WANDERING THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHS THAT ARE NOT HERE

SNAPSHOTS

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אוצרות וكتابة / חגית קיסר // עיצוב / אביבית גרוס-אלון // עריכה / נורמה מוסי
בהיענות לבקשתי, עיריית ירושלים העניקה לי היתר להעתיק צילומים מִתיקים מתהלה של בנייה ללא היתר. כך שיתפה עיריית ירושלים בזכויות היוצרים שלה על הדימוי, והפקידה בקריית העירייה, מאחורי שולחן עמוס לתיקים שלא הוכנו במיוחד עבורי, בידי את הרכוש המדומיין שבבעלותה - הבית המצולם. ישבתי בארכיון המחלקה המשפטית בבניין מספר 8, והצילמתי מתוכם למעלה מחמש מאות צילומים. רובם המוחלט של התיקים ניכרכו בצבע צהוב, המסמן תיק פלילי שנפתח כנגד בנייה ללא היתר על-ידי פלסטינים.

כאלף בתים נבנים ללא היתר במזרח העיר מדי שנה. בארכיון אלפי ועשרות אלפי תיקים העוקבים אחר פעולות בנייה בירושלים, כולל תיקים שנפתחו נגד עבירות בנייה, לצד תיקים העוקבים אחר בנייה לפי היתר. הסיבות לשכיחות הגבוהה של בנייה ללא היתר במזרח ירושלים נטועות אי התאמה בין גידול האוכלוסייה וצריכים של התושבים ובין מדיניות התכנון של עיריית ירושלים במרחב הגאוגרפי של מזרח העיר. מדיניות העירייה אינה מותירה לבעלי הבתים אפשרות אחרת מלבד לבנותם באופן לא חוקי. אף על פי כן, פעולות בנייה ללא היתר הופך, למעשה, לבנייה, לעבריין. התיק פלילי, פלילית, כאשר אין חשיבות משפטית לשאלת הנסיבות האישיות, החברתיות והכלכליות של מבצעי העבירה.

חילוץ הצילומים מתוך התיקים האישיים מאפשר לצפות באופייה האזרחי של הבנייה ללא היתר, שברובו מכיל את קל очерיו של העבריין, ומכיל כאן לפני כלכלו האדריכלי, את דימויו של הבית. החושף את מרחב החוקיות הארכיון כתשתית ופרקטיקה להפללת קהילה שלמה.

במהלך שנות ה-90 הצילום הפך כלי מרכזי בתהליך האכיפה, בהפקת ראיות לקיומה של העבירה ולתיעוד תהליך האכיפה עצמו. yanında העתקים של צווים, תראות, ופרוטוקוליםמבתי המשפט, התווספו מסמכים – צילומים – המניעים דמיון עובדות חותכות ואת ייצורו של משטר אמת שאינה משתמעת לשתי פנים. התוצאה היא כמויות עצומות של תצלומי סانبשוט המצולמים על-ידי המפקחים במהלך עבודתם. הם מתעדים את הבית, את החדירה אליו, את עצמם, ואת הרגעים החולפים במפגש ביניהם ובין התושבים. כמויות הצילומים, והפוטנציאל הפרשני העולה מה démarche בהם, עומדים כמכשול בפני הניסיון הממסדי לסווג ולמיין את הידע הטמון בתיק לכדי אמת אחת וקטגוריה זו או אחרת. יותר מזאת, הפרקטיקות החזותיות הופכות את הביורוקרטיה לא רק לחדרותנית יותר, אלא גם לחדירותית יותר מתמיד למבט ולמעקב.

העניין בצילומים לא מסתיים בחשיפה הפרקטיקות החודרות בתהליך האכיפה; חודרה ככל שיהיה, שימוש לרעה בסמכויות והכוח אינו דבר חדש או מפתיע. השיטוט בצילומים במקומם בארכיון מאפשר להתבונן באופן שבו המנגנון עובד, ולבחון את הנחות היסוד שמכוונות ומצדיקות את פעולותיו, דרך התבוננות בדימוי ובעקבות שנותרו על פניו – כל אלה הן פעולות המותירות עקבות ליצירת המרחב, יצירה, איסוף, שכפול, שימור והפצה של הצילומים, העברתם של מקומות אחרים. הארכיון – אתר מסמכים מונומנטלי, המסדיר ומסגיר את עקבות פעולות המנגנון – מאפשר לייצר זיכרון של מה ש-hero, לשכחה ולשכחה עכשווית, מאולתרת ומאורגנת.

העתקי הצילומים מאפשרים לאתר ולמפות את היחסים הבלתי-נראים והלא-מדוברים הנרקמים תחת כנפיו של החוק. הם מאפשרים לדמיין את התהליך שבו רכוש מצולם יוצר בו את הנכונות שלוותרו למ amd,.addValue למשטר אמת שאינה משתמעת לשתי פנים, ומגדיר תהליך אכיפה של עבירה, על פנים舰ם על פנים. הוא המפץ מקסימלי של הרעיון. עם זאת, נאמן למקור, ולא מבקש לשכפל את האוטוריטה של קודמו, אלא מתערב ומשתתף בה בכדי להיות מקור בעצמו. הארכיון מלא בתיקים אישיים, של למאות ולאלפים, שהם של אוספים ומאגרים של מסמכים ותיעודים. הצילומים הם נתיבים של הוכחה ומאגרים של שיא של ייצוג.}

*The exhibition took place in the "Zochrot" Gallery / December-January / 2009-10 / ר"צ - נווארה*
In response to my request, the Jerusalem municipality gave me permission to copy photographs from files documenting houses which had been built without a permit. By doing so, the municipality made me a participator in its copyright on the images, and deposited with me its imaginary property – the photographed house. I sat in the judicial department's archive, located in building No. 8 at the municipal complex, next to a table loaded with files that weren’t set out especially for me, and copied hundreds of photographs. The majority of the file folders were yellow, the colour indicating a criminal file opened against a Palestinian landowner who had built without a permit.

Each year, about one thousand homes are built by Palestinians in East Jerusalem without a permit. The discrepancy between the size of the population and its needs on the one hand, and the authorities' planning policy, on the other, leaves homeowners no choice but to build illegally. Although people build illegally for reasons grounded in the social and civil contexts, such action is considered a criminal offence, and the particular personal, social and economic circumstances of the so-called offender are irrelevant in the judicial procedures. The builder becomes a criminal by the mere act of building his/her house. In these cases, the infraction file, which usually holds a photograph of the criminal, contains the image of a house. The release of images from their forced confinement in the files is an attempt to visualize the civil character of “illegal” building and to expose the incrimination of a whole community from within the intimacy of the archival infrastructure.

During the 1990’s photography became an increasingly central component of the enforcement procedure, providing evidence of violations and a documentation of the enforcement process itself. Along with copies of court orders, warnings and protocols of court hearings, the files also included original documents – photographs – which allow the observer to imagine incontrovertible facts creating a regime of incontestable truth.

The enormous number of snapshots taken by the supervisors during the course of their work is kept in the archive’s files. Supervisors document the building, the inside of the house, take photos of themselves in the place, and document the transitory moments of contact with its inhabitants. The sheer quantity of photographs that accumulates and the interpretive possibilities they offer raise obstacles in the institutional attempt to classify the information they contain according to a certain category or a particular truth. These visual practices not only make the bureaucracy more invasive, but also make it more penetrable than ever before to outside documentation and scrutiny.

What is interesting about the photographs is not only that they expose the invasive practices involved in the process of enforcing the planning law – abuse of authority and power is neither new nor surprising. It is an opportunity to observe how the mechanism operates and examine the presuppositions related to its visual practices, wandering though these images and tracing back the biographical details of their institutional life. Production, collection, duplication and dissemination of the photographs, their movements from hand to hand and from place to place are activities that leave their traces on the surface of the image, an amalgam of evidences for the production of space. The monumental documentation in the archive, which classifies and reorganizes the traces of the institutional mechanisms, is the raw material of memory which allows us to (re)produce relationships on the ground, between people, and between people and place.

The copies of the photographs in the archive make it possible to locate and map these unseen relationships between people and places and documents, and imagine the process by which photographed property can create imaginary ownership that later materializes in reality and on the ground. I am tracing the surveillance practices of the administrative apparatus with the archived photographs: nonetheless, these reproductions are not necessarily an exact copy of their source, nor do they attempt to duplicate its authority, but rather interfere and engage with it to become a source in itself.

The exhibition in the gallery makes it possible to view the visual mass of administrative documentation, which is compiled and divided into the file index, open and spread like a panoramic landscape. It is an archival document but at the same time an image, a fabrication that calls for personal and singular interpretation. In exhibiting these photographs/documents the archival intimacy is disrupted and changes from private (classified) to public. We are all authorized to view, question, interpret and store this knowledge in our memory.
השיטוט בצילומים מעלה הרוחות דרך חישה מרחוק. תצלומים של צלעות משלבון את אנשי המנהל המרכזיים ומאמנים את מציאותם במישוריות המונעת הפגועים. הצילומים מוסיפים את התוכן המודגש והדמוי. ציונים צבעוניים משוחזרים על הצילום מפ镐 את תאי הנסיגה ומעניין את לדוגמה, התצלומים מספקים היכרות במיקול החשית וההжаダメיה של_phrסכולSadık, 2004. מסייעים לה砗ישנה להימנע מסטייה מהמסלול שהוקבע, כך שכל פגיעה והתערבות בפעילות האורגנית של המקום תהיה נשלטת, מבקרת ומפוקחת.
Wandering through photographs allows for familiarity in remote sensing, as you hover above the happening and above the surface of the photo. Here, the mechanisms of photography and bureaucracy blend together, creating a visual and sensual map that allows for experimental orientation within the workings of the bureaucratic mechanism.

The photographs are marked in red with a coloured pen that guides the eyes along trails of incontrovertible facts which offer a solid foundation for every text or speculation. Like marked trails made in open terrain by the Society for the Protection of Nature, the marks on the photographs implore those wandering through them not to leave the assigned path, so that any damage to, or interference with the organic activities taking place there will be controlled, inspected and supervised.
Two hundred dunams of land equals 300 shekels. That’s what S., who is in charge of the municipality’s Geographical Information System, told me when I asked to buy an aerial photo of Jerusalem from the GIS department. Whether the size of the print is A4 or any size bigger, each 200 dunams will cost you 300 shekels.

I want to buy a photograph, not a piece of land, I told him. But he didn’t have time for silly questions: The size of the printed document doesn’t matter, what matters is the size of the area you’re interested in. I realised that I had entered a circumscribed world of concepts unfamiliar to me, one I’d have to get to know and learn to interpret, a conceptual world which determines exchange relations between the size of a photographed territory and the value of the photograph. S., the GIS person, is a bridge player and a geographer, whose desk is laden with a collection of medals, prizes and gilt trophies. He pointed to the lot’s map on the wall behind him so that I could locate the numbers of the lots I was interested in. I had to decide quickly in order not to waste his time. The only location that came to my mind at the moment was the municipality complex. I chose 170 dunams surrounding it and paid 200 shekels.
A photograph taken at the entrance to a house, apparently on 6 April 2006, or perhaps on 4 June, the time wasn’t 07:34 a.m. The boy looks at the people standing at the entrance, visitors whom he doesn’t recognize, among them an armed man in uniform. He must be waiting for his parents or another adult to arrive and take care of the visitors. His little sister may have heard somebody has arrived, and come to see who’s there. He picked her up and held her, as if to protect her from the unexpected visitors. The people who arrived are the municipal inspectors with the police-soldiers who accompany them, they spoke to each other in Hebrew, a language the boy didn’t understand. A moment later they took out a camera and began taking photographs without looking at him. He watched them carefully. The inspectors weren’t interested in the boy; they photographed a view into the apartment according to what was written on the photo. In some other time and another visit, I immediately recognized the sharp expression in his eyes, that was snapped in the photo. I felt as if we’d known each other for a long time.
A photograph glued onto a file cover, taken from a car through the open window. In the centre of the photograph, a plot of land that has been levelled, on which a building’s foundations can be seen. They're marked with a red circle enclosing them, like police tape around a crime scene.

The inspectors arrive during the day, it's usually the women and children who are at home. Sometimes they look through the window and don't open, one of the inspectors told me. So what do you do? I knock firmly on the door. If she refuses to open I photograph the house through the window bars and question her. Supervisors, not inspectors they correct me, as I was speaking with two of them (P., K. and H. - aliases) in the Building Inspection Department. P. showed me two photographs, in the first one he pointed to himself, standing on a plastic chair with his back to the photographer, taking a picture of the inside of the house through the window. The second photo was the one he took through the window. The image shows a fairly empty room and a boy running, almost falling, who looks at the camera: to his right is a white rectangle that’s been cut out of the photo. What’s that white part? I cut children out of the photo; I filed this without the child because he was nude. K. adds that homeowners often request that their children be removed from the files.
Six months later, on 2 February 2009, I had an appointment with Ophir May, the Director of the Department of Building Inspection, who invited me to meet in response to a letter I had sent him.

I’d like to thank you and Attorney Dani Liebman for allowing me to view files from your archive, and tell you that, in addition to the work on my thesis, I’m planning to display texts and photographs from it in an exhibition to be held in the Zochrot gallery in Tel Aviv. Since the photographs which I used were taken by employees of the municipality, I’d like to credit them by name. I’d be grateful if we could meet to go over the photographs and identify the people who took them. I’ll also be happy to show you my thesis.

When I met with May I got his permission to display the photographs. He also introduced me, for the first time, to three of the inspectors who happened to be in the office at the time. In this visit I had the opportunity to look at the photographs through their eyes and see things I couldn't recognize myself. I could also ask questions on the basis of the information I extracted from the photographs. In their hands, my thesis took the shape of a personal/family album in which they recognized themselves, the photos they had taken and recall places and people with a certain excitement, information I extracted from the photographs. In their hands, the photographs became a personal/family album.

On July 30, 2008 I arrived at the Judicial Department's archives in Building 8 in the municipal complex, during public opening hours. The archive’s employee looked at the signature on the slip of paper I presented to him and welcomed me affably. After thinking for a moment, he seated me at a vacant table loaded with more than 40 files that had been removed from the shelves, apparently for reclassification or transfer to the court. I was sitting in a room that seemed to be an office, near the door to another, inner room that looked like an archive, where all the files were arranged on shelves. I wasn’t supposed to look at the files spread around, some in cartons, others not, but only at those on the table.

That was my territory. While I inhabited it, I felt I had a considerable amount of freedom; no one came by to supervise or check to see what I was doing.

At one point an archive employee noticed that I was detaching documents so that I could remove the photograph from the file and take a picture of it in its entirety. For a moment he was alarmed, but then just told me to make sure to put everything back in its place.
Ha-makom – Hebrew for 'the place', is reiterated, written by hand over the photographs with red, blue or black marker pen to mark the location of the house. The meaning of 'place' is the indication of something, of a particular portion of space, of some sort of existence. Things and people can be recognized and identified by their place, the place can be identified by them. It means local, particular, specific. The aerial photograph is marked with this indication which guides the viewer and directs one's attention to a particular point in the picture, defining it from others similar to it. Yet rather than indicating a particular place – a house owned by a certain family – it is a uniform sign awarded to all houses in all files, by all the agents who handle these files and intervene in them.

The place is each of the individual houses and, at the same time, all of them together - an offence, a crime scene, and the crime itself.
Two large red circles incriminate the external walls of a building in Jabel Mukaber. Like landowners who mark the boundaries of plots of land to indicate ownership, the supervisors mark the boundaries of plots on the surface of the photo to indicate the space of illegality. Illegal construction is located in a number of ways: one is by regular patrols in the area. Each pair of supervisors is responsible for a specific geographical area, they know which buildings are being built legally and are supposed to be familiar with the status of the land or the buildings in their area. They’re expected to notice unusual activity. The second way is locating through aerial photographs, and the third is through residents’ complaints to the Building Inspection Department in East Jerusalem. In an informal conversation, I was told that 90% of the illegal construction identified by the Building Inspection Department comes from information provided unofficially by informers.
31 May 2001. A photo of a hill in the distance with a mark, apparently made with a green pen – it’s hard to make out the details. Another photo shows a closer view. It’s a green fence around a building site. I show P. the photo and he immediately recalls – The Marzouk family house. I was surprised how quickly he retrieved this single photo from his memory. How do you know? I don’t just tour around the field, but around the photos too. He moved to look at the aerial photo on the computer screen; with a mouse-click he drags the picture and looks at one point after another, searching for the house of the Marzouk family to show me what it looks like today, after years have passed. I watched him touring the aerial photograph and wasn’t able to follow his movements; everything in the photograph looked the same to me. He slid the photo across the screen, rummaging in different directions, like you’d look for a small object in a loaded drawer.
The municipality’s Geographical Information System (GIS) is one of the first stations in the process of locating an infraction and collecting evidence against the potential offender. They provide the inspectors with photographs from the GIS archive, and order new and updated photographs of the area to compare with older ones to identify changes that have occurred. Inside the architecture of the files loaded with documents, snapshots are filed haphazardly in no particular chronological order, some stapled to a page, pasted on cardboard or cut out, threaded into the file through holes punched in their margins, and others inserted in envelopes which I sometimes found to be empty. The aerial photographs, on the other hand, are kept in special plastic sleeves, separate from the other documents and accompanied by a written report. They have a special status, one that hints at their high financial value as well as the esteem in which they’re held, reflecting an almost sterile truth. On one such photograph, I find the mark made by a blue felt pen enclosing the house in parentheses, separating it from the rest of the photo like a translator’s parenthetical comments inserted into the original text.
The landscape in the aerial photograph is succumbing to a scientific order which the human mind can decipher, grasp and control. Decoded by specialists, the interpretation of an aerial photograph is an evaluation, or more correctly, the confirmation of some truth about the photographed landscape which was fixed in the image for the purpose of examination. The specialist's eyes seem to be disconnected from his body, as he presents his view as neutral and unbiased. He declares:

"My area of expertise: consultant and expert in the field of mapping and aerial photography. I also serve as an external consultant to the Ministry of Defence and to the IDF - I am an authorized supplier."

His report is the basis for beginning a follow-up operation, opening a file, phrasing an indictment, and taking many snapshots documenting various developments in the field. The specialist in decoding aerial photographs is a major actor in laying the initial groundwork for the enforcement performance.
The injunction is an order which must be implemented without any additional hearing and requires no further approval. In order for it to be issued, various messengers employed by the department must organize the justifications and evidence to prove that it is necessary. They provide the required documentation, collect and distribute material, obtain signatures, and implement procedures. P. tells me, We create the file in cooperation with the police. To say we’re not liked would be an understatement. I wouldn’t even consider going out without an escort, and every time we go out and take photos I know that I have to document as much as I can, so I always take as many pictures as possible because when we look at the photos at the office, more questions often arise, and we usually can’t return the following day because no police are available. The best thing would be to have four cameras on my head, directed four directions at once.
You know this is a dramatic moment? Ophir May, the director of the Construction Inspection Department, pointed at some words that were scribbled on the other side of a photograph that I photographed. No, why is it dramatic? - It says “I agreed to give a deferment for the execution of the injunction” which means that the demolition order was postponed. This is a dramatic moment for a family.

It is as though the supervisor embodies the camera. P. is presenting his photography in a most technical way, as a mechanism for fixing an irrevocable truth. In their hands photography is a tool for closed-circuit tracking that operates according to the judicial requirements of the law. Like CCTV, the camera the inspectors use for tracking aspires to provide a comprehensive picture of the offence, but unlike CCTV, the camera is mobile and able to think and plan its next steps.
am very discreet; I don't stop and chat with them. People recognize you after seven years on the job, right? Do you feel safe doing it? - No, people don't recognize me, not really. I do it because I feel it's for the bigger good, to make them feel better, safer. - But I am sure you recognize the place, memorizing how to get to it. - But how does it work, do you actually open the photograph while walking to the delivery number. This is the messenger, delivering municipal orders to houses in East Jerusalem which are not connected to the top one has the same number that appears on the screen. The man explains to me: 528 is a record number, he says, and 4 is a pink opaque circle that a man is pointing at. He holds a pen in his hand and in the other, a stack of letters, official letters, the top one has the same number that appears on the screen. The man explains to me:

On a computer screen is a view of a neighbourhood from above, on top of it is a big red number 528/1. Underneath the number is a pink opaque circle that a man is pointing at. He holds a pen in his hand and in the other, a stack of letters, official letters, the top one has the same number that appears on the screen. The man explains to me:

On a computer screen is a view of a neighbourhood from above, on top of it is a big red number 528/1. Underneath the number is a pink opaque circle that a man is pointing at. He holds a pen in his hand and in the other, a stack of letters, official letters, the top one has the same number that appears on the screen. The man explains to me:

On a computer screen is a view of a neighbourhood from above, on top of it is a big red number 528. 528/4, with a red and white number above it, is for other details, he explains, as well. He shows me a red line on a map that indicates the street and a small red circle that represents the delivery number. The man explains:

On a computer screen is a view of a neighbourhood from above, on top of it is a big red number 528. 528/4, with a red and white number above it, is for other details, he explains, as well. He shows me a red line on a map that indicates the street and a small red circle that represents the delivery number. The man explains:

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On a computer screen is a view of a neighbourhood from above, on top of it is a big red number 528. 528/4, with a red and white number above it, is for other details, he explains, as well. He shows me a red line on a map that indicates the street and a small red circle that represents the delivery number. The man explains:
The messenger who delivers the injunction exposes the complexity of the bureaucratic mechanism. As a Druze, he plays an important role in translating and representing the law to a population seen as a threat to Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. He is able to communicate the regime’s messages discreetly, without causing an encounter that might be interpreted as a source of danger to the residents, without threatening them - rather making them feel at ease. He animates the injunction, and gives it a human form, and a familiar face. He finds a common language with the residents and thereby gives them an incentive to obey the law. The order he delivers is clearly but not simply, the law; it has a face, a body and a cultural identification, it expresses feelings, empathy, it lies, and hides. He was happy to help me in any way he could, so we exchanged phone numbers during that coincidental meeting, but later he avoided setting-up another meeting.

Like the messenger, when I met and talked with municipal employees I also presented parts of my identity while hiding others – I was the researcher, the photographer, the student, the Jerusalemite. And they, I presume, also saw the person standing before them as the likeable, raven-haired girl. Where’s she from? Is she a Yemenite? In order to bypass the closed-to-the-public obstacle, my official letters to the judicial department and two weeks of electronic communication were not enough. It was the unexpected visit I paid to the office of Attorney Dani Leibman, the municipality’s Assistant Legal Advisor, that got me the signed authorization to look at photos in the archive’s files. The visit was brief and contrary to my expectations my request was easily fulfilled. In the archive, I sat amongst the employees and went through the files without interference, I was an outsider but only because I actually came from within – an Israeli citizen, a Hebrew speaker and a woman among men, decision-makers. I got the feeling that I was no longer just another citizen in public reception hours, rather I became an interlocutor and, if only temporarily, part of the inner circle.
The file is not only a container holding all sorts of documentation, but it is also a means of communication among various people in the inner administrative circle, and they pass it to one another as if it was their own private property. For a while I also seemed to be part of that inner circle of licensees; I had free access to the files, like the judge, the lawyer, the supervisor or the employee in the archive.

The category “west” does not necessarily refer to an actual geographical reality, but hints at the reorganization of space that will be consistent with, or allow the existence of, a categorical ethnic separation between Jews and Arabs. The political struggle over the local geography is fragmented into the acts of classification and categorization which on the one hand, marks the geographical space of illegality and on the other, a space of legality within the archive.

The job of the two men in the archive is primarily to keep it organized, to retrieve the files that are needed each day in court, and to keep track of the files’ movements. One of them explained how hard it is to keep track of the files – an inspector can come and take one file, he says. I’ll note that he has it but he could pass it on to other inspectors, or to a lawyer, without notifying me. Many files have gotten lost that way; today, for example, I’m missing four files that have to go to court. Sometimes I pester the inspectors when I see they haven’t returned a file, I go to their offices and look in their cabinets. There could be as many as 300 files there… Do you think that he knows what he has got there?

The supervisor in the archive, and a man working there, told me that the division refers to West and East Jerusalem.

In the archive and between the municipal open-space offices, inspection and control over construction in Jerusalem seems to be plainly bureaucratic and disconnected from ideology. Yet the political is there, like a thin, transparent membrane that can tear and adhere to someone who would make the wrong move. I was a fly on the wall in the archive and was encouraged to feel comfortable and at home. The employees were friendly, they made me coffee, reminded me to eat lunch, and even offered to arrange a student-job for me. Only one of the 40 files on the table before me concerned a building owned by Jews, a place which used as a Talmud Torah school for orthodox Jewish children. Documents regarding the classroom, on Winograd Street in Neve Ya’akov, in East Jerusalem, had been put in a file with a blue cover, a colour signifying “West Jerusalem”. Apparently the person who used the blue folder wanted to save himself the trouble of copying the information about the building and its owner, and simply cut out and pasted on it part of the cover of the previous file, which was pink, indicating a building violation in the western part of the city. What do the colours of the files signify? One of the archive’s employees said they’re divided into buildings belonging to Arabs and buildings belonging to Jews. Later I was told by another archive worker that the division refers to West and East Jerusalem.
It is the supervisors who originally open a file. On the cover they write all the details they managed to gather, for in the administrative and first phase of the enforcement process, the builder’s identity may be still unknown and will be verified in court procedures. At this stage the file is moved and kept in the judicial archive.

Judicial procedures can last more than ten years, and the files are actively used all through this period. Their covers become worn out and torn, sometimes the whole thing is held together with a rubber band, sometimes not, and pieces of it are held or banded depending on the courtesy of the beholder. The files’ covers are extremely revealing: they tell much about the object’s ordeals through the years, hinting at its social biography. Almost every file has a picture of the house stapled to its cover; on some photographs someone had written “do not tear off!” (Lo Litlosh! in Hebrew) insinuating previous cases in which files were lost or left unidentified due to the absence of the photograph on which heavy reliance is placed. Some files had their cover changed at a certain time, and the photograph which was previously glued or stapled to it was cut out, punched with holes, and attached along with the other photographs and documents inside. It then becomes thick with cardboard, stapled and punched with several holes. Hand-written text, in some cases, has taken over every free space on the cover. First, the basic details are written in bold letters. But what are the basic details? It is not uniform on all files. Is it the name of the builder, an ID number, or the file’s ordinal number? Is the name of the neighbourhood/village required or only the house’s co-ordinates on the map? Is it all of these together? It’s hard to say, some files had all of these details, some didn’t.
The architecture of the file is the process and the product in the creation of space of illegality in Jerusalem; it is an infrastructure as well as a shelter which assures the creation of a secured space on the one hand, and a forfeited space on the other. The space of the file is one of authorized participation and another of determined fragmentation, breaking a pattern of civil life into miniature singular infractions.

A corner between two brick walls, dead-end laid on a flat surface. On the seam with the ceiling, each wall was punched with two holes. It seems the photographer is documenting the means for constructing a house. What kind of authority does this photograph have in the world? How can one describe its evidential value? It could have been taken anywhere, anytime; is it intended to prove the existence of a wall, a brick corner, somewhere in space and time? The flash-lit wall reflects back at the photographer and illuminates his ways of thinking; it seems he is not preoccupied with the possibility of scrutiny, that his authority will not be questioned. He is taking the photograph of a dead-end, a document for 'internal' use, above scrutiny and 'classified'.
This is not our house, she says. I repeat the name written in Hebrew on the cover of the file – Nawal Hassan Qara’in, from Silwan. She compares the identity card number written below the name with hers; it doesn’t match, but the grandfather’s name, Hassan, does.

There can’t be another Nawal Hassan Qara’in in Silwan, she tells us, and We don’t have balconies, you can see for yourself.

Two red arrows drawn with a red marker on a blue sky above the house belonging to Ta’ir Farouk Qara’in in Givati Parking Lot. That’s our house – she points to the house in the photo. The family moved the entrance door to the other side, to the alley between the buildings, because the parking lot is no longer there. A deep hole has been dug instead, right against the outer walls of the house. Elad, an organization aimed at expanding Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem, had bought the land and began an archaeological salvage excavation in the parking lot before starting the construction. But the construction plans were never legally approved. The excavation on one side of the house was halted, she says, after a petition to the High Court of Justice was submitted by 25 Palestinian families, including the Qara’ins, complaining about the work being done in the parking lot which made a terrible noise all day long and caused serious structural damage to their homes - sinking floors, collapsed ceilings, cracked walls and floors. The court told us there’s a pending demolition order over our house, she says, but they don’t know what will happen with it. They have lived in the house for ten years already, the inspectors don’t come that often, but every month they pay fines to the municipality. So far they’ve had to pay almost 200,000 shekels, and they’re still paying 1500 shekels every month.

We get up to leave, and say goodbye. Only then does she tell us: two days ago a Jewish man shot her son near their home, at the entrance to the City of David, a controversial archaeological and tourist site, directed by the Elad foundation.
There is the keeping track of construction being held on the ground and there's also keeping track of keeping track. The house is copied and inserted in the archive and then copied again and again for the various purposes of those who use it. Instructions are written on the file by hand, advancing the mechanism of reproduction: Please copy; please photocopy; to be scanned. The copy is marked, folded, passed from one hand to another, undergoes wear and tear, returns to the file and sometimes copied again, even if it no longer has much resemblance to the original document, it is filed and kept in the file. In the snapshots they take, the inspectors copy the house into the file, they take photos of the bedroom, children's room, kitchen, toilet, bathroom, living-room, all appear in the file and become imaginary public property. Later I realized that since I copied the images from the files, these private spaces became also my imaginary property.

A photo of a house, apparently taken in Abs-Tor in August, 1997. Its file has been open for more than twelve years. The photo-print was originally included in the file, holes were punched on its side and it was threaded through the flexible metal clips holding it in place. Some copies were made out of it, and later it was taken out of the metal clips and was glued onto the file's cover. It was also stapled down in places where the glue didn't hold. Still later it was cut off the cover, which must have been replaced, had holes punched in it again and was reinserted into the file. One photocopy of the this photo-print had been folded in half with other papers that were attached to it in such a way that a wide vertical strip of the image had been worn out at the fold. That copy had been photocopied and folded again, and across it a thin line of the image had been worn out again, at the fold.
The private house in the archive is the imaginary property of the apparatus which acts upon it. The image of the building is wrung out, worn from use and erased over the years, leaving traces for each and every act of the apparatus and their reduplication over the image and consecutively over the house and its inhabitants. Fulfilling the authorities' demands becomes an integral part of the daily routine of residents subjected to building inspections and enforcement. The supervisors show up at the house at certain times to check whether the court decision has been implemented, or to deliver warnings and injunctions. Yet between inspection visits, the presence of the authorities remains, embodied in efforts to keep up with the huge payments and the needed expenses for living. Fines amounting to hundreds of thousands of shekels are divided into obligatory monthly payments. Non-payment can result in arrest and additional fines that are added to charges imposed on arrears. The financial burden becomes part of the daily routine undermining the stability of the home and of its inhabitants, who are bound in a life of debt. Efforts to keep up with the payments also represents acceptance and obedience that can hold a promise or an anchor for the physical structure of the house, the conditions for whose stability are in the hands of the authorities.
A composition of four photographs printed out from digital files, arranged in what seems to be an official document that includes the dates when they were taken, the number of the file to which they belong, the archive's record number and a logo of the Jerusalem Municipality. A laundry basket and a bucket in a squat toilet, a living room furnished with lots of personal belonging, clothes, and framed pictures on the wall. A young man sitting at the entrance to the room, clothes are strewn around him, he is hunched and seems weak. He might have sat down to put on the shoes next to him, or maybe he was asked to sit quietly while the soldiers and supervisors check out his ID card and tour his house.
In the computer file into which I copied the photographs I took at the archive, I know which photo belongs to which file according to the order in which they appear. Collecting and organizing a large number of photos requires paying careful attention to details and meticulous follow-up. I tried to photograph the file’s cover before opening and photographing the photos inside, but occasionally my attention wandered and I photographed the cover only after I had closed the file. Sometimes I looked at the photo index and was unsure to which file a particular photo belongs. For example, one photograph was printed twice and appeared twice in the archive, one of its copies was folded on its side. I took a photograph of each one of the prints without noticing it was the same picture and only now I find the two copies which appear on my list in different locations, which means, in two different files. I can’t recall whether it was located in two different files, it’s complicated to track the source of the mistake, and sometimes the source itself can be a mistake.

That’s what I wrote about this photo a few months ago. When I tried to relocate the couple in order to get their permission to show the photograph, I discovered that the two of them apparently aren’t a couple, nor do they live in the building indicated in the file that I photographed. A. and I went round and round the blocks that had changed shape since the photos were taken, until we recognized the building with the purple curtains. At the entrance a young girl was photographed standing with her arms crossed on her chest. The man from the couple's photographs stands opposite her, in the same cardigan with the grey geometric design. He is looking at the documents brought by the inspectors, accompanied by Border Police officers. By now the entrance has already been built, enclosed with a gate and seemed to be well kept. A banister had been added to the stairs. We called a few times outside the locked gate, and finally a young woman on the upper floor let us into the guest room at the front of the house. The room was wood-panelled, and had a warm, enveloping atmosphere, it contained pot-plants to which considerable attention had been paid. That’s Manal, my daughter, an older woman who joined us a moment later told us with an affectionate smile looking at the photo of the girl in front of the house. She said that her husband had already been imprisoned a few times for non-payment of fines for illegal construction; recently he has exchanged more prison time for months of unpaid community service. We showed her the photos of their house and asked if she recognises the couple in the picture. She knew the man, and mentioned his name, he is a Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem. He works for the municipality, they told me, and always comes with the supervisors. What’s his job? They didn’t know exactly, maybe to translate and help in delivering the orders to the residents. They didn’t recognize the woman. She’s not from here.

I went back to my list of photos; maybe I’d made a mistake when I connected the photograph of the man in the sweater and the girl, Manal, with the photo of him with the woman at the entrance to the house. But the order of the photos clearly indicates that the two photographs where located in the same file. Could it be that the photographed woman was just a coincidental visitor, and this is why they didn’t remember her? Or perhaps someone who had used the file had erred in including both photos of the man in the cardigan in the same file?
I felt strange and uncomfortable when I sat down in the guest room that I recognised without ever having visited it. A young man opened the door for us, I immediately recognized the look in his eyes. I also recognised his little sister who had peeped round the door to see who arrived. She had really grown. We weren’t invited into the house; he sat us down in the guest room adjoining the entrance, it was a small room that was more decorated than it appeared in the photo, with golden lampshades and adorned ceiling. We sat waiting; the father wasn’t home and someone went to get him. I placed the photographs on the table and took out the one showing the man we were waiting for. In the photo he was seated on the same couch on which we sat, holding his little daughter on his knees. When I showed the photo to P. he told me that it was taken during questioning. He needed a flat surface to fill in the investigation form so he sat at the table which isn’t visible in the photo; the man in the photo is looking at him. His partner took the picture while he was questioning and recording the answers.

A few minutes later the father arrived and sat to our left on the couch. He works in a nearby pharmacy and arrived well-dressed, in a suit, playing with the Misbaha (prayer beads) between his fingers. His wife followed him: she was wearing a burqa, her head was uncovered and she had short grey hair. Shortly afterwards a few of her female relatives who lived nearby also entered; suddenly the room was full of people. They looked at the photos of their house repeatedly, passing them from one another.

We didn’t stay long. The father told us that there were no problems with the house it was built a long time ago with a permit. The problem, he says, is with the lower floor, the shop, whose ceiling is a little higher than is permitted. He received the building permit in 1999, but in 2003 the regulation changed and the permit was cancelled. Since then he’s been paying monthly fines that have become tens of thousands of shekels, in addition to over 12,000 shekels in fees for a lawyer and an engineer.
He doesn’t understand when the inspectors photographed the house, and why? There’s no problem with the house, only with the floor below. How did they enter the rooms, and what were they looking for? The father remembers the day he sat for questioning in his living room. He said the inspectors don’t show up frequently, he could tell by what the daughter is wearing that the photos were taken during two different visits.

They don’t let us live, he says. Today I can only give my children what’s necessary, I can’t promise them more than that. He speaks in Arabic; I don’t understand most of it and A. translates. I can see what she cannot translate: he raises his hand and clutches his throat, kanquna, they’re choking us, he said once, and clutched his throat three or four more times during the conversation. I felt as if I was unwillingly duplicating the strangling grip, that chokes him and his house with the on-going reduplication of the image.

The father was willing for the photographs of him and his house to be exhibited, and after a brief conversation with the lawyer allowed me to use them. Although we hadn’t discussed it, it was clear that even though he didn’t hold the copyright, the rights to the images taken inside his home, without his knowledge or agreement, belonged to him, and him alone.

What is seen in the photograph - the house in the photograph as well as the photograph itself - is The Place, it can be felt and controlled from a distance. The place reproduces a defined space for an internal discourse and a shared memory that allows the supervisors and other viewers to develop a close relationship by getting to know the photographed house and its inhabitants. This relationship deepens with time through the ongoing use and reduplication of the image. The image, which is kept in the municipality’s judicial archive, is a copy of the house on the ground: it allows the silent exchange between the source and its duplication, between belonging and territory, and between the copyright of the photograph and the ownership rights to the house.
Gluing order for cessation of work 29/7/03 was written underneath the photograph pasted on a sheet of municipal stationary paper. The photo shows a window or an entrance under construction; the order was stuck on the stones of the frame and is almost invisible among them. There is no postal delivery service for the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem so affixing orders on the external walls of houses is considered part of the supervisors' routine. Such orders can include an Administrative Demolition Order in which demolition can take place within 24 hours and 30 days from the moment the order was affixed. Sometimes orders blow away in the wind, are soaked by rain and fall off, or just disappear. In such cases, the photo of the order allows the inspectors to claim later in court that they acted appropriately and according to regulations.
July 30, 08/file/2006/unknown family house/Shuafat Ref. Camp

July 30, 08/file/1998/Abu Khdir family house/Shuafat
I hereby confirm that I glued this order to the external wall of the above building on 8 November 2007, at 10:29 a.m. My name://Signature://

H, a supervisor working for years in the city’s eastern district, says that he writes on the photos so he can find his way around more easily. He says that with the photographs his mind is constantly shifting from two to three dimensions. Issuing a demolition order for a building which isn’t yet ready for dwelling requires careful documentation of every detail. I take photos of missing plaster, if there are no doors or windows, and make sure I cover all sides of the building; we now also take a panoramic photo. H. says that over time, as they gain more experience, the supervisors improve their documentation methods, which leads to tighter enforcement. After years on the job, and hundreds of hours in court, he’s learned how the lawyers think, their strategies in court hearings, and has developed methods that anticipate their questions in order to supply firm evidence.

It’s a job with a tremendous amount of power, he told me; a demolition order is a brutal act. More than once I’ve showed up during a demolition and, to tell you the truth, my heart broke. I remember once standing in front of a building and saw a child go inside for a moment, retrieve a toy and leave. I represent the law, he said, I have no choice, it’s black and white. We provide the information and everything goes to the bosses who decide what to do next. What’s most important is to retain one’s humanity, not to become dulled.
On July 22 I was in the municipality’s Building Inspection Department. That afternoon a group of employees leaned into the cubicle of Yaron Elias, the Demolition Coordinator of the department, they were all watching a news broadcast on a small portable TV. It was live, shortly after a young Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem drove a tractor down King David Street, hitting pedestrians and vehicles. A few minutes later he was shot to death by an armed civilian.

After the group had dispersed I went over to Elias and asked whether he had a few minutes to talk with me. He was busy and asked me to wait while holding an aerial photo printed on a sheet of A4 paper, on which a small area was marked with a red circle. I asked him what the photo was, he said it was an aerial photo showing the home of the man who ran people over with the tractor on King David Street half an hour earlier. I was surprised at how quickly information about the man's identity had reached the department and already turned into a marked target on the photo. I wondered what Elias had to do with the location on the photo; perhaps he wanted to find out whether the man's family had a file on illegal construction? but in what way was the incident connected to his role as Demolition Coordinator? I already realized during my previous meeting with Elias that I couldn’t ask him such questions. He had made it clear to me that he has no interest in discussing his role in the department, It has nothing to do with my personal point of view, or with any other person’s; it's about the job. Whoever doesn’t understand that, isn’t cut out for the job.
Warnings are delivered by the supervisors and the forces that accompany them to whoever is present on the construction site or at home. The Warning is phrased and printed in Hebrew, the official text is sometimes translated into Arabic ad hoc and handwritten next to the Hebrew text, the original is left with the recipient and a copy remains in the file. In the Warning, the builder is ordered to stop all building activities and return the site to its previous state; in case the order is not fulfilled, you will be prosecuted in court. The Warning is a detail, a trace of a working mechanism of deterrence which operates in the particular geographical area of Jerusalem. The police and army forces who accompany the supervisors are present in the Palestinian public space which is expropriated on a regular basis, with fixed and unexpected checkpoints and patrols. Furthermore, the construction of the Separation Barrier threatens to disconnect many homes from the city, their livelihood, and their organic environment. The private house becomes the only refuge for the community of residents who are deprived of their civil rights in the public sphere. The ongoing surveillance of the private homes built with or without a permit, pushes and displaces a whole community into nothing more than zero living space.

The simple privilege of being protected from constant exposure, scrutiny and surveillance is a basic condition for developing an empowered position from which one can resist such measures that expropriate one’s right to privacy. The resistance that can be seen in the photographs is not directed only at the mere act of photography, rather, it is visible in the anxious and threatened faces of the photographed people, telling of the impossibility to oppose, having been left with no choice but to accept the power the photographer represents. The collection of these photographs links together many acts of building which are turned singular and controlled within the archival space. The release of the images from their forced confinement in the files is an attempt to visualize the fragmented and singular building acts as a civil movement of people who are trying to take possession of their expropriated civil rights. This collection of photographs is a small detail out of a vast quantity of photographs in the archive, the snapshots taken by supervisors during their work is probably the most comprehensive testimony one can find of the ongoing surveillance alongside quiet civil resistance. In light of this, the demolition of houses seems like a special spectacle arranged by the regime in order to disguise and distract attention from the ongoing rehearsal of power from within the intimacy of the archive. The administrative use of photography enables the dissemination of evidence by a brutal policy that holds the physical and conceptual home under a constant reality of danger, close proximity to disaster, and everlasting distance from a future.
On Monday, March 16, 1998, you parked your vehicle: municipal vehicle No. 3338, type: Toyota, colour: Green, on an unpaved area in Silwan, Wadi Hilweh, next to a hill supported by concrete buttresses. You came out of the vehicle holding white sheets of paper. Later you stood behind the vehicle while another man, with whom you arrived, stood five meters away from you, holding a camera. Your associate photographed you holding the papers in your hand, outstretched toward the hill behind you. You seemed to be saying: Look, here it is! I was there, I saw it with my own eyes. As if a photo of the building isn’t enough to prove that it existed. You know that the image is unstable by nature, that the same photo of the building may, in someone else’s hands, speak with a different voice, and you want to close that breach. The building isn’t the subject of your photo; you yourself are. Your presence as a representative of the law is the matter in the photograph, you determine the image’s scale of objectivity with your body, as well as the relationship between the truth and the image. Your body is the original fingerprint, the signature that proves the authenticity of the incriminating evidence. You embody the law, and the law materializes through you.
זכויות היוצרים לגבי הצילומים המקוריים שבארכיון שמורות לעיריית ירושלים.

דונאם, צילמה: נועה בן שלום.

ディוקן עם תרגום לאנגלית / צ'רלס ס. קיימן

הגהה אנגלית / דיאנה רובנенко

עריכה לשונית בעברית / אפרת אבן-צור

// תודות //

אופיר מאי / מנהל המחלקה לפיקוח על הבנייה / עו"ד דני ליבמן / סגן היועמ"ש / ירון אליאס / מתאם הריסת במחלקה לפיקוח על הבנייה / פ.ק.ח המפקחים


DECEMBER 2009

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