue to exist side-by-side. It is clear, then, that reality is not always ordered in a single, centered, and coherent manner. Sometimes, reality is messy *and stays messy*. And this is not because strategies of coordination have failed. Rather, it is because they have succeeded. This was a court ordered mess. It was a mess ordered by the court.

***Noncoherence: A Pinboard of Partiality***

Objects. They come into being, and they disappear. All of this, as a consequence of the practices in which they are manipulated. In the previous section, I watched reality multiply. I saw the ways in which ‘government’ can be more than one, but less than many. I studied how it can take on different shapes, a variation that depends on the specific practices—the specific sites—from which it emerges. But I also saw just how unsettling this multiplicity can be. There is the complicated work of coordination, the different techniques deployed in order to ensure the singularity of objects. Coherence—this has been my emphasis. How do human and nonhuman actants fuse together into coherent actor-networks? How do different combinations of these associations enact different entities? How are these different versions of an object made to relate? The pages of this dissertation have attempted to answer these questions about coordination. They have, in short, been an extended explanation of how things *hang together*. The problem, though, is that I have taken for granted the notion that questions of multiplicity—multiple actants, multiple practices, multiple realities—should necessarily accompany questions of coordination, of how differences are settled.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

Until this chapter, my answers to these questions have asserted that things hold together because of practical associations. I studied how each new and successful association changes an object into something else, how each new and successful association allows these objects to cohere, how each new and successful association makes an actor-network larger and realer. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to acknowledge the simplifying effects such an approach entails, for I have depicted a world where associations are *either* made *or* they aren't, where things either hang together *or* they don't. This is an either-or kind of world. This is important to think through, because in such a world, an association is the very thing that is needed in order for an entity to act. Yet I have encountered too many examples of moments when entities are not coordinated into one, when entities are left *incoherent*. So, maybe I need to loosen the threads of actor-network theory, all in order to study the moments where incoherences “aren't smoothed away. They are lived with” (Mol 2002:87). This is what I want to study.

This will, undoubtedly, be difficult. As anthropologists, the methods of social science warn us that incoherence may be an indication that our “personal use of method was not up to scratch” (Law and Singleton 2005:334). Or, if our use of method was fine, perhaps the messiness of our conclusions stems from our inability to interpret data properly, to locate the unity that underlies a surface of complex contradictions. I want to see what happens when we pretend that the problem is not with us (our use of method, our interpretation of data), but with our methods themselves—methods that are not equipped for knowing certain kinds of messy realities. But, before I can begin studying how things relate-without-adding-up, I ask for your patience, for the text that follows may not convey a story that organizes happenings into a neat, linear narrative, a tale guided by causes and their effects, where separately determinate entities—presumed to pre-exist their intra-action—leave their marks on other entities (Barad 2007:175). I will begin with a story of a tourism development project in the Old City of Acre. This is a story of fractional coherence, one that shows how entities hang together—but not quite.

There has been a dream to rehabilitate Khan as-Shawarda by building a small hotel on top of it. Initiated by the Old Acre Development Company, the project is designed to not only serve as an economic revitalizer, but to also restore the historic structure to its original purpose. “My first involvement with Khan as-Shawarda was, I

think, in 1995,” began Yaniv. “This was when we conducted a documentation of all the ‘big sites’ in the Old City of Acre in order to determine the potential for tourism in the city. This included all of the khans, the cinemas, the sarayya—things like that. There were maybe eight to ten projects that we did. In regards to the hotel project, the idea for creating an addition to Khan as-Shawarda that would be used as a hotel facility has existed for a long time. The idea was that it would help give life to the Old City. In many ways, this makes sense. Historically, hotels were concentrated in that area of the Old City.”

I had travelled to Jerusalem in order to meet this gentleman, a former Director of the Conservation Department of the Israel Antiquities Authority and one of the few conservation engineers practicing in Israel. I had previously met him at a conservation committee meeting, where he presented the work he had conducted on behalf of the Old Acre Development Company. I imagined his work the same way many historians of ideas, technologies, and nation-states imagine the great discoverers, inventors, and founders—as mythological superheroes, with the strength of giants and the reach of an army. But when I entered his workspace on the sixth floor of a quiet office building, I did not find him alone in his office, scrutinizing engineering plans all by himself. I encountered almost a dozen young professionals, silently sitting at separate computer stations. A sea of black and neon screens surrounded me; the AutoCAD software stylizing LCD monitors as their monochromatic predecessors.

“But I was against the proposal,” Yaniv intimated. “Personally, I did not support it. The Director of the Israel Antiquities Authority made the final decision and decided in favor of it. The building had a number of dangerous cracks in its vaults. I wrote a letter to the Old Acre Development Company about the condition of these vaults, and they wrote to the Acre Municipality. We finally acquired the money to do a survey and a preliminary rehabilitation of the structure. We did it in small stages. One section here. One section there. After three or four years all of the cracks were stabilized, but just the public parts of it. We did not do anything inside the rooms—those areas are private. Our next project was purely aesthetic. We restored the façades—the storefronts—by adding new doors and windows.

“The presentation you saw in September, that was part of a feasibility study that I conducted to see if it was possible to add an additional level to the existing building. Could the building withstand the weight of a second story? One test we performed is called a flat-jack test. We did these tests in only a few rooms. You cannot test every wall, but you want to generate what you hope are some statistically relevant results. The flat-jack requires two flat plates—we have the device here—that are inserted into a cut in the wall. These plates are connected to a pump and a computer, then all of these graphs are made.” He opened a file on his computer and pointed to a series of stress-strain diagrams. “Don’t ask me to explain all of the lines in these charts. What I will tell you is that the final results let us know the existing weight placed on the stones. Well, no. Not the stones. On the wall. A wall contains both stones and mortars. They also let us know the maximum potential weight that we can place on the wall.

“These tests are very expensive. They cost about 2,000 to 3,000 dollars for each sample. It is a very equipment-heavy and labor-intensive process. We have to send two to three people to the site by car with two heavy cases of equipment. It is at least one full day of work. We need to use a pump, so that requires electricity. We need to cut holes in the walls, so that requires a special kind of worker with stone-cutting equipment—I cannot cut holes in walls.”

“What did you conclude about Khan as-Shawarda from these tests?” I asked.

“We learned that the first plan the architect submitted would not work. I told him that the placement of the walls of the hotel would have been impossible to support. I also told him that the floor could not touch the roof of the khan because the cracks in the vaults would not be able to support the weight. There needed to be space between the floor of the hotel and the vaults of the khan.”

I want to hang this interview on my pinboard, right next to the transcript of my meeting with the architect of the project. This architect had worked extensively with the Old Acre Development Company. He specialized in projects designed to put ancient structures into contemporary use, an expert at transplanting modern infrastructures into old and fragile buildings. “After the conservation engineer for this project examined the building, he concluded that Khan as-Shawarda is structurally very fragile. He said that another level could be added to the building, but that we must follow specific guidelines.

For example, the addition needs to be fabricated out of light materials. This basically leaves steel and wood as the only possible construction materials—concrete would be too heavy. The engineer also said that we could only place the load points of the addition on the load-bearing walls of the original structure. This would mean the location of the walls separating each room would need to align with the load-bearing walls of the ground floor. This was a problem. We want to make sure that the future developer has flexibility in the design of the hotel. Our solution is to install a steel device that will raise the floor of the hotel and divide the load of the walls. It will be placed above the load-bearing pillars of the original building. This will give the walls of the hotel flexibility in their placement. The developer will be able to position the walls to the left or to the right of the load-bearing walls of the khan.

“In the plan I submitted, I designed the size of each room to be the minimum required by law. It is very difficult to create an architectural scheme for this hotel because there are so many variables that are not defined. This is intentional. This project is spearheaded by the Old Acre Development Company. After it gets approval from the conservation committee and the Municipality, then the Old Acre Development Company can bring it to tender and try to get an entrepreneur to invest in it. This means that certain aspects of the hotel will change—or should be able to be changed. I have tried to create a design that will allow the future investor to adjust the size of each room according to their needs.”

“At the conservation committee meeting in November,” I began, “there seemed to be a lot of opposition to the project. I remember the Municipal Engineer expressed concerns about the hotel. She was worried about how the design would affect the view of the Old City. That it might, for example, block the view of al-Jazzar Mosque. Can you comment on this?” I asked.

“It is like this. Imagine someone is in an operating theater and his friends and family are all in the room with him, standing there and telling the surgeon what to do. The Deputy Mayor of Acre was against the project. Before the presentation even started, he said under his breath—but loud enough for everyone to hear—that there was no way he would let this project get approved by the Municipality.”

“Can he do that? Can he stop a project?”



“Yes, he can. He can stop it. His statement was what one might characterize as having ‘nuisance value’. He developed so great a nuisance that the other members of the conservation committee would adopt his stance. His comments turned the whole committee against the project. I was so frustrated with it all. I just wanted to walk out of the room, right then and there. But I couldn’t. It would have meant the end of the project, and I didn’t want to do that to my client. After the meeting, I went to the office of the Old Acre Development Company and we had a conversation about the concerns of the committee members. Dudu Harari, the CEO of the Old Acre Development Company, had a discussion with the Deputy Mayor about why he was opposed to the project. The Deputy Mayor responded that the project would force the shops near Khan as-Shawarda to close for the duration of construction, something that would adversely affect these businesses. I do not know where this idea came from. Dudu explained to him that there are ways construction can proceed that will not require the shops to close. After hearing this, he said that if this is the case, then he is open to the idea of the hotel.

“The other concern expressed at the meeting was with the view.” The architect squinted his eyes and tilted his head, “but views always change depending on where you stand. So it may ‘ruin’ the view from here, but not from there. This is why we had the photoshoot today—to take panoramic photographs of the Old City. I asked the Municipal Engineer to come with me. I wanted her to be there so that I could make sure I took a photograph of the correct ‘view’. I did not want to take photographs and create before-and-after renderings of the proposal, only to have her tell me that the photographs are from the wrong vantage point.”

The initial idea of the Khan as-Shawarda hotel project was to add a low-profile addition, one that would practically disappear from the view of pedestrians in the courtyard. Remember, though, that the conservation engineer said there needed to be space between the vaults of the khan and the floor of the hotel. How could these conflicting demands be reconciled? The architect brought a second technical solution. “Usually, the infrastructure for a building is placed beneath its floor,” the architect began. “However, if I design the hotel with its infrastructure there, then I would need to raise the floor 80 to 100 centimeters. This is because the length of the wing is 40 meters and the slope of the sewage pipes needs to be 1.5 to 2 percent. This would dramatically increase

the height of the addition.” This would have been good for the conservation engineer, but it would have been bad for the Municipal Engineer. So, instead, the architect proposed to position all of the infrastructure for the hotel on its roof, a solution that would allow the building to maintain a low profile, that would keep to a minimum the space between the floor of the hotel and the roof of the khan.

“I’m sorry. I don’t understand. How, exactly, does this reduce the height of the building?” I asked.

“A bathroom can have a lower ceiling than the rest of the hotel room. This will let us create what I call an ‘infrastructural corridor’ on the roof of the hotel. In this corridor, we will place the air-conditioning units for the first and second floors as well as water, sewage, and electrical lines. This is something that would not have been possible more than ten years ago.” Perspective would do the rest of the work. The pipes in the infrastructural corridor would remain hidden, impossible to see from the courtyard of the khan.

“Do you have any concerns about placing a sewage system on the roof of a building? Are there any benefits to having it below the structure?”

“No. The sewage corridor creates a space for workers to come and service the system. It is a system where if one pump stops working, it will not affect the general system. Only that room will be affected.”

And, with this brief explanation, I move to a third interview, one that I will pin-up right next to the others, right next to all of the architectural plans and the photographs, the cracked vaults and the flat-jack tests, the formal meetings and the informal discussions. The third interview is with the conservation architect of the project, an employee of the Israel Antiquities Authority who had been contracted by the Old Acre Development Company to do the conservation documentation of the site. An anthropology of the awkward, for the Israel Antiquities Authority had been tasked with assisting a project that might not necessarily get the approval of the conservation committee—its own conservation committee.

“Buildings in the Old City of Acre were not designed with electricity, water, sewage, or telecommunications in mind,” began the conservation architect. “The result: everything is attached externally. The easiest thing to do is to make a hole in the wall and

let the sewage come down through a pipe. The sewage cannot always go straight down. This is why you see the jungle of twisting and turning pipes throughout the Old City. The architect for the hotel needed to create a complicated system to deal with the sewage. I think the solution is less than ideal. It is totally dependent on machinery. Generally, with sewage, you let gravity do all the work. Machines break, but gravity does not. What happens when the electricity goes out? Or a pump stops working? What happens when a pipe bursts? You could have a building that is in deep shit. This will require a lot of energy, maintenance, and risk. I think he will create these plans, and the investor will decide that it is too much work, that they will not want to have to deal with all of this.”

The conservation architect expressed one final concern: where will all this waste go? how will it leave the hotel complex and enter the municipal sewage system? where will you place the pipes? It would not be possible to put them behind the hotel; there are shops there. The only feasible spot is in front of the hotel. But how? How will they connect to the manholes in the courtyard, the two openings installed sometimes in the past in anticipation of a future hotel? “The pipes will ruin the façade,” he declared. Such details had been left out of the illustrative renderings of the proposed hotel. No solution had been presented. And so, a load-bearing technique (a steel device to raise the floor, to redistribute loads) and a sewage-transporting technique (a device to pump sewage up, rather than down) created a space for the concerns of a conservation engineer (space beneath the floor) to hang together with the concerns of a municipal engineer (low-profile addition). But these techniques, techniques that allowed the proposal to hang together (at least until November 2016), are the same techniques that helped it come undone. The infrastructural corridor would help save a view of the historic cityscape while harming a view of the façade. It would help save a view of the cityscape while burdening a future investor with excessive energy and maintenance expenses. Two concerns that sat waiting to be addressed. Two concerns that sat in contradiction with the other ideas the participants wanted to keep (Latour 1996a:92).

And so the pace of the project slowed. Things came together. Until they did not. There are three things to learn from this encounter with messiness. First, government is not a single object. It is an object that comes in different forms, in different versions. At one moment, government is an entity that protects the physicality of historic structures

and historic cityscapes. At another moment, it is a tourism development company, molding the Old City of Acre into an international tourist destination. At yet another moment, government is a custodian, an entity that secures the health and safety of its citizens by requiring structural stability, by ensuring unobstructed flows of water, sewage, and electricity. Government is multiple, a plethora of different entities that “interfere with one another and shuffle themselves together” (Law 2002a:3). The second thing to learn is that *beings* are not fixed entities, entities that enter into predictable relations with one another. During the two conservation committee meetings I attended, the Municipality formed associations with the Conservation Appendix of the Old City of Acre and its policies on historic cityscapes, right after it had aligned itself with shop owners and residents. With each new alliance, the Municipality became a different kind of object, a different kind of government.

And finally, it is possible to learn something about causes and their effects. The transformation of Khan as-Shawarda into a hotel would require the demolition of the illegal and non-historic structures that sit on the southern portion of the complex. These homes would need to be removed. Their residents would need to be evicted. Unfortunately, these are the kinds of events that are reported all too often in the Old City of Acre. They are the stories that can be read in newspapers, stories about the governing authorities and their agendas to remove Palestinian residents from this historic city. They are also stories that assume occurrences and phenomena can be explained causally, that presume the existence of a ‘whole’ that orders the endless multitude of visible facts and events (Callon and Law 2004:3). Yet, in the conservation committee, I saw the Municipality acting in an unexpected, surprising way. I saw it blocking evictions and demolitions, a reminder that there is no way to predict how anyone will take up a project. There is no neat, replicable story to be told about actants and their intentions, their actions, and their effects. The Acre Municipality and the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Conservation Appendix and the historic cityscape, the Old Acre Development Company and the flows of imagined waste—these things came together in ways that sped the project along *and* slowed it down.

I want to add to this pinboard the trails left over from another, similar event. Khan al-Umdan is one of the largest in Palestine. Approximately seventy (Palestinian) families

resided in the structure from 1948 to 1973. Most lived in its upper-story, using the ground floor rooms for storage and industry. Each family had one room in which there was a small kitchen and a small shower. In a corner of the complex, there were four toilets that served all of its residents. That is, until 1959, when a team of architects from the Office of Planning for Old Acre began devising proposals for the building's future. They suggested evicting the tenants in order to convert the structure into offices for the local authorities. According to the proposal,

On the upper story and in the passageways to the arcades there is no reason to prevent altering the system of rooms in order to make them smaller and enlarge their entrances to make new openings for windows as needed. When the municipality will need to open branches for several departments dealing with the population in the old city and when they feel there is a need to establish an authority for the restoration and building on a larger scale, this will be a suitable place to locate its offices. [Kesten 1962:39]

But nothing happened until 1966, when the Old Acre Development Company began to evict its residents so as to renovate the structure and convert it into a tourist center. They paved the courtyard, dismantled the balconies, rehabilitated a few rooms, installed a system of supports for the ground floor columns, and reinforced the main entrance with concrete arches. Today, though, all of these rooms are closed to the public, locked away behind a metal gate (Killebrew and Weinstein-Evron 2005).

On 18 October 2013, Palestinian activists organized a protest in the Old City of Acre, marching from al-Jazzar Mosque, along Salah ad-Din street, to Khan al-Umdan. This demonstration occurred a month after the Old Acre Development Company and the Israel Land Authority released a tender inviting investors to purchase the right to develop a hotel complex in Khan al-Umdan, Khan as-Shuni, and the small hammam. As a researcher, there is much to sort through. First, there are the ambiguities regarding the lease agreement, which grants the investor possession of the structures until 31 August 2072. What will happen after the end of the lease, when the rental contract for the property between the Board of Trustees of the Muslim Waqf and the Old Acre Development Company expires? Readers of the protocol of the Economics Committee of the Knesset are told that all anyone can do is wait and see.<sup>137</sup> Second, there is the fact that

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<sup>137</sup> Protocol number 115. Economics Committee. Nineteenth Knesset. 18 November 2013. Accessed from [https://www.nevo.co.il/law\\_html/Law103/2013-11-18-2.htm](https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/Law103/2013-11-18-2.htm).

the tender has a stipulation for the developer, a line that requires the investor to successfully evict all of the tenants (36 families) from Khan as-Shuni within five years before (s)he can possess any rights to the site.

These are some of the issues that brought together a number of politicians, bureaucrats, and activists in the hearing of the Economics Committee of the Knesset on 18 November 2013. But there were others. “I want to settle accounts with the Old Acre Development Company,” said Basel Ghattas at the meeting. “This khan is in your possession. You are responsible for it. What have you done in the last 20–30 years to preserve it?” Ghattas wanted to know how, under the supervision and management of the Old Acre Development Company, this structure could have deteriorated so extensively—could become a ruin. “Even if this tender takes a few more years, what will you do tomorrow morning, by virtue of your position, for a site of such importance?”<sup>138</sup>

“The tender involves the cooperation of the Old Acre Development Company, which is also a management company on behalf of the Israel Land Authority, together with Amidar,” explained Dudu Harari. “It would not be possible to successfully market Khan al-Umdan for just 40 years. The reason is very simple—the economic difficulty of rehabilitating it. According to the economic analysis, costs cannot be returned even after twenty years. This is why they attached Khan as-Shuni to the tender.”<sup>139</sup>

“You can develop without selling,” Ghattas asserted. “Why do they not save it? You need to save it.”<sup>140</sup>

“I cannot save it. I am a company that is budgeted by the government,” insisted Harari, repeating a line that should be very familiar by now. “As soon as the government funds me and tells me to save Khan al-Umdan, then I will save it.”<sup>141</sup>

“There is no dispute about the importance of Acre and the importance of Khan al-Umdan, that is the first thing,” Raanan Kislev added. “You really have to see how everyone is doing the same thing and making sure to work together. Now some facts. In the declaration of Acre as a World Heritage Site, already in the portfolio it was decided that there would be sites that would become hotels, and this is the case here. Khan al-

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

Umdan and Khan as-Shuni—UNESCO knows that these are supposed to become a hotel, so there is no surprise here. What we need, and this also answers the question of Waim Balum, is to preserve the values of the structure. Indeed, the Old Acre Development Company, as an initiator, accepted the conditions of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Our mission is to see that the khan and its values have not been harmed, and in the process as it becomes a hotel, that it will continue to uphold its values.”<sup>142</sup> The problem, however, is that “at the end of the day, this is a very big project.” Perhaps one of the largest in Israel. Someone would have to invest more than NIS 150 million.

One can also peruse the tender booklet, where they can find a collection of outstanding removal of danger orders for the Khan al-Umdan complex. The first citation in the pile is for building 18011/102.<sup>143</sup> The notice, addressed to Amidar and the Old Acre Development Company, states that the structure constitutes a danger to its occupants and to those around it.

On the ground floor there was a wide crack in the ceiling and in the vault that extended to the north and east walls. Stones are detached from exteriors and threaten passersby. The first floor apartment of the Abu Abed al-Fattah family has strong diagonal cracks in the walls and shows signs of movement in the floor of the apartment. There is continuous disintegration and marks on the floor, including movement in the eastern wall, and there are signs of significant moisture in the walls and the ceiling of the house. In the apartment next to the family, there is an abandoned flat. On the roof of the apartment there are strong cracks and the roof needs an immediate seal. There is a strong bulge in the room and an immediate need to remove the danger.<sup>144</sup>

Or, consider another citation for the same building, one issued two years later.

In the outer walls of the Khan as-Shuna courtyard, vegetation grew. Stones dropped and fell, cracks in the walls, depressions and openings were caused by the agitation and disintegration of structural stones. In the warehouses of the Sha’lan family that are used for horse stables, there are signs of dampness in the walls and vaults, the arches and the walls have dropped, particularly the internal storage. The walls are cracked, the concrete beam in the entrance is cracking, the bed is exposed and rusty, the concrete drops and falls, the windows are broken and the frames are dismantled.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> An invitation to receive offers to rent a hotel complex in Khan al-Umdan, Khan as-Shuni and the Small Hammam. Israel Lands Authority. Old Acre Development Company. September 2013.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

These are the kinds of precarious conditions under which many of the residents in Khan as-Shuni have lived.

The tender failed in 2014. Many reasons have been given. No bids had been submitted by January 2014, which Dudu Harari attributed to the fact that “anyone who wants to enter the tender is required to receive prior approval from the Ministry of Tourism, which is supposed to check its financial strength and suitability to manage the hotel” (Barnes 2014). It also failed in 2007. Another report claims that seven investors had prepared to enter a bid, but “they all withdrew in light of all the accumulated complexities: mainly the residents’ objections and their opposition to plans to evict them from their homes” (Assaf 2014:26). The point, though, is not *why* the tender failed. It is to learn something about *complexity*. The pinboard I have created for the Khan al-Umdan hotel project demonstrates how architectural conservation and tourism development *hang together*. The structures that compose this historic complex cannot be rehabilitated without the financial resources of a private hotel developer. The project is simply too big.

But my pinboard also demonstrates something else. If the project succeeds, if everything comes together, the residents of Khan al-Umdan and Khan as-Shuni will be evicted from their homes, displaced to make space for international tourists. (Un)fortunately, in this pinboard, things only came together partially. The Israel Antiquities Authority, the Old Acre Development Company, and the Israel Land Authority found a way to coordinate their activities. They were less successful in finding an entrepreneur to join their project. A missing thread. For now, for them, that is okay. The Old Acre Development Company will put the (fractionally coherent) project in a drawer and save it for later (Danon 2017). Meanwhile, the residents have continued living in their homes, in their *dangerous* homes. These were homes where moisture continued its delegations to salt, where reinforced cement continued to explode, where compressive stress continued to crush. This is what messiness looks like—a project (a building) neither disbanded nor actualized, a project (a building) partially hung together. These are the kinds of inequalities that can emerge from a moment of fractional coherence, inequalities that can only be seen if an analyst refrains from one simple assumption: things *either* cohere into consistent wholes *or* they do not cohere at all.



### *Functional Noncoherence*

I sat in a restaurant with the Municipal Veterinarian. To many, this was an unlikely pairing. I scheduled a meeting with him after hearing that he might know something about what happened to the historical archives of the Acre Municipality. “Some years ago,” he recounted, “the Municipality threw away all of their historical records. They put them all in a truck and took them to the dump. Some historically-minded individuals in the Municipality managed to save a few items that they thought were important. But mostly, everything is gone.” He agreed to help me find any documents that might be left, any documents that might help me with my research on architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre. He accompanied me from one office to another within the Municipality, from one office to another within the Old City of Acre. “You know,” he offered, “there are not very good relations between the Municipality and the Israel Antiquities Authority. I really do not know why. This is just what I hear.”

I did not need much convincing. I was instantly reminded of another restaurant in the Old City of Acre, and the conversation I had with a conservation professional there. She spoke about a report she wrote, which outlined the state of conservation in the Old City of Acre. “Before I can send it to anyone in the Municipality, I will need to change the language and make it softer—more gentle. I will need to scale-back my critiques. I will need to say things about how conservation in the Old City has done good things. Otherwise, everyone will read it and say that it is too political. Then they will hate me. They will read it, and they will hate me. But then they will probably forget about it in six months.” Such a statement echoed my own observations in the Old City of Acre. I would often find it difficult to get bureaucrats to talk about their relationships with the other institutions that administered the Old City. Most of my questions met the same, quieting refrain. “It is all political.” Four words delivered in a way that dismissed the need for further clarification. Such a simple explanation.

Sometimes people offered more. During my review of the literature on the Old City of Acre, I found the following testimony, a statement attesting to the failed coordinations that have affected the historic city.

the interviewee claimed that there is no cooperation between all the public institutions with an interest in Old Acre. According to him, the multiplicity of stakeholders causes each actor to shift responsibility for the city's problems to another. 'When they ask the Old Acre Development Company, they say the empty building belongs to the Israel Lands Administration. When they call the Deputy Engineer of the Municipality to deal with the problem, he says it is the responsibility of the Old Acre Development Company'. This impression was confirmed in a conversation with the Mayor of Acre. According to him, there is no cooperation between the Acre Municipality and the Old Acre Development Company. The background to this is a general disagreement of the location and functions of the Old Acre Development Company. This lack of agreement causes the Municipality to blatantly transfer resources intended for use by the Old Acre Development Company to the Municipality. [Peleg 2010:74]

Later, in an interview with Adham Jamal, a Deputy Mayor of Acre, I asked about the challenges of governing a historic city, particularly one that is managed by so many different authorities. There is the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Old Acre Development Company, the Acre Municipality, and the Development Authority, all of whom are watching the happenings in the Old City of Acre. Surely, I thought, this should make governing the place easier.

"No," he corrected me. "The fact that there are so many authorities governing the Old City is actually an obstacle for governing it. The primary goal is to balance the needs for development with the need to protect the original state of the Old City. The Old Acre Development Company, it works in certain areas and this makes it difficult for the Municipality to also manage those areas. This is a problem because the Old Acre Development Company only sees the Old City as a tourist site. They are only developing it for tourism purposes. They do not do much for the welfare of the residents. They invest in the historic walls and the historic sites, but they could invest more in public buildings and the environment—how people live. For us, sometimes it would just be easier if the Old Acre Development Company was not there. It would be easier for the Municipality to manage it."

Were these managerial failures? Probably. It is likely that things could have been improved through better coordination and clearer communication. Were these perspectival failures? Maybe. The Municipality sees the Old City of Acre as a population. The Old Acre Development Company sees it as a tourist attraction. Failure is just something that can happen when different actors, with different perspectives, come

together to address an object. Underlying these two questions is the assumption that many of the problems in the Old City of Acre could simply disappear, if only things were organized better. I watched as the Deputy Mayor paused and searched for a brochure, unfolding it on his desk for me to read. “There are positive things happening. The Municipality is encouraging a project to develop open spaces for local residents, such as plazas, a football field, and a promenade. We are encouraging this investment and we are contributing ten percent to the budget. The rest is the Old Acre Development Company. The Municipality is also initiating kindergartens and playgrounds.”

Kindergartens. I had heard these discussed before. In *World Heritage, Urban Design, and Tourism* (2014), Luna Khirfan shares a snippet from an interview with an urban planner, a fragment of their discussion about the Old Acre Development Company.

I mentioned before the three kindergartens, and we used the Ministry of Tourism’s money to build kindergartens. The government was not happy. They said that money from the Ministry of Tourism should go to tourism not to kindergartens, and of course I am sure you realize that a kindergarten in the Old City is much more expensive than a hotel. But we thought that if there is no better way than expressing an attitude than to build a kindergarten for the kids. If you build a kindergarten then you would want them to stay, to be part of this place. [2014:115]

Are these examples of successful coordination? Yes. The Old Acre Development Company—a for-profit government company—invested in a municipal project that would generate little-to-no revenue, a project that would divert budgets away from tourism, a project that would enact a completely different version of government. The Ministry of Tourism was hesitant about bringing together two different versions of government. Perhaps it had made the assumption that this kind of noncoherence would imply a potential failure in its mission. The urban planner, however, could readily see the ways in which fractional coherence might actually “be functional and thereby reduce the possibility of failure” (Law 2010:7). The completion of a project, one that was entirely irrelevant to its mandate, might actually help the Ministry of Tourism actualize its goal to develop tourism. It would allow the local residents to become a routine part of the Old City of Acre, for their children would now have a place to stay. Meanwhile, the Old Acre Development Company would have linked itself to new elements. It would have formed an association with the community, whose presence could help to maintain the Old City of Acre as an ‘authentic’ tourist attraction, one filled with just enough ethnic difference.

These are the kinds of Latourian translations with which readers have become familiar, translations where “the two interests are moving in the same direction” (Latour 1987:109).

I want to consider another example of partial coordination. This time, though, I will focus on the effects of fractional coherences that can emerge through inaction. In the Israel State Archives, I found a memorandum from 24 May 1995, a brief note written on Israel Antiquities Authority letterhead. Its author sounds frustrated.

For several years, we have tried to be everyone’s policemen to curb illegal construction in the Old City of Acre through the Antiquities Law. This does not work—we have no professional power to do so, we are not budgeted for this. There is no cooperation with the Municipality (which is supposed to enforce the Planning and Building Law), and illegal construction ‘celebrates’ before our eyes and the eyes of others. We must examine the matter thoroughly and decide how to act because we make fun of ourselves—the Antiquities Law applies to the entire city. We see clear offenses, and we are unable to cope.”<sup>146</sup>

My conversations with conservation professionals and local residents in the Old City of Acre suggest that not much had changed since 1995. “The Municipality does not demolish in Acre,” explained one conservation professional. “There is the humanity to it. This attitude can change, but that is how it is for now. They have their own rules, and they punish in other ways.” A (Palestinian) resident made a similar remark. This time through an example. “My brother wanted to add another level to our house. It was too complicated to get a building permit. Or, I don’t know why he didn’t go through the legal channels. During the weekend he brought in all the materials and he did all the work. And then the next day he received a notice from the Municipality about the illegal construction. The notice said we needed to demolish it. I don’t know how they found out. They said that a neighbor told on us. You know they pay people to tell on people here. But we just took the notice and we tore it up. The Municipality took my brother to court and everything, but eventually you just make an arrangement with them. You agree to pay a fine and they leave you alone. They really just want the money. They don’t demolish illegal construction. I don’t think they even could. Where would you put the crane and the debris?”

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<sup>146</sup> Letter from Giora Solar to Amir Drori. 24 May 1995. Electronic record number 00071706.81.93.A5.2A. Israel State Archives.

An organizational problem. An ethical problem. A technical problem. Is that the only way to understand these events? Is that the only way to interpret the inactions of the Acre Municipality? On one of my first patrols with Yedida through the Old City of Acre, she stopped and pointed to a building across from us. “There is an illegal addition. The third level was already illegal, and then they added a fourth level over the holiday. I already reported it.”

“Where did you report it?” I asked.

“To the Municipality,” she replied, and then added with a hint of sarcasm, “As you can see, they have responded quickly. They are doing a lot about it.” After a brief pause, she clarified. “I guess you can’t really blame them. The Municipality has a hard time with enforcement because of the political situation. If they came to the Old City and started tearing down illegal buildings. I don’t know. It would probably turn into a third war.” With these words, Yedida had identified a functional noncoherence. These are moments when an actor-network coheres by not cohering. (By now, this should be familiar. Just reconsider the lime-based plasters that protect historic masonry materials through their own self-destruction.)

Functional noncoherence is a concept I have adopted from John Law, a concept that is, perhaps, best characterized through an example.

[I]t is likely that in a stringent financial climate, not-quite-perfectly air conditioned labs are the (usually inconsequential) price to pay for having labs that function at all. Perhaps the alternative is closing them down. The argument, then, is that unruliness is often a good, or (if you prefer) that the best is the enemy of the workable. [2010:5]

It is a concept that tells a completely different story about government and its possibilities for acting. The Acre Municipality hangs together with the Israel Antiquities Authority, but only partially. It does enforce against illegal building activities. Just not in the ways the Israel Antiquities Authority would prefer. It issues fines instead of demolition orders, a detour that may not always preserve the historic fabric of the Old City of Acre, but that allows it to maintain (better) relations with its residents, that allows it to maintain a semblance of control over the things that they do.

As a result, the Israel Antiquities Authority has had to modify its approach to architectural conservation. One day, Yedida’s supervisor articulated his philosophy on building applications. “The Municipality does not enforce against illegal construction.

The residents could build without a permit, and the additions would stay. Maybe they would even add two stories instead of one. This is why we need to be flexible in what we approve. We need to acknowledge the needs of the community and be flexible with them. This way, we can actually have more control over what happens. If we are too strict in our professional commitments as conservators, if we denied every application, then they would probably just build it anyway, and we would have no control over what they do, and the structure would stay that way because the Municipality does not enforce the building codes. If we are more flexible in what we approve, then the residents will work with us and do it the right way.” The Israel Antiquities Authority has adopted a similar technique as the Municipality. This is a technique of governance, whereby one controls *more* by controlling *less*.

In these moments of functional noncoherence, the Acre Municipality and the Israel Antiquities Authority manage their own dissolution, dissolving into their surroundings like a fluid (de Laet and Mol 2000:248). The Acre Municipality does not necessarily need to sit at the center of government and its governmentality. The Israel Antiquities Authority does not necessarily need to stand as a solid, stable center of calculation. Everything does not necessarily need to come together, to hang together in just the right way for them to command and control from a distance. Often, it is the not-quite-perfect coordinations that matter, the partial associations between illegal buildings, municipal inspectors, and local laws, between renovation projects, conservation architects, and preservation standards. These partialities are the things that allow governance to exist at all (Singleton 1998).

### ***Concluding Thoughts***

As social scientists, we have learned from Bruno Latour to treat the realities that populate our world(s) as miracles. Not as miracles that emanate from the divine or from chance, but as miracles that emerge from specific assortments of human and nonhuman actants, many of which are invisible and underappreciated. It is a miracle that for many in the Old City of Acre, their sewage does not make their neighbors sick. This has something to do with the pipes that they use, the ways in which they have been installed and maintained. It might also have something to do with the vaccines they have been administered, the small concoctions that stimulate the antibodies in their bodies. It likely

has something to do with all of the paperwork that moves from one office to another, the immutable mobiles that forge connections between toilets and treatment plants, government bureaucrats and municipal budgets. These are the kinds of stories actor-network theorists have learned to recount. They are stories about coherence, but they are also stories that *are* coherent.

These are great stories. They are powerful stories. Still, I worry that they allow us to slide too quickly from empirical observations to abstract concepts—to broad generalizations (about centers of calculation, about networks of actants, about strategies of coordination) that can so easily take on a life of their own. As John Law and Vicky Singleton observed, actor-network theory and its “intuition about the importance of relations was right, but it got itself too concerned with standardization, with the rigidities of immutable mobiles that, if they exist at all, exist within rather specific networks that try to reach out over long distances and achieve centralized control” (2005:339). These stories have become predictable in their tellings. Detailed accounts that follow specific projects through their entire duration, from their beginnings as impossible ideas to their realizations into reality or their fumbblings into failure. Success, here, acquires a managerialist intonation. It is the thing that happens when tactics of persuasion, coercion, or control are effectively deployed. It is the thing that happens when everything *finally comes together*.

I am concerned that these stories leave little that can be known about mess. About the things that didn't work, but that almost did. In this chapter, I have taken what I learned from actor-network theorists, and I have tried to imagine “networks that are more relaxed, networks where such control is less important” (Law and Singleton 2005:339). During my fieldwork in the Old City of Acre, I encountered all sorts of moments when the world stayed messy, when entities did not cohere into a single unit, when strategies of coordination left things incoherent. Quite often, this failure to adequately liaise did not occasion a failure to command and control from a distance. There were many moments in which things—architectural conservation, local governance, settler colonialism—worked well precisely because they did not work well at all. There were the municipal building inspectors who refrained from issuing demolition orders. Or the lime-based building

materials that crumbled into bits and pieces. Or the hotel development projects that settled into drawers for an indefinite pause.

The Old City of Acre was a place where all sorts of actants learned to grapple with the practicalities of functional noncoherence, with the affordances of having things *almost* come together. Here, architectural conservation was a fragile reality. It acquired a new shape with each association that it formed, changing from one moment to the next. But even though this fragile reality could easily change, it could not be easily undone. Architectural conservation did not fall to pieces because a conduit had been sealed, because a flow had been interrupted, because a thread had been pulled. Blocking the roads that transport bureaucrats, cutting the electrical wires that power their computers, burning the archives that store their immutable mobiles. None of this would be enough to undo the networks that administer architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre—at least not for very long. Things can be much too fluid, thriving off of the partialities, the contradictions, and the ambiguities of that which is not quite, but almost.

Maybe this is because architectural conservation is never really *done*. It is rarely, if ever, a fully-formed, tightly-knit network of associated entities. I suspect this is the case for most things. Perhaps most realities are collateral. They happen incidentally and along the way (Law 2011). Social scientists need to find new ways to think about messiness in these terms, ways that can help others tinker with it. Grapple with it. Meddle with it. Pinboards are a place to start. They operate differently from stories. There is no expectation that everything will coalesce into a single narrative. There is no overarching requirement for coherence, a requirement that compels writers to overlook the things that can appear in the play of fractionality, in “the oscillation between singularity and multiplicity” (Law 2002a:199). Pinboards allow viewers to readily confront “a series of different stories that don’t add up very well” (200). This is important. The stories social scientists tell and the methods they deploy—these are performative just as much as they are descriptive. They interact in a manner that extends beyond their contributions to knowledge, helping to make a world fit for certain modes of political practice. It is pinboards that make ready a mode of political practice that attends to the building of realities that are never quite built.



## CONCLUSION

It was one of my final days in the Old City of Acre. I sat with a friend on a portion of the historic wall that surrounds the city. He was telling me about his new life as an immigrant in Canada, about the freedoms he has as a bartender in Toronto, about the guilt he carries as a Palestinian in the diaspora. We were just above the land gate, the original entrance to the Old City of Acre. From here, we could see the sea. We could see a school of Jewish-Israeli students learning how to sail in tiny boats. We could see a resident of the city, a man waist deep in the water, screaming at things only he could perceive. “He does that a lot,” began Alim. “He is always yelling at nothing. He is...” Mid-sentence, a police car interrupted him. It blared its horn and shouted commands over a loudspeaker. We peered over the wall and watched as a teenager stood in the middle of the street. He shouted back, blocking their path with his voice and his body. He stayed—an act of defiance against the police, against their demands that he should move faster, against their orders that he should leave.

I watched the confrontation ensue. Two officers stepped out of the vehicle, one brandishing a baton. And then something happened that I did not expect. The baton acquired a new ally. The teenager grabbed it and ran, fleeing with the weapon into an adjacent parking lot. The officers scrambled back into their car and chased after him. Their path was finally cleared, but they had a new mission. The problem, however, was that they had pursued him right into the trap he had set for them, for there was only one way to enter into this parking lot, and this was also the only way to exit it. Moments later, when the teenager re-emerged, he was all alone. He left the parking lot and closed its gate behind him, sealing the two officers inside. Before they could even turn their car around, he had disappeared into the Old City of Acre, losing himself in its winding alleys.

The two officers eventually returned to the scene of the crime. I watched as they stood outside the land gate and interviewed local residents. They pointed to an image on a tablet computer, displaying the footage from the dashboard camera of their car. They wanted somebody to identify the boy. But everyone they asked shook their head. “No, I do not know who that is.” This is how one teenager managed to stay—to stay in a street, to stay in the Old City of Acre. He did precisely what the local authorities have done. He

handled the networks—the conduits—that have allowed the police to act. He aligned himself with their weapons, with their streets, with their gates. A young network-builder.

He also did something else. As he ran into the alleys of the Old City of Acre, he mimicked a guerilla army, an IRA soldier, a black bloc tactician. He attacked swiftly before melting back into his surroundings (Feldman 1991). He circumvented, and then he dissolved. Surprise and fury quickly converted into total passivity (Guevara 1998:21). He put a lot of effort into this dissolution (de Laet and Mol 2000:251). This, all in a way that allowed him to preserve—at least for the day—his continuity in the Old City of Acre. Just like the Acre Municipality, he had learned quite well how to exist as a network object, an Euclidean object, and a fluid object. Just like lime-based building materials, he had learned the practicalities of functional noncoherence, the affordances of having everything come together—but not quite.

### *Departures*

The Old City of Acre is a cityscape wherein familiar domestic spaces have become monumental sites, a place consequentially “full of affection, distrust, loyalty, hatred, amused tolerance, fierce exclusion” (Herzfeld 1991:4). During the course of my fieldwork, I condensed architectural conservation in this historic city into a few feet of paper. Field notes, meeting minutes, archival documents, conservation reports, digital photographs—these were the immutable mobiles through which I carried the Old City of Acre with me to my apartment in the United States. In my living room, I condensed everything again, placing architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre into a dissertation, into a few stacks of neatly stapled pages. Things were, undoubtedly, left out. I have largely erased “the work of secretaries, wives, laboratory technicians, and all sorts of associates” (Star 1990:29), the kind of work that might lead to entirely different conclusions, to conclusions about gender, race, and class.

I hope this is okay. This dissertation was never meant to provide a *better* description of architectural conservation, of government administration, of (settler) colonialism in the Old City of Acre. My intention has never been to write as a more trustworthy guide, as someone who could present a more convincing argument about the same reality, a more precise perspective on a previously uncovered truth. I have not discovered anything new. There is little in these pages that conservation architects, civil

servants, and local residents do not already know. They have already learned that the reach of the Acre Municipality is anything but expansive and authoritative. They have long known that the Israel Antiquities Authority hesitates and falters as it encounters competing institutions, skeptical publics, and unruly materials. They have repeatedly experienced the instabilities and patchiness of civil administration, the inability of policymakers to seamlessly transfer government projects into predictable outcomes. After all, people continued to build illegally in the Old City of Acre. These illegal buildings continued to stay.

Still, I write about the precarities and the uncertainties of local administration in order to prompt readers to (re)imagine the solidities and the intensities of government authority in Israel. I hope that it does so in a way that stimulates discussions about where, when, and how it might be worthwhile to refashion its forms of existence. This dissertation, then, was my attempt to add another conversation to the anthropology of Palestine. Many of the critics of Israeli (settler) colonialism have taught us well. We have learned how to foreground the architect(s) behind Jewish settlement in the region. We have learned to spotlight all those secret plans and private collusions, tawdry practices and clandestine activities, overheated rhetorics and crass muckrackings that have accompanied Jewish-Israeli pursuits of power (Braun and Whatmore 2010:ix). This is how many have been taught to imagine political life in the region (Butler 2004). A medley of conspiracy theories. Smoky back rooms filled with powerful leaders. Straight lines connecting unscrupulous intentions with actual outcomes.

These analytics have been made to articulate with a few well-known motifs within settler colonial studies, themes that position these individual architects alongside the invisible structures, the hidden logics, or the cloaked systems that have shaped the form and content of Jewish settlement (e.g., Bornstein 2002; Rabinowitz 1997; Robinson 2013). Readers are left with a feeling that there is an all-pervasive *something* that can account for the inequalities, the inequities, the injustices found in the region (Stewart 2007:89). The search is for this underlying cause—a structure, a logic, a system. These are the conceptual tools that have allowed many scholars to come to grips with the complexities of power. These are the kinds of things anthropologists have been trained to identify through “the telltale signs inscribed on banal surfaces” (88).

While I sympathize with the *raison d'être* of this research, I think that it overemphasizes the coherence of government institutions and the material reach of individual bureaucrats. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, the world is much too lively. To start, there are all of the nonhumans to consider. There is the need for an expanded political community, one that acknowledges *anything* and *everything* that has the ability to capture others in new relations. Nonhumans can no longer be adequately treated as passive entities, as background characters, as objects of political action or topics of political debate. Perhaps more importantly, though, there is also the sense that terms like *colonial logics* or *settler colonial structures* cannot sufficiently describe the events that have taken place. This is not because the forces these terms try “to name are not real and literally pressing,” but rather these terms have a tendency to leave these forces “looking like dead effects imposed on an innocent world” (Stewart 2007:1).

### *Experiments*

Structures, logics, and systems advance a particular form of anthropological analysis, one where scholars are asked to draw lines between phenomena, to distinguish between “those that drive and those that are driven” (Law 1994:12). Explanation has been reduced to a search for causes and an articulation of their effects, a search to find out *who* or *what* has done the doings. ‘To think’ is ‘to critique’, and ‘to critique’ is to annihilate any and all surface appearances (no matter how contradictory they might be) in favor of something more solid, more real, more singular, more originary (Harman 2013:84). Philosophers call this reductionism. I call it an exercise in cleaning up mess. I have done this too. I have spent most of this dissertation recounting coherent stories about network-builders and network-building. I have discussed how architectural conservation in the Old City of Acre has failed and how it has succeeded, identifying some of the missed connections, some of the moments when things could have been otherwise.

I did this by describing a series of remarkably mundane events. They were about the charcoal lines inscribed on masonry walls and the cracked tell-tales distributed throughout historic buildings. They were about the photographs, the reports, and the applications that allowed ephemeral interactions to enter into new spaces, to connect buildings, bureaucrats, and bodies. They were about a conservation inspector who patrolled the Old City of Acre in search of cement, an illegal building material that helps

salt gobble irreplaceable sandstones, that renders these sandstones less able to carry the loads placed on them. They were about movements and alliances, about the ways in which entities persuaded and interrupted, the ways in which they excluded, annoyed, and detained. After recounting these stories, I learned that the Old City of Acre is a place where few of its historic buildings have been plastered with lime-based materials, where few of its dangerous building citations have been adequately addressed, where few of its illegal additions have been dismantled, where few of its hotel development projects have been actualized. It is a place littered with failed, half-finished projects.

Readers might infer that these failures have been caused by managerial problems—by the inability to adequately coordinate a heterogeneous assemblage of (non)human actants. After all, network-building requires a lot of work. But my attention to the details of architectural conservation was never meant to suggest that there is “a small class of phenomena, objects or events that drives everything else—a suggestion often linked to the belief by the analyst that he or she has understood these root phenomena” (Law 2004:12). It was never meant *to explain*, that is, to replace a purported reality with a genuine reality, tracing how the former is merely derivative of the latter (Harman 2013:84). It was simply meant to highlight how architectural conservation started from particular places—from humble buildings, from tired bureaucrats, from dirty folders. And then it encountered locked doors. Failed experiments. Improper stamps. Inaccurate drawings. These were the things that slowed it down, that caused it to stutter, to stumble, to transform.

By paying attention to these details, I could begin to think through a particular theory of agency. I could illustrate how nobody acts as an agent without the right props. Agency, here, is a precarious achievement, something that is never assured and never guaranteed. It comes in momentary bursts—events. The conservation of a historic building is a fragile process of networking elements together into new associations. It is a task that nobody can accomplish on their own. There are verbal contracts, entrance certificates, antiquities guards, diplomatic gestures. These are the bits and pieces that must be kept in line, stabilized long enough to have any kind of ordering effect. Each bit and each piece provides a different affordance in the maintenance of an alignment. The fortuity of their particular placement fills architectural conservation with all sorts of

precarities and potentialities. With these simple observations, my research questions became descriptive rather than explicative. How do different entities come together? How are different entities coordinated in practice? An incontrovertible concern with cause and effect has been replaced by a concern with *relations*.

Entities relate. They come together. But not always. Not completely. Not forever. Conservation committee members arrived late to conservation committee meetings. Conservation committee meetings got interrupted by requests for cookies, by spilled water bottles. Conservation committee decisions got delayed by overworked civil servants and lost in overstuffed archives. There was also the lime-based plaster that crumbled days after its application. The historic buildings that remained ungentrified but also unsafe. The building inspectors who reported illegal additions without dismantling them. Nobody could predict how any of these entities would behave. There was no way to know how a lime-based plaster would interact with a specific sandstone. There was no way to anticipate how a hotel developer would respond to a building tender. There was no way to ensure that a building inspector would enforce an antiquities law violation. Uncertainties lingered.

I could follow connections and alignments, but they could seldom be deduced or reduced (Stengers 2010:24). Participants became restless and exhausted, unreliable and unpredictable. I needed to depart from epistemologies that begin and end with a knowing subject, with someone who is ready to apprehend the world in order to more effectively act *on* it. These kinds of epistemologies privilege *good* representations, *good* explanations, and *good* reductions. The problem, however, is that these epistemologies can be tricky. They seek hopeful moments of correspondence, moments wherein our explanations might finally be accurate *enough*. This is the important part. These epistemologies strive for certainty, all the while recognizing a field in which uncertainties abound. Writers can always explain events with more detail, with more clarity, with more fidelity. Yet they must find a way to finally get things right, to finally tear appearances down to their foundations, to finally find the smallest or the most basic elements from which all other objects are built (Harman 2013:85). Stated simply: the problem is its own solution.

I do not think that we need *better* stories or *better* explanations. I think we need different stories. We need stories that can deal with the mundane and “with the *fleeting*—that which is here today and gone tomorrow” (Law and Urry 2004:403–404). And we need stories that can grapple with “the *distributed*—that which is to be found here and there but not in between—or that which slips and slides between one place and another.” These are stories about the affordances of ephemerality, about the passing movements of a conservation inspector on her daily patrols through sleepy alleys. They are stories about the authority of administrative decisions, about the puzzled bureaucrats who could not reconcile a decades-old stamp with a contemporary database. They are stories about the efficacy of posted notices, about the publics that ignore, vandalize, or misread them. We need more stories like this. More stories that confront the messiness found in the Old City of Acre, that try to *describe* it rather than *explain* it.

This is not because explanations simply fail to get things right. It is because something else is also happening when we tell these stories. It has often been assumed that the ways in which one writes about (settler) colonialism affect the ways in which readers might imagine or strategize its undoing. A (settler) colonial state, a singular entity filled with agentic individuals constrained by repressive structures, privileges “certain forms of opposition while denying legitimacy to others” (Cooper 2005:231). The exercise of colonial authority is rendered simple in its predictability. There are *real reasons* for discriminatory policies. There are *identifiable causes* of tragic events. (Settler) colonialism becomes a formidable enemy that is somewhere specific even if it is nowhere in particular. It is an enemy that necessitates parliamentary debates, investigative committees, academic conferences, surveys of popular will, periodic elections. It is an enemy that requires the work of tireless individuals, dedicated people who can finally get to the bottom of things.

I wanted to present a different kind of story about the Old City of Acre. A kind of story that does not really look like much of a story. I wanted to find a way to slow down any quick leaps towards reductionism, eschewing evaluative critiques long enough to demonstrate what it might mean to write *against* conclusion (Vohnsen 2017). Those well-versed in literary theory already have a well-equipped repertoire from which to draw. This might include the careful juxtaposition of ethnographic vignettes or the repetitious

foregrounding of fragmentary footnotes. If done effectively, these techniques can *evoke* the precarities of governmental authority as well as the impossibilities of local administration. I tried a different technique: the pinboard. Pinboards are littered with (somewhat) random items. Not everything on them goes together. But there are bits and pieces that can be partially aligned through their juxtaposition. I mean this figuratively *and* literally. Items sit next to each other on the same physical surface. Sometimes they overlap and collide with one another. Yet these items are also disconnected. They are attached to the pinboard separately. Each with its own pin.

When I look at a pinboard, I can identify new relations between one item and another. But I can also do other things. Pinboards change *how* I see relations. I can see relations that are *both* arbitrary *and* purposeful, that are *both* fleeting *and* long-lasting, that are *both* coherent *and* incoherent. I can see the ways that things coexist simultaneously, even if it is only a partial coexistence. When applied to the events I encountered in the Old City of Acre, pinboards have allowed me to confront the messiness of architectural conservation. They make no demands that I sort everything into organized piles, that I turn these piles into coherent stories, into confident declarations. This is how pinboards help to unsettle the concept of analytic closure. They invoke a different kind of expertise, an expertise that is less about being *correct*, about being in *agreement* with reality, than it is about finding new ways to manage fragile alliances, to tinker with (partially) overlapping realities. The world, here, is not something to know. It is something with which to improvise, to wrestle, to handle. Pinboards are case studies of past improvisations. They are tools that scholars can use to work *through* unexpected alignments, intractable problems, unimagined alternatives (Bertoni 2017:31).

Pinboards model a sensitivity to the uncertain, to how one might come to relate to it, attend to it, attune to it. They propose a way of sitting with complexity, convening with it long enough to act *with* it rather than *on* it (Hawkins 2010:121–122). This is why I like pinboards. I could place side-by-side the different versions of government that appeared in the Old City of Acre. I could note how these different governments dealt with surprises, how they managed, negotiated, and accommodated each other. Sometimes they merged into a single entity, into a coherent center of calculation. Often, they did not.



Civil servants took extended breaks. Conservation projects stalled in desk drawers. Approved additions utilized unapproved materials. Lime plasters disintegrated into white flakes. In these quiet moments, the heterogeneous assortment of (non)human actants involved in architectural conservation cohered, but only fractionally—only partially. I think we should be attentive to the kinds of realities these partial alignments hold together. They are realities in which the conservation of historic buildings is made equivalent to the governance of (Palestinian) bodies. They are realities the management of which can inspire creative ways to act in circumscribed, tricky, and precarious situations (Ang 2011:790).

I want to leave readers with the suggestion that there may be no definitive state of affairs. The government might not always be an impenetrable structure, a tightly-knit network of associated entities. It can be a fragile object, something that acquires a new shape with each association that it forms. Its power can be “curious, halting, and vulnerable,” something that is “always made in performance, always subject to being undermined” (Mathews 2011:5). There is the police officer who lost her baton. The police car stuck behind a closed gate. The police investigators who could not locate a favorable witness. The police morphed from something that hits to something that chases to something that investigates. These partial coordinations slowed governance down. They temporalized it. They softened it. But one should not forget that things can be much more surprising than this might suggest. Sometimes it is the loosely built networks and the fractional noncoherences that keep everything together. Just ask the Acre Municipality or the lime-based building materials, the building contractors or the teenage boy. These are the entities that have learned to act *with* uncertainty rather than *on* it, that have learned to *flatten* the ontological landscape rather than *bifurcate* it, that have learned to act as (active or passive) participants *in* a field of action rather than as (good or bad) representations *of* it. This is how I prefer to imagine (scholarly) praxis, as a set of skills through which we learn to take responsibility for our collective actions, through which we learn to tinker with the kinds of realities we might enter into with others (Bains 2006:133–134).

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