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► **To cite this version:**

Leyla Dakhli. Archiving in an Age of (Counter)Revolutions. *Altered States. The Remaking of the Political in the Arab World*, 2022, 9781003229094. halshs-03924550

**HAL Id: halshs-03924550**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03924550>**

Submitted on 5 Jan 2023

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# 3 Archiving in an Age of (Counter)Revolutions

Leyla Dakhli

## Abstract

The Arab uprising and revolutions have revealed the strength of protest, but also the political apparatus of police, the military and the deep state networks that support them. For archivists and archival activists, the uprisings have also shown the difficulty of anchoring national memory of post-colonial states. Memory and the archives are crucial components of modern democratic states. The question is what states do with memories of failed and defeated revolutions. Today, the proliferation of “places of memory” for the revolutions on the Internet, in Art and even in public space creates a sanctification of traces of the struggle, but also of its erasure. All this affects the revolutions themselves and plays a part in the history to come and the very possibility of new struggles. Some archives are produced by private persons, de-materialized and shown on the web, while others exist at the mercy of foreign funding. Even so, this chapter argues, archives produce institution. By disentangling the notions of state that underwrite archival ventures, this chapter aims to capture the tension that lies in the gap between state institutions for conservations and the civil society’s production of memories. It describes a position for historians and historical narratives that take seriously the access and accessibility of the documentation as well as their very own production and creation as archives of today.

**Episode 1:** In March 2011, a rumor spread in Egypt: officials of the State Security Investigation Service were reportedly destroying their files. On March 4 and 5, crowds gathered in front of the buildings in Alexandria and Cairo, demanding that the destruction of the archives be stopped.<sup>1</sup>

Some demonstrators see vehicles full of files passing in front of them and then grab these documents in an act of what we might call “requisitioning the archives of the repression.” This episode, and many others like it in countries ranging from (the soon to be former) East Germany to Libya in the aftermath of Ghaddafi’s fall, illustrates how archival concern can enter a revolution. It turns revolutionaries into improvised curators, fighting against the disappearance of documents held as evidence, prosecutorial evidence to justify their claims, evidence of the surveillance to which they have been subjected. Transparency and availability of state archives, i.e. the archives produced by the various state services – or at least the archives of the newly ex-regime – are then considered as pillars of its democratization. In this regard, the actions of the Egyptian revolutionaries signified their desire for justice and at the same time the need to affirm the continuity of the state in order to do justice. They were against the disappearance of the archives of the previous regime (that of Mubarak) because the new reign, which they hoped would be fairer, must be based on the knowledge and judgment of what precedes it. At the end of this episode, the State Security Investigation Service (*Amn al-dawla*) became the National Security Service (*al-Amn al-qawmi*), thereby symbolically signifying the re-appropriation of this service by what could be called the national interest.

**Episode 2:** From the first weeks of the uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Syria, images were deposited in profusion on social networks and on Internet channels. After some time, some people started talking about archives, living archives, a documentation that comes with mobilization and protest. Each document, often videos, almost exclusively images, was brandished as a testimony for the time after the revolution, to express the fact that the demonstrators are indeed there and that they cannot be muzzled again. The archive, in this sense

of a singular entity, very quickly becomes a part of the fight for justice. In Syria, it took a very specific form when demonstrators started adding date and place to their photos and videos.

Whether in the case of raids on state archives or the profusion of documentation that “makes archives,” what is clear is that the question of the archive, in plural or singular, is revolutionary from the outset. The archival gesture of protest is caught in tension between the gesture of tearing archives away from institutions (thus from their destruction or concealment) and that of producing archives by collecting the words of the actors; a tension between accumulating evidence and accumulating memory, although it is clear that the two movements are intertwining.

These actions are not obvious. Some revolutions destroy the archives, making a clean cut with the past. What is at stake here is the link between memory and justice as well as the one that establishes the revolutionary rupture (or continuity). In this sense, revolutionaries most often work for the continuity of the state while overthrowing the despised regime. They break the link between regime and state, each in their own way. Access to archives or creation of documentation which may have the status of archives is part of a utopian vision that creates a community. The imaginary of “collective ownership” is convened by the archive (Mbembé 2002). The question I want to address here is whether the collectivity contributes to blurring the frontier between state and society.

When we look at the state from the perspective of the archives, it can be viewed as one of the empirical places that represent the state, one of the “practices of the modern age” that Timothy Mitchell refers to (Mitchell 1991: 78). The state is reflected in the architecture of state archives. This reflection however is not a static one. It involves many actors and different conceptions of the state as it is manifested in the archive, its preservation, its constitution, its access.

The idea of this chapter is born from the observation of the realities and (often contrasting) imaginaries related to archives and the acts of archiving. As part of a joint reflection on how the state is affected by the events that have shaken the Arab world since 2010–2011, it is necessary to observe the places of the archive, their semantic and semiotic shifts, their positions in relation to the power (regimes, states) to understand what is at stake today. Two aspects stand out in this regard: the opening (even sometimes in a very ephemeral way) of once inaccessible or invisible state archives, as occurred in Egypt and Yemen in 2011 and is still occurring in Tunisia; and the multiplication of private archiving initiatives, documenting revolts and revolutions but also older memories. Both raise several questions this chapter hopes to interrogate, most importantly: does this private space complement or contradict the archive of power? What kind of power regime does it construct?

## **Power and Archives, Act I. Profanations, Captures and Negations**

At first sight, the discussion on archives in the post-colonial Arab world is immediately, from the moment when states free themselves from colonial tutelages, oriented toward the question of the state and its autonomy, its ability to seize its own memory. It seems to place the countries of the region in a situation of “peoples without history” or at least without archives, since their archives are largely recorded by others. If we follow Ann Laura Stoler’s invitation to seize archives not simply as an instrument, but as a subject and as a place of knowledge production, it is not useless to consider the real or proclaimed absence of archives as an object of study (Stoler 2002; 2009). It is then necessary to question the systems of domination at work in the production and visibility—or invisibilization—of the archive, but also the way in which their supposed absence produces knowledge about the region. The point will be to discuss, dispute and go beyond

Edward Said's (1996) statement that "the archive of much of modern Arab history resides unmetaphorically, has been deposited in, has been physically imprisoned by, Europe." The appropriation of archives by colonial empires is very real, and it naturally accompanies the establishment of state domination. For the purpose of this paper, we need to understand the effects of this domination on knowledge, on the very form of archives and on the way in which it is extended. But the modern independent states have also appropriated the archive knowledge in many ways. Their absence and their lack of access are just a part of the politics of archives during the revolutions and their aftermaths.

## **A History Without Archives?**

The history of Arab state archival institutions from a comparative perspective remains to be written.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, a few observations are in order as a first step in a reflection.<sup>3</sup>

Preservation, in the broadest sense of the term, tends to focus primarily on the manuscript treasures of national or private libraries, that is, on a very patrimonial vision of what archives are, whom they serve and how they (should) function. Memory resides in the precious nature of these documents, which have a high symbolic and real value. More recent printed documents, considered to be of lower value, are usually not subject to the same care. Thus, if we visit the al-Khalidiyya Library today, considered one of the major sites in Jerusalem and Palestine (al-Khalidi 1997), we can see the care taken and the efforts made to preserve the manuscripts. While the Khalidiyya Library is a precious testimony to a state of written knowledge in the first 20th century, it is kept unchanged and the archival documentation remains very difficult to access.<sup>4</sup> "Treasures" monopolize all the will to preserve; the archives they constitute are similar to relics, those of knowledge, law or faith, as well as those of a state and its history (Potin 2015). These

paper monuments are often the focus of special treatment, displayed in a museal form. At the Khalidiyya, the precious manuscripts are described and cautiously kept in a specific room. It is also the case in another library of the old city of Jerusalem, al-Budayriyya. The word used to designate the archives in Arabic (*wathâ'iq*) evokes the idea of traces, of testimony. Manuscripts, before being sources for the historian, are monuments, traces of past history, treasures.

The history of post-colonial states based on these treasures is made of struggles that move outside the sphere of the archive itself. As has been shown in the case of Egypt and Libya (Dumasy & Di Pasquale 2012), there is a strong mobilization of history in the post-colonial states in the service of a new narrative. Historians of the newly independent states, described by Yoav di Capua (2009) as “gatekeepers,” are similar to chroniclers. They put history at the heart of the national narrative in a dimension that is both heroic and epic. But they also establish a link between archiving and writing history.<sup>5</sup>

Until recently, the use of national state archives to write historical accounts was relatively rare. They were based on memories or even direct testimonies and sometimes on colonial archives. The making of a national history involved all these sources, necessary to forge myth and document the history in progress. Contemporary (professional) history was then written through the use of sources of circumvention (most often colonial archives and newspapers), which often passed through the same old guardianships and contributed to producing an essentially geopolitical vision of the region. And we had become accustomed to debates on the difficulty of access, the destruction of sources, the necessary invention of new archives to distance ourselves from the look carried by imperial papers. This balance is the one on which the work of the areas studies departments is based, where the specificity of the historian’s profession based on the reading and comprehension of archive is dissolved in the access to the original documentation on

the region. It also produces treasure-based knowledge, focusing on rare documentation and manuscripts.

Does this mean that state archives, this reasoned and classified accumulation of the very production of state services, are absent in the region? Not necessarily. Their history is linked to that of local governments and institutions as well as to the regimes that govern them. Access to national, municipal or institutional archives obviously varies according to the country and context. The Arab world is no exception. We can sketch here some elements of understanding and differentiation from some examples.<sup>6</sup>

Tunisia prides itself on the long-standing nature of its state apparatus and its persistent structures. Indeed, the first archive service was created there in 1874 and supported the movement for reform and modernization of the state. Its role was to collect the documents of what before the French occupation of 1881 was known as the *beylik*. Much closer to the present, the National Archives, initially under the Presidency of the Council, were transferred to the First Ministry in 1999. Their work is regulated by a 1988 law<sup>7</sup> establishing a work process that obliges the state services to deposit their definitive archives with the Archive's for conservation, processing and communication. The disclosure of documents is subject to clear rules that have since been established on a ministry-by-ministry and service-by-service basis. The automatic nature of these deposits has been problematic, as has the disclosure of a number of files considered sensitive. Nevertheless, work has been undertaken by the institution to standardize and systematize the deposits and to open the collections to the public.

In the context of the new republic, after the 2011 revolution, archives are still the focus of civic and political battles. The case of the archives of the Presidency revealed some of the democratic weaknesses in the memory of the state. The centralization of power is reflected in the

preservation of the archives, some of which had remained in the rooms of the Carthage Palace when President Moncef Marzouki took office in 2011. His desire to uncover these *secrets d'alcove* has come up against both a sensitive context and the firmness of the public administration, which is anxious to respect the legal requirements. It was also the administration of the archives that intervened between the palace officials and the Truth and Dignity Commission when its president decided to stage an operation to seize sensitive documents.<sup>8</sup> Through the archives, one discovers the true architecture of an authoritarian state, encapsulating the ministries in different layers of semi-formal institutions from the ruling party, the presidency or the police apparatus, which constitutes the regime, the system (*nidam*); the very one that revolutionaries are trying to overthrow (*yasqut al-nidâm*).

Unlocking that regime takes time. Nevertheless, these archives, which are now inventoried, may be transferred and communicated to researchers. They have already been made available to the commissions dealing with transitional justice. Paradoxically, the national reconciliation process has so far addressed the question of memory through the archive, if not through the action of the Truth and Dignity Forum and in 2018 through the collection undertaken for the exhibition “Tunisian Instant,” reconstructing the traces of the days of uprisings in 2010–2011.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to Palestine or Lebanon, there are very few private archives established in the Tunisian context. The Temimi Foundation for Research and Information,<sup>10</sup> a research institution that collects and publishes testimonies, is an exception, as are some documentation centers, which are rather documentary collections. There are also oral history initiatives, including the one led by the National Institute for the History of the National Movement at the University of La Manouba. The Oral History and Audiovisual Documentation Unit has been involved in a program to “safeguard national memory” since 1991. This collection of testimonies and life

stories from the actors led to the creation of a fund that now includes 306 recordings. Since 2011, associations and groups have been involved in oral history and archive collection businesses.

Their work is generally not yet valued and accessible.<sup>11</sup>

In Egypt, a similar centralizing and modernizing tradition was at the heart of the foundation in 1828 of an archive's office by the Khedive Muhammad Ali. It subsequently developed according to the model of the French National Archives. It was after the 1952 revolution that this institution was transformed into Dar al-Watha'iq,<sup>12</sup> a massive institution that stands out even in the context of the Middle East. Since the 1990s, it has been linked to the National Library (Dar al-Kutub). It is home to very rich collections, which have been the basis for abundant research, both on ancient periods and on the 19th century.

In the context of the 2011 revolution and the subsequent coup, but also during the Morsi regime, archives have been at the center of a debate on the reception of sensitive documents and access to information in national history. Part of the mobilization took place about access to documentation, embarking on a reflection on the archive itself as part of the revolutionary process. The spectacular action of encircling certain buildings of the State Security during the days of March was one of the acts.

The constitution of the "Committee to Document the 25th of January Revolution," initiated by historian Khaled Fahmy at the invitation of Mohamed Saber Arab, then director of Dar al-Kutub, was intended to reflect a desire to report and leave traces of what was happening on the country's streets. The aim was to document the revolution and gather the abundant material that circulated on social networks: films, photos, texts, performances of all kinds. Khaled Fahmy took charge of this mission by transforming it from the outset into a reflection on the use and meaning of the archive. For someone who knows that "archives do not belong to the people; they belong to the

State,”<sup>13</sup> this mission had a very special meaning. He was keen to move the debate and to articulate it with the closure of the archives, their restriction to an area of more or less authorized specialists and thus to reveal the civic challenge of the conservation and availability of state documentation, particularly sensitive in the context of the Dar al-Watha’iq as an institution.<sup>14</sup> This institution, “as any other archive, in fact, embodies a unique stratification of all the institutions, political decisions, turns of the events that have preceded it” (Carminati 2019). The uncovering of this issue is a means of further exposing the secrecy surrounding the most sensitive archives (concerning particular wars), of which we do not know even if they have been constituted and preserved. One of the consequences of this closure, for example, is that historical knowledge of the Arab-Israeli wars is based almost exclusively on Israeli archives and European or American chancelleries. The hope of the Committee in 2011 was to unlock access to these archives to accompany the gesture of national liberation. Its ambition was then, as Fahmy puts it, to “turn the National Archives from a reservoir to a research center that generates new questions.” Unfortunately, the Committee’s hope of creating an open national archive of the revolution was short-lived. But it has made it possible to ask questions of an ethical and technical nature, which will then be taken up and developed by private initiatives.

The question of the state taking over the archiving and memory enterprise is not raised in the same way in other national contexts such as Lebanon after the civil war. The Lebanese National Archives is a somewhat ghostly institution. However, it does exist, and an inventory was published in 1983 under the auspices of UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).<sup>15</sup> These state archives, partially destroyed after the war, have remained relatively unknown and coexist with many private or semi-private, confessional or institutional archives, sometimes family archives in a country where everyone protects its own memory (Jungen &

Sfeir 2019). A quick reading makes the “weakness” of the state coincide with the absence of an archive, but one can also see a multiplicity of preservation authorities (universities, specifically the American University of Beirut and the University of Balamand, cultural institutions like publishing houses and newspapers [*al-Nahar*] and non-governmental organizations), which reflects more the fragmentation of authority than its absence and reveals a fusion between archives and memory. What is often interpreted as a failure of the state seems to reflect a confusion between memory and archive, for the most important archiving sites in the country are not substitutes for the archive, but for memory. We see the development of projects to collect oral archives or heritage documents, but we cannot yet reconstitute the archives of the state and its various services, the traces of state activity. Only pieces of municipal archives can provide access to such information, at least of the late Ottoman and Mandate period (Ilbert 1996; Hanssen 2005; Eddé 2009; Lafi 2019).

In this particular case, the civil war has superimposed itself on this specific structure of the state, producing holes linked to destruction, looting and disappearances, creating further obstacles to access and clouding understanding of documentation, while also introducing an urgency of memory. Private heritage companies rely on this diagnosis to develop their actions, despairing of the state’s ability to address traumatic issues and concerned about the demonstrated fragility of what is called the state and its institutions. This is how other institutions, sometimes of a religious nature or even non-Lebanese established and/or administered institutions such as the American University of Beirut, become the depositaries of funds and compensate for the state’s lack of understanding of the country’s history. It is in relation to this kind of memory that the UMAM Documentation and Research (UMAM D&R) project is defined to challenge what the founders call a “national amnesia,” the latter constituting a “quasi-official state religion.”<sup>16</sup> This

project, which focuses specifically on the traces and memory of the civil war (1975–1990), expresses a belief, which could be described as magical, based on the contributions of trauma studies: atrocities are repeated if they are not uncovered and understood.

The pressing need to do something was also motivated by the worries and hopes that influenced Lebanon at the time UMAM D&R emerged. Some 15 years after the Taif Agreement, it had become very clear that the approach used to pacify this small (210 kilometers long and 50 kilometers wide) strip of land, one that has repeatedly demonstrated an uncanny ability to both suffer and cause headaches, could not be sustained. The archives are here conceived as a collective treasure that is deposited for the purposes of healing and real pacification. This is indeed a question of collective memory, which has replaced organized amnesia, but also the absence of places of memory and the absence of a state archive over this period. The case of the UMAM initiative is obviously paroxysmal,<sup>17</sup> and we could observe this same fusion between memory and archive from other examples, such as that of the Arab Image Foundation.<sup>18</sup> Lebanon also hosts a large part of the Palestinian archives and living memory through the Centre for Palestinian Studies or initiatives such as the “Nakba Archive,” also hosted by the American University of Beirut.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, when the Israelis invaded Beirut in 1982, they went right to the most similar to a “state archive institution,” the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Documentation Centre, to steal its archives. The story of the archives of the Palestinian revolution reflects in a very dramatic way the history of the struggle itself. The PLO documented for decades its activities, but also the memory of the Palestinians and their living heritage. This collection or at least part of it was displaced from Amman to Beirut, then to Algeria, where it stayed until very recently. The documentation stolen in Beirut was then restituted as part of an

exchange of prisoners with Israel in 1983: “4,500 Palestinian prisoners and what Israel said was the Research Center library were returned, in exchange for six Israeli soldiers” (Sleiman 2016).<sup>20</sup> Acting with the state, transforming the conditions of access and conservation, doing without the state, bypassing or replacing it, all of these actions affect the archival landscape and say something about the territory, its history and political situation. The collections bear, in their very form, their existence or absence, their accessibility, the trace of violence or neglect.

## **Abductions, Thefts and Capture**

The history of the state archives is also made up of silences, disappearances and recordings. Like other treasures, they are part of the spoils of war. The question of Iraqi archives and their “abduction” has been much commented on (Gravois 2008; Caswell 2011; Cox 2011; Montgomery 2012). The archives of the Baathist period were considered a war treasure and deposited at the Hoover Institution. One of the most comprehensive funds is the one related to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, the “Kuwait Dataset.” It was directly formed by the Coalition forces led by the US in 1991.<sup>21</sup> The Hoover Institution, a conservative think tank hosted by Stanford University, has a long history of “saving” archives and documentation. Thus, under the impetus of its founder Herbert Hoover, “treasures” such as Rosa Luxemburg’s papers or those of Joseph Goebbels were extracted from Germany.<sup>22</sup> The collection of Baath archives is in line with this policy of relocating sensitive archives. Here, the war treasure itself has been privatized, since it was not the American government that took charge of this mass of documents, but a private foundation that stored seven million pages from the “Baath Party records” in Qatar before transferring them to the Iraq Memory Foundation, “a private Washington, D.C.-based group that

entered Iraq as an American defense contractor to preserve the records of Saddam Hussein's regime" (Montgomery 2012: 326).

The Iraq Memory Foundation, which has deposited them, uses a mixed psychoanalytical discourse to present its mission of revelation and its enterprise of truth. The documentation is entirely oriented toward revealing the truth, and this is not clearly linked to a process of national reconciliation involving the Iraqi state and its citizens.

Truth is a healing force. To recover from their wounds and to lay a foundation for present and future justice the people of Iraq must come to terms with the atrocities perpetrated under Saddam Hussein's brutal regime. Iraqis are now forging new identities in a very different society. The Iraq Memory Foundation has as its mission: to encourage and inform that development free from half-truths and distortions; to use the Iraq experience to advance knowledge throughout the world and, by so doing, to honor the victims and the survivors of this dark era in the country's history.<sup>23</sup>

The central character of this project is the writer Kanan Makiya (author of *The Republic of Fear* under the name of Samir al-Khalil).<sup>24</sup> He is working on the memory and collection of oral sources, particularly to document the atrocities committed in the northern regions of Iraq in the 1990s. The combination of knowledge and revelation brings this endeavor closer to the reconciliation commissions that have been set up in countries such as South Africa, Rwanda, Morocco and, more recently, Tunisia. But in the absence of a state-run and democratic process, this private body appears to be a questionable substitute. And this is all the more so as the collection is moved to another territory, to that of an occupying army. It is an archival operation that displays its embedded side (with the occupying forces) and assumes its deterritorialization in the name of universal justice.

The uprooting of archives and their removal from their territory is not an operation that is ethically neutral,<sup>25</sup> and it is thus also not insignificant from a scientific and intellectual point of view. Once archives are removed from their home societies, they are detached from what makes it possible to interpret them in the first place, i.e., their production context. The “truth” is not simply to be seen in the sign or the sum of the signs; it is also seen in the gesture of collecting, preserving and depositing. This truth, considered as a healing power, is multiple and complex; it must find its meaning in a more global critical work. The Baath Party archives or those of the occupation of Kuwait, which were removed because they were considered particularly sensitive, testify to the very structure of Saddam Hussein’s system. They must be linked to the archives of the state and institutions to find their meaning. The issue of restitution is not simply a question of morality but a matter of meaning (Caswell 2011). With regard to the abuses committed by party officials during the years of dictatorship, these documentary collections can indeed testify to the guilt of certain people and must be made available to national and international justice commissions. This guarantee is now given by the foundation. But how can we guarantee this mission in the long term and who should be the real guarantor?

Finally, if we compare the care taken in obtaining this war treasure with the negligence responsible for the destruction of a large part of the National Library’s collections, the destruction by bombing of the Iraqi national archives in 2003 or even the proliferation of trafficking in archives and antiquities, we cannot help but see it as a selection. What must remain of Iraq’s memory then is only this black memory of the party. Who decides what remains and what disappears?

Beyond the political and moral question, arises here in this context where data are considered today as the foundation of governance and surveillance and as a new black gold, the economic

question and that of the wealth generated by these data and memory processing. It is also in this context that archives must be placed at the center of a reflection on the state and its relationship with private institutions to which it can subcontract part of its prerogatives in terms of archives. The history of the collection and place of archives should be made in a somewhat precise way to situate each of the state/semi-state/private spaces in their relationship to data.

Undoubtedly, entrepreneurs of memory (and justice) like Kanan Makiya are trying to develop, through archives and documentation, other ways of operating. The Iraqi example is both exceptional and paradigmatic. It accompanies a fairly common delegation of governance in the form of privatization of collection and digitization activities—justified in particular by the cost of these operations—and a movement to build “independent” archives and put documentation online. Not surprisingly, most of the documents so catalogued and put online were mainly those captured or otherwise collected from militant sources. If we can talk in the Iraqi case about a real relocation/transmission from a reduced State to a party apparatus, what relationship do these private projects have with the idea of a memory infrastructure or even an archival infrastructure?

## **Power and Archives Act II. Imagining Other Responses, Proposals and Alternatives Outside the State**

Independent archival collection is an expression of political dissent with its own history. In the Soviet context, it gave birth to the organization Memorial, “a historical, educational, charitable society for the defense of human rights.” As a collective and militant enterprise, Memorial has set itself the goal of “promoting the uncovering of the truth about the past, and perpetuating the memory of the victims of the political repression exercised by totalitarian regimes.” This last point is achieved in particular by keeping the “books in memory of the victims of political

repression.”<sup>26</sup> In this sense, all memory enterprises linked to political repression are part of the archives, even when the traces are very small.<sup>27</sup>

As with the Memorial association and archives, they aim to produce a record for future justice and to open up a space for transparent access to documentation as well as to establish a “duty of remembrance” in post-authoritarian states.<sup>28</sup> This is also understandable from the struggle of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the way they refuse to allow the traces of their missing children to be erased. They stand there as the very archives of the existence of these bodies and lives, facing the machine of disappearance as a weapon of war (Déotte 2002). This mobilization of activists around the issue of traces and archives has given rise in recent years to new techniques and new theoretical materials to document, in particular, the absence and disappearance around the notion of Forensics linked to Human Rights studies. The Goldsmith University laboratory, London, has set up a scientific and legal methodology based on trace to demonstrate and compile legal files and therefore even research and investigation.<sup>29</sup>

In the Arab world, a number of independent archiving initiatives are approaching these places of dissent, particularly since 2011. What seems to unite these contemporary initiatives is the way they make the archive an object for itself. They shift it from its understanding as a residue of an institution’s daily work to perceive it as a more generic trace linked to the inscription (whether it is of writing, image, sounds or even a bodily inscription an incarnated memory). As Jean-Pierre Vernant says about the rediscovery of writing, the archive (the document) “will henceforth fulfill a function of publicity; (it) will make it possible to disclose, to place also under the gaze of all the various aspects of social and political life” (Vernant 1962: 27–28). Contemporary archival gestures start from there, from a gesture that consists in placing under the gaze, in showing, in disclosing, in extirpating. They are based on (or invent) a belief whose foundation is

transparency and the driving force is data (Ebeling and Günzel 2009). In this way, they support the utopias of the World Wide Web in a world where it has partly been transformed into a vast information and data market. This is not the least of the paradoxes. These modes of intervention by the archives can be analyzed through their relationship to information and the media, to the notion of memory and in their particular relationship to art.

### **Informing and Archiving the Same Thing?**

One of the characteristics of contemporary archival projects on the web is the link they maintain with the media. The revolutions of 2010–2013 were, as we know, made and documented simultaneously. They have implemented real-time information techniques to counter national propaganda and have set up independent media centers based on a dense network of “journalist activists.” In this respect, they are the “daughters of Seattle,” the famous 1999 protests that launched the so-called “anti-globalization movement” and the explosion of a new form of protest in which anti-globalization demonstrators had become masters. At the time, the idea was to take advantage of the Internet’s channels to produce and disclose the information oneself. This vast do it yourself (DIY) enterprise, the most famous example of which is *Indymedia*, has produced images of the movement, its highlights and some of its slogans—“The Whole world is watching,” “this is what democracy looks like,” making films and showing (including the most spectacular actions and repression) an act of resistance. This is the dimension that can be found, for example, in the work of 858, a member of the media collective *Mosireen*. This archive is a collection that has its coherence and history—that of a media collective born during the Egyptian revolution:

The Mosireen collective came together in early 2011, its members were a part of the protest movement. We filmed and collected footage from across Egypt, in factories, hospitals, unions and morgues. We held trainings in street media in Cairo and across the country. In our workspace we hosted events, discussions and film screenings. We weren't neutral observers, but actors within a wider struggle. We participated and documented in the same time. We were engaged in a battle of narratives, of revolution against the counter-revolution of the Army, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Old Regime.<sup>30</sup>

The project 858 is conceived as a closed one, with a beginning and an end, and it reflects its particular time. But it also hosts other materials that are to be added to the collection. It is the support for other projects, which are grafted onto the deposited material. Starting from the archive, everybody's contributions are thought of and curated, fed with more information, additions or memories. These traces are there to be used and they can even occasionally become documents to be added to a court file. They are proof for the continuation of the struggle in another way. The on-site research within this documentary material is based on a knowledge of editing and documentary creation tools, allowing several films to be viewed on the same screen and their progress to be read in sequences. The possibility of creating a personal account to gather archive choices, then constituting personal news channels has been added.

This orientation is found in a number of sites whose objective is to feed media productions to counter the propaganda of the regimes in place and accumulate evidence for justice. Thus the *Syria Untold* website, run by Syrian media activists, reports on its own transformation from a testimonial site to an archive site. The site designers situate their approach in a broader fight against false information and lies. One of the founders speaks of a transformation of history into an archive: first of all, to "live history," then to produce an archive because "the end of the history of the Syrian revolution is the return to lies," to the truncated and distorted regime of

truth. The truth comes to stand up to the reinstatement of the lie. The flow of history contrasts with the fixity and constructed nature of the archive.<sup>31</sup>

This transition from action to archive requires a work that the collective 858 describes as a flow, where each video bears its date, stands for a moment, into a renaming regime that spatializes events and in a certain way freezes them. In this way, the videos, initially classified according to their date of arrival, are gradually “naturally” (re)ordered by reference to a place that has become a place of memory, meaning both the place and a date related to it: Mohammed Mahmoud (19–24 November 2011), Maspero (9–10 October 2011), Abassiyya, and so on.<sup>32</sup>

The issue of archives is linked to the explosion of social medias and therefore to the issue of the so-called revolutions 2.0, which has been widely debated. It is obvious that the scope of these archival projects could not have been planned before the development of a whole series of technical tools, from upstream, smartphones and highly portable cameras to downstream, collaborative research tools that guide visitors and enable them to enrich content. Technology takes its place and conquers it when tools are invented to archive and index oral archives in Arabic, for example, or when solutions are found to protect the identity of depositors.

If the technological approach says anything about how large-scale citizen initiatives are made possible with regard to the preservation and dissemination of all documentation, it is primarily the context of competing stories that justifies this work. Contrary to what happened for the first generation of media activists who were entirely focused on transparency and revelation, media archivists are concerned about building independent tools that give an important place to collaboration while guaranteeing sustainability. The social dimension of the Internet has proved its worth in its ability to federate and mobilize and it remains fundamental in the use and composition of the archives themselves. There is also a use of technology to outsource and call

for spontaneous contributions by ensuring the protection and dissemination of a certain “heritage” in an open and large sense. This heritage, in turn, feeds initiatives such as Wikis, allowing the development of knowledge in Arabic(s) on social topics. An example can be given in the development of the Wiki-Gender in Arabic.

But whereas in the project 858 this aspect can be controlled by the limited nature of the archive itself, produced and edited, *Syria Untold*'s project does not have the same borders and is sometimes difficult to capture. There, one can find a creative bric-a-brac, the archives of a future state that would contain all the memories of revolutionary Syria, but also all the “untold Syria,” the country that the regime hides, does not want to see, does not want to show. It goes far beyond the documentation of the uprisings itself and aims to narrate its roots and justifications. The work based on this abundant documentation consists in editorializing and transforming it into a narrative. On the website, one can thus read the history of cities in revolution about which texts, images and maps are gathered.<sup>33</sup> Access to the documentation then requires a narrative.

Paradoxically, it produces content that is more similar to that of a classical news media than that of 858.

It should be remembered that in the Syrian case, independent news coverage compensates for the very fragmented media coverage throughout the conflict. Threats against journalists, confusion of the situation discouraged official press organizations from documenting directly and media activists soon found themselves in the front line. Documenting became a matter of life and death as well as a struggle against emptiness and oblivion. For Syrian initiatives, perhaps even more than for others, the challenge is to (re)conquer the public space, even if dematerialized, inside and outside the country. This is why their initiatives are often linked to the perspective of constituting a basis for transitional justice processes (Haugbolle 2019).

The ways of reading, selecting, sorting are at the heart of the work of archive builders when they take the form of a website. Thus, an architecture, a classification, but also and above all a circulation between documents is developed. The contributions draw and record the echoes between the videos or texts or images, the tags suggest paths and transversal readings. Journalism that has become an archive remains an evolving reading tool, whose history can be made and understood.

## **Memory**

Fighting against deletion is a revolutionary objective. The Syrian case is emblematic. The actress and revolutionary activist Fadwa Suleiman said in her last interview before her untimely death, in exile, from cancer in 2017:

Even if they erase everything, we mustn't let them erase our dream. If there's only one Syrian left, I am sure that he or she would build the Syria that we love. Syria isn't a country, it isn't a geographical entity. It's an idea. The noble revolution of the mind and soul that will last in time and space.

The idea of fighting against erasure is also the main brand of projects such as the Nakba archives on Palestine before 1948:

The Nakba Archive is an oral history collective established in Lebanon in 2002. Since its inception, the Archive has recorded over 650 video interviews with first generation Palestinian refugees in Lebanon about their recollections of life in Palestine and the events that led to their displacement. These eyewitness narratives, with refugees from more than 150 Palestinian villages and towns, recall social and cultural life in Palestine before 1948, relations with neighboring Jewish communities and the British Mandate, the 1948 expulsion,

and the early years of exile. The aim has been to document this critical period through the voices and experiences of those who lived through it, and to bear witness in a way shaped not by political symbolism but rather by the rhythms of personal memory.

This memory-oriented project based on oral history, was created by Diana Allan and Mahmoud Zeidan. Its progressive digitization should make it possible to develop indexing based on keywords, to preserve interviews and make them accessible and to build a catalogue that can be consulted by researchers from the AUB.

Beyond research and documentation in the strict sense of the term, the memory work developed through these online repositories constitutes what Cécile Boëx calls, following Christophe Traïni, “awareness raising devices” (Traïni 2009). This is probably what unites all these initiatives, the belief in the ability of the archive to do a sensitive work, to touch. The capture of a moment of state mobilization or repression, the long-term testimony, whether formalized within the framework of a commission, a systematic collection project or captured on the spot, are bits of direct emotion that are returned to us. In this way, the memory of mobilization replays the emotions that arouse it and creates new ones, which are hoped to be able to extend the mobilization.

Belief in the ability to mobilize these emotions emerged with the 2011 revolutions within them. In this sense, these sites can be read as repetitions of the revolutionary act, “remembering hope” as A. Rigney (2018) calls it. The documentation of revolutions immediately contributes to the revolution itself; the restitution of a truth of repression contributes to the continuation of the revolution, whether it is after the establishment of a new regime as in Tunisia or in the tensions of counterrevolution as in Egypt. In this context, the predominance of the image is to be discussed. “The imaging of events also helps to shape specific awareness-raising mechanisms

whose objective is to elicit emotional reactions that are quick to rally support,” writes Cécile Boex. Faced with the abundance of videos, we are led to doubt the ability of images to “make emotion” more immediately than other media. As archives, these images are installed in a closed space, they are aligned like folders, in series, ready to be used as testimonies or as a document. They reach, through the flow, the position of a piece within a larger narrative. Their accumulation is evidence, but it makes empathy more and more difficult.

It is from these memory traces that the exhibition (and the collection) “Before the 14th,” which could be seen at the Bardo Museum in Tunis from 10 December 2018, was built. The choice was made to present a linear chronological presentation of the Tunisian revolutionary days (before January 14). In the available documentary material (more than 1,200 videos have been collected), only a few minutes are presented, edited meticulously. Some moments are recalled, and the emotion really unfolds when the videos are rendered in their entirety. Unfortunately, this choice was made only in one particularly poignant case—that of a clip telling the story of the death of the first martyr. This exhibition, staged in a system that makes events part of the national memory, contributes to writing history and giving it meaning. The accompanying collection, deposited at the ANTs, should serve as a support for a sensitive memory and for further research.

## **What Art Can Do**

Beyond counter-information and dissent, beyond complex memorial attempts, one of the major places of reflection on archives and power is the world of contemporary art. This link is not completely new, at least not in the articulation it makes between dissent, resistance and past practices. In the face of state propaganda, the use of creative forms of resistance implies the use

of archival evidence to reveal other truths. Art has a new capacity to struggle “by the trace”: it orders and gives meaning. It also contributes to an aesthetics of the hidden. And archives are extracted to reveal what had been hidden. All this contributes to contemporary archival inflation and to a certain form of worship of the document (Ebeling & Günzel 2009).

Literature makes use of its ability to narrate reality, approaching documentary forms, and the visual arts work with trace, strata and the ability or inability to narrate. The link with art has become central and determines the treatment and a certain form of sacralization of the archive (singular), conceived not as a collection and serial production of state/official documentation, but as a multiform trace, inserted in an artistic reflection on meaning. A number of archive places of modern times in the Arab world are artistic spaces.<sup>34</sup> They transform the archives into a form of aesthetics that is intrinsically linked to an interrogation about truth and the past, but not fundamentally to history as a science or to the archive as a technique.

A project like the Tahrir archive presents itself as a collaborative collection project from below, under the name of “Vox Populi,” but it is organized as an artistic project, a performance. The home page of the site is written by the artist Lara Baladi and its sections focus on exhibitions and productions emanating from her work. The ambition here does not derive from an archival logic or even an activist logic, but rather of an aesthetic discourse on the resonances and echoes of history:

...On January 28 2011, I joined the people in Tahrir as a regular citizen. Just as the YouTube video ‘Tiananmen-Cairo Courage in Cairo’ went viral, a friend posted on Facebook a speech Jean Paul Sartre had delivered to an audience of striking French autoworkers 40 years earlier. As the political tension grew, more and more images and videos of a packed Tahrir Square were uploaded. They echoed footage from other uprisings across the Middle East and

North Africa, as well as a vast array of past social movements. It was as though Sartre was protesting with us in Tahrir.

In an attempt to keep track of the events unfolding on the ground, I set about documenting and archiving, videos, photographs, articles and further data related to the 2011 Egyptian revolution and its aftermath, while also collecting material on major events taking place around the world at that time. In parallel I researched and amassed footage that resonated with Tahrir Square and everything that followed, from historical footage (of which the Sartre speech is an example) to philosophical discourses, to banned cartoons, to political satire... I called this ongoing archive Vox Populi...

The emphasis on the phenomena of conjunction, resonance and echo is very striking when reading this text as well as in the desire to build a timeline that is not a strict chronology but a work on the very matter of time. Lara Baladi's artistic productions combine elements from multiple revolutionary echoes when, for example, she calls one of her pieces made from the archives "Be realistic, ask for the impossible," using a famous slogan of the Parisian 68, and inserts an Egyptian poem by Amal Dunqul from 1962 on the Spartakist revolt. Here, the archives are aggregated and constituted into icons. The work of Walid Raad and the Atlas Group, creating counterfactual fictions from real or fabricated archives, contributes, by pushing it to the end, to the same logic of reflection on the status of proof, truth and document, between fiction and non-fiction.<sup>35</sup> The device obviously questions the notion of truth, but also the sacralization of the document, its role in the production of knowledge. It questions the state apparatus and the logics of power.

*The Creative memory of the Syrian revolution*, a website created and directed by Sana Yazigi, a graphic-designer who lives now in exile in France, takes the aesthetic issue to another level. Far

from inserting the archive into aesthetic creation, she and her team decided to retain the revolutionary interventions that have to do with art with aesthetics. The process of selecting the objects collected is in fact artwork and the archive (or memory, as the name of the project states) is a collection in the artistic or museum sense of the term. These revolutionary artworks are meticulously catalogued, they have authors, supports. This choice also says something about the revolutionary gesture, making it a worthy creative act not only by its politics, but also by its aesthetic and symbolic value. To put it briefly, the Assadian order is ugly, beauty is revolutionary. The memory of this aesthetic is encapsulated in ephemeral artworks and their archiving makes it possible to save part of revolutionary politics itself, which consists in building a fairer but also more beautiful society. In this sense, archiving is creating and contributing to an alternative patrimony for the country. Archival pieces give sense to another potential state, to that of the revolution, with its own monuments and art pieces.

This commitment to artistic work is one of the aspects of the revolution, documented by films shot in the liberated areas. As in the documentary film “Still Recording” directed by Saeed Al Batal and Ghiath Ayoub in the city of Daraa in Syria,<sup>36</sup> where young artists are followed in the streets of a besieged and starving city, where they are seen painting and sculpting, it is this gesture and the accompanying emotion that the archive’s work tries to preserve on the web by publishing the photo of the artworks, the place where they were found, the possible names of the authors.

In the world of visual arts and documentary, the place of the archive (in the singular) is certainly the most visible. On the borderline between information work and artistic creation, contemporary documentaries use a wide range of interpretation and recording of the archive in the narrative. A journalist like Nahed Awwad works from photographic traces and interviews to reconstruct the

history of Jerusalem Airport. She highlights in the center the archive in the face of oblivion or even the absurdity that seizes us when we learn and imagine that instead of the largest checkpoint in the West Bank, Qalandia, the runways of an airport stretched out, the traces of which appear to have emerged from another world: photos of famous artists welcomed with flowers, children in their Sunday clothes to visit their families in Lebanon or to welcome workers from the Gulf. A whole world emerges and is restored by the camera and research.

Palestinian artist Kamal Aljafari works with another visual material: Israeli B-movies. In these films, he tracks Palestinian characters who were supposed to be erased from the picture and who appear as intruders in the shots, hidden in an angle, forgotten during the editing. He then produces a discourse on the trace and disappearance that is part of this shabby culture and reveals not the other side of the set but the thickness of the set itself.<sup>37</sup>

What is even more striking is to see scientific works go through the prism of the artistic treatment of the archive to question the archives and give them meaning. Thus, the project carried out in Egypt by Alya Mossallam entitled “Speak, History” (*ahki ya târikh*) proceeds in the form of workshops devoted to the sound, visual and textual archives of a place or event. Participants collect stories, give testimonies and order this collection in the form of maps, stories, books-objects that emphasize anachronisms and temporal overlaps. History is here to tell the present and reveal the past in a collaborative and creative form. These experiences of public history, both civic and pedagogical, are being transformed at the same time into artistic projects (notably theatrical or in the form of exhibitions) and into research proposals to bring out memory and transform it into an archival record.

## **Archival Consideration of the Public/Private Dichotomy**

The relation between these multiple private initiatives and traditional state archives is not self-evident. They seem to constitute two parallel and separate worlds. If we stick to the ethics of memory approach, some are substitutes for the failures of others. Those who collect privately, aim to do the preservation that the state does not do or that the state in fact hurts. The gesture (or the accumulation of gestures) however exceeds this ambition; it draws a democratic ambition for the archive, in particular through the very form it gives to these archives. The contributor, access and order are at the center of what could be considered a counter-power based on a number of shared beliefs (truth against lies, disclosure against the hidden, power of memory, aesthetics that flows from all this).

It seems central that these archival operations on the web are most often open devices, hosting documents and proposals for the classification of ordinary people. Democracy is displayed in the gesture of collection or gleaning. It can simply be presented as a call for testimonies and contributions. For example, the *Signs of Conflict Archive* website is dedicated to specific objects: posters of the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990).<sup>38</sup> The collection involves different authorities and no longer only individuals. It includes the archives of political parties, personal collections, libraries and private collectors. There is a concern, starting from this particular object, to name and represent, to inscribe an iconography. The aesthetic concern, even if it is not a key argument here, is very much present in the marked interest for a history of graphic codes and image setting, coupled with a history of a particularly deadly episode in the region.

This is well reflected in the research tools made available to visitors: “relevant information whenever available: publisher/political party, date, designer, collection, in addition to keywords that facilitate searching through the archive, such as: names of significant political figures; wartime events and places; and recurrent icons.” Another initiative such as that of “Khazaaen”

proposes a “bottom-up” collection that goes even further, since it aims to store the traces of the ordinary lives of the men and women of the region, with the ambition of reconstituting the common archive of an Arab world considered as a misguided one by its elites and governments.<sup>39</sup>

The other central point of this democratic ambition is access. The form of the website is intended to compensate for the difficulty of setting up stable archiving facilities. Digitization appears to be replacing the material presence of an object or document, so that the photo of the thing ends up being equivalent to the thing itself. But just as archiving requires selection and tidying up, the website operates a scheduling system that prioritizes and nests content. Very often, this documentation is given in a form already articulated as a story. The policy that is played out through access is expressed through openness, transparency and the possibility of contributing to and developing the archive itself. Here, technology plays the role of a political mirror. Some sites are designed as showcases, closed protection areas. Items are placed in the hands of “trusted persons” who protect and enhance them. Other sites are working to strengthen the participatory elements to enrich the collection and develop it, but also to make it reflect the ambition of openness and transparency for which it is accountable. These initiatives then continue the debates carried out during the revolutions on the notion of open democracy and on a certain conception of anarchism based on horizontality.

## **Conclusion: An Archive Without History?**

The great lacuna in contemporary archiving initiatives is paradoxically the work of the historian. In this respect, the experience of the Committee to Document the 25th of January Revolution in Egypt is an exception and confirms by its failure the impression that one can have that history, or

even critical thinking of the archive are not at the center of the debate. If we start from a situation where the writing of contemporary history is done without necessarily resorting to state archives and where we bypass them by accessing private or personal archives, encouraging the constitution of historical schools of notables based on their family networks, the publication of new archives should make possible new historical research and narratives on the contemporary period. These collections would then be able to compensate for the absence of the others.

In some cases, the collapse of a regime, concerned with preserving the memory of episodes considered glorious, can jeopardize archives. We have seen this in the case of Iraq, and this is certainly the case in Gaddafi's Libya. Official history was used to unify the nation (Dumasy & Di Pasquale 2012). This national ambition was implemented in the work of the journal *Majallat al-buhuth al-târikhiyya* linked to the Libyan Studies Center (*markaz dirâsât jihâd al-libyiin dhidda al-ghazw al-italî*, 1978). This project, in accordance with the official ideology, proclaimed to make a history from below. The work on the archive was at the heart of this ideological state operation, supported by the work of historians. It consisted of the acquisition of official archives (particularly colonial) and the collection of memoirs and oral narratives focusing on resistance to colonial power because it highlighted a moment in Libyan history that could act as a unifying moment, with a number of key moments that were studied in the review (the Italian-Ottoman war of 1911, Italian colonial policy in general and the "resistance"). Other episodes were obviously erased from this official memory, such as the period of independence and the reign of the Senous Monarchy immediately preceding the coup d'état of Gaddafi.

This example, along with that of Egypt and other countries in the region where a historical school is developed and valued by institutions, shows that historians, with or without the support of the state, could bring out non-linear stories from national territories. The link with archives is

not obvious, partly because these historical schools, like archival institutions, have focused on the oldest heritage and neglected to focus on the poorer material of the contemporary archive. As a result, archival research most often concerns the oldest historical periods, stopping with the colonial corpus, ordered and closed.

Looking at the historical evolution that Foucault describes when he defines the archival process as “a way of introducing, in the language already deposited and in the traces that it left, an order of the same kind that the one established among living beings” (Foucault 1966: 143–144), one can read the attempts of the activists initiatives as a way to reclaim the prerogatives of the state, blur the lines between state and society so as to uncover the regime or the system as the problematic location of power. It can be seen as a way to change the order, present an alternative order among the living.

The revolutions that occurred in 2011 as well as the effect of a certain temporal distance are transforming this historiographical landscape. But they also collide—in conflict?—with a new conception of the archive (in the singular) that we have tried to sketch here, caught between political will and magic proliferation. What some have called “archival turn” is then, here as elsewhere, a new critical thought emerging from non-professionals of the archive that relies on the archive to think about relationships of domination; an activist practice based on the production of memory and knowledge; a patrimonial practice concerned with justice (restitution, contestation of monopolies, rebalancing of speeches). In all these movements, historians are almost absent. Would it be possible for Derrida’s program to constitute “a general and interdisciplinary science of the archive” under the name of “archival science” (Derrida 1994) to be carried out without them?

The fact is that the archive goes beyond the professionals of the archive. It concerns the very transformations of modern or post-modern societies. The Arab world is then only joining since 2010 a movement that has developed with the help of computer technology tools. In this perspective, the archive is emancipated from history from the outset. It is not a question of a return to history or a return to history, but rather of a transformation of the world's narratives into a "demonstration of reality" represented by the archive. This movement is a movement of resistance in many ways, an answer to the state practices of hiding evidence and documentation, an alternative to the archive as a (often ugly and absurd) mirror of the state and its practices.

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<sup>2</sup> For some reflections on the field, see Omnia el-Shakry (2015). “‘History without Documents’: The Vexed Archives of Decolonization in the Middle East.” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 120, No. 3, pp. 920–934; Sherene Seikaly (2018). “How I Met My Great-Grandfather: Archives and the Writing of History.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 6–20; Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and John Pedro Schwartz, eds. (2012). *Archives, Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World*, Ashgate: Farhm, Pascale Ghazaleh (2019). *Past Imperfect, Future Tense: Writing People’s Histories in the Middle East Today*, Essays of the Forum Transregionale Studien.

<sup>3</sup> Carried out in particular within the framework of two research programs. For Jerusalem from 1840 to 1940, the Open Jerusalem archives; for the revolutions in the Arab Mediterranean world, the ERC-Co DREAM, DRafting and Enacting the revolutions in the Arab Mediterranean (2018–2023).

<sup>4</sup> Access to the catalogues via the website: [www.khalidilibrary.org](http://www.khalidilibrary.org).

<sup>5</sup> For Libya, see Jakob Kraus, (2014). “A National Story? Libyan Historiography of Italian Colonialism.” In *Memoirs with Uniforms. Peoples, States and Nations in the Mediterranean and the Middle East*, hrsg. v. Paolo Branca and Marco Demichelis. Bd. I. 219–30. Milano: SeSaMO/LeggereLeggere.

<sup>6</sup> These few examples are worth milestones toward a typology of archives in their relationship to the State. In this chapter, we have been able to focus on only a few national examples, but it is clear that other cases would have been interesting to consider.

<sup>7</sup> Decree No. 97–389 of 21 February 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Hedi Jellab, Director of the National Archives, February 2019.

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<sup>9</sup> These traces, mainly made up of videos, are now deposited and accessible (on request) at the National archives of Tunisia.

<sup>10</sup> [www.fondationtemimi.tn](http://www.fondationtemimi.tn).

<sup>11</sup> We can mention Nachaz, an association working on the memory of the movement “Perspectives”; and the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) which has undertaken an oral history project.

<sup>12</sup> Law of 1954.

<sup>13</sup> “Archives do not belong to the people. They belong to the state,” an interview with Khaled Fahmy, seen on 22 February 2019. <https://academic.aucegypt.edu/bulletins/fb/?p=1890>.

<sup>14</sup> On the committee and for an account of the relationship between historians and the archival institution in Egypt, see Salma Shamel (2018). “Who Told You History Is an Open Buffet? On Facts, Fiction and Absence in the Archives.” *Jadaliyya*. <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/37547/Who-Told-You-History-is-an-Open-Bufferet-On-Facts,-Fiction-and-Absence-in-the-Archives>.

<sup>15</sup> Salvatore Carbone, *Les Archives nationales du Liban. Guide. Inventaire*, Centre des archives nationales Liban, Institut culturel italien, Mu’assasat al-Maḥfūzāt al-Waṭanīyah (Lebanon), 1983.

<sup>16</sup> UMAM D&R, “raisons d’être”: <https://www.umam-dr.org/en/home/about-umam/1/advance-contents/4/raisons-detre>, consulted on 22 February 2019.

<sup>17</sup> See also the project “Signs of conflicts”: <http://www.signsofconflict.org/>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.fai.org.lb/home.aspx>.

<sup>19</sup> In collaboration with the Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts and Heinrich Böll Stiftung for the digitalization of the background.

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<sup>20</sup> For the specific question of the prisoners' exchange, she refers to David Shipler (1983).

“Palestinians and Israelis Welcome Their Prisoners Freed in Exchange,” *New York Times*.

<sup>21</sup> This is what one can read on the website “800,000 pages; digitized, annotated, restrictively accessible—primary geographical span: Iraqi-occupied Kuwait; primary chronological span: 1990–91. Gathered by the Coalition forces upon the retreat of the Iraqi military from Kuwait, KDS provides in harrowing detail a view of the treatment of the civilian population as well as the conduct of war. KDS is particularly rich in content underlining the human condition of both Kuwaiti civilians and Iraqi soldiers entrapped in Saddam's war.”

[http://www.iraqmemory.org/en/Projects\\_Documentation.asp](http://www.iraqmemory.org/en/Projects_Documentation.asp), consulted on 22 February 2019.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4m3nb03h/?query=goebbels>.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.iraqmemory.org/en/>.

<sup>24</sup> A series of films which initiated the project is available on the Saddam's Killing Fields website: [http://www.iraqmemory.com/en/projects/saddams\\_killing\\_fields](http://www.iraqmemory.com/en/projects/saddams_killing_fields).

<sup>25</sup> On restitution, see Felwin Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy (2018). *Restituer le patrimoine africain*, Paris: Seuil.

<sup>26</sup> Objectives of the Memorial organization, as stated on their website.

<sup>27</sup> Iraqi memory could indeed be compared to this type of action; the term “dissident,” used to designate Kanan Makiya, obviously reinforcing the analogy.

<sup>28</sup> This has led to big difficulties under the present regime.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.forensic-architecture.org>.

<sup>30</sup> Presentation on the 858 website, “What is this?” <https://858.ma/> consulted on 18 March 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Discussion in Beirut during the workshop organized by the ACSS working group “Critiques of Power,” “Forum on alternative archival practices,” 14–15/12/18.

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<sup>32</sup> These names are found by searching the archive by “places.” Testimony of one of the members of the collective, Beirut, December 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Project “Cities in Revolution”: <https://cities.syriauntold.com/?lang=en>.

<sup>34</sup> For Lebanon and the memory of the civil war, see Elias, C., *Posthumous Images: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics in Post-Civil War Lebanon*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.theatlasgroup.org>.

<sup>36</sup> “لسه عم نسجل,” a Bidayyat For Audiovisual Arts production, Beirut, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Kamal Aljafari, “Recollection,” 2015.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.signsofconflict.org/>.

<sup>39</sup> <https://khazaaen.wordpress.com/>.