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Ilana Feldman. *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. xii + 324 pp. 84.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-4222-9; 23.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-4240-3.

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Gaza in Suspension

Governance at some level is collectively and discursively conducted in the sense that the whole of society has a share in the making of its functions or dysfunctions. Governance cannot be viewed as an abstract concept divorced from mundane sociopolitical ambiences and practices, since variations in power relations ultimately serve as an indicator of how governance is conducted. Gaza has been subject to a series of external functional and colonial administrations, by Egypt, Britain, and Israel, respectively. The concerns of these different administrations rested on maintaining a consistent legitimization of rule, which was achieved through various tedious bureaucracies wherein Gazans were left to grapple with the organization of daily life in a manner that obscured broader political contexts of domination to which they were subjected. In her remarkable and thoroughly researched book, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967*, Ilana Feldman unravels the relational aspects that underpin the governing of Gaza through defining periods in its history, from the British Mandate over Gaza (1917-1947) to the Egyptian Administration (1948-1967), including the intermediary period when Gaza was used by Britain, France, and Israel during their 1956 war on Egypt.

Feldman uses archival materials, interviews, and in-depth historical analysis in her meticulous examination of patterns of governance, which looks at services such as the building of sewage systems and the supervision of mosques. Her thorough approach makes this book compellingly useful to policymakers, social anthropologists and historians. Governance, as Feldman explains, conforms to norms of reiteration, whereby authority is produced through congruent acts of cooperation and interaction between civil servants and the people. This is underlined by the need for services and continuity: "[S]ervice was transformed from an intermittent response to crisis to a general condition of being in the Gaza Strip. And if service was expansive here, it was also productive. Relations among the various parts of Gaza, and the character of these places themselves, were produced in part in the details of service delivery" (p. 187).

Services continued to be delivered to the people of Gaza though the degree and quality changed from one administration to another. The bureaucratic infrastructure remained intact, but there were disruptions which represented "a persistent tension between the goal of regularity in their [civil servants'] work and the often exceptional conditions under which that work was conducted" (p. 26).

In the first part of her book, Feldman shows that the succession of different administrations acted in ways consistent with their own systems of rule and control, leaving their imprints on the sociopolitical organization of Gaza; this makes Gaza's sociopolitical history highly informative, in the sense that she demonstrates how different power structures affect government and civil society practices, and create changes in the way government is conducted. Feldman deftly concerns herself with the "analytics of governance" and the micro-physics of power in the Foucaultian and Weberian tradition of revealing how the mundane is formative of Gaza's sociopolitical make-up. In her own words: "rather than measuring practice against policy–whether to judge the degree of perfection in its enactment or to highlight the failures of ideal types in capturing bureaucratic complexity–the Gazan case suggests that we need to consider this practice itself productive of governing form, intent and direction" (p. 14). This is a mission at which Feldman excels distinctively.

In the second part of the book Feldman turns to the change in government from British (1917-1948) to Egyptian (1948-1967) and then Israeli rule (1967-1993) and its effects on the people. This is evident in the transfor-

mative nature of relationships between those governing and the governed, resulting in a multiplicity of governing techniques and responses. One feature that defines Gaza's different governments is that they "relied on practices that were both impermanent and restricted in their claims. Service, while at the centre of the governing relation, was not necessarily meant to declare anything about the character of that relation" (p .221). The British regarded Gaza as a place of lesser significance, and therefore they did not put enough efforts into servicing it; instead of direct rule they allocated power to locals within a superimposed power structure which was reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire. In contrast, the Egyptian administration projected its service to Gaza as "a humanitarian effort, rather than as part of a rationalized bureaucratic structure[;] the administration was able to proceed without fully inhabiting the role of government" (p. 139).

Feldman's narrative suggests that in the case of Gaza a series of governments were implicated by the necessity of grander schemes from which they could not exclude Gaza; yet strategically, Gaza was in effect outside the fray of their core colonial or administrative tutelage, particularly in terms of service and direct governance. To this end, Gaza was locked into a tactical, short-term mode of governance, the bedrock of which is continuity of service, governance, and legitimacy without sustained and systematic supervision by the governing authorities, whether British or Egyptian. The limitations of British governance can be seen in their reluctance to help Gaza's housing: "British officials worried about the financial drain on already limited government resources, about setting a precedent that would impose future obligations on government which it might wish to avoid, and about the possibility that the relationship between municipalities and the central government would be disrupted by government intervention in what was felt to be a municipal (or possibly private arena)" (p. 144).

The establishment of the UNRWA added further complexity to the sociopolitical landscape of Gaza: "these complicated relations [with the Egyptian administration] certainly contributed to a lack of clarity about the meaning of particular policies for judgments of government, though it did not in any way limit critique of those policies themselves," since servicing became a cooperative affair (p. 151). Feldman eloquently highlights what can be called "a continuity of rationale" with regard to the British Mandate and Egyptian Administration in their "abstinence" from decisive involvement in Gaza: "In the Mandate, the government sought to limit its service interventions, thereby developing a housing project that was quickly overtaken by market forces and by regulation, and to limit the implications of those services it did provide, defining its food rationing as an exceptional instance that was not characteristic of government responsibility. In the Administration, government explained the expansion of service by reference to a language of international obligation and humanitarian relief" (pp. 153-154). The Egyptian Administration refused to take an active governing role in Gaza because it did not want to claim sovereignty over Gaza, and "did not want to seem to suggest or accept the idea that refugees were permanently Gazan or that the Gaza Strip itself was not temporary" (p. 171). One significant area which distinguishes the British Mandate from Egyptian rule is education; in the case of the former it was emptied of national rights and nationalism, whereas the latter reinforced nationalism and reinvigorated in Gazans the sense that they were part of a broader Arab nation. Otherwise, Egypt followed in the footsteps of the British Mandate in so far as it preferred tactical and disengaged modes of governance, while not ceding its legitimacy as the sole governing authority of Gaza.

In the final chapter, Feldman makes an enlightening analogy to the case of Iraq. Here the American occupation added insult to injury by dissolving the bureaucratic infrastructure that existed prior to the occupation, resulting in anarchy, the consequences of which Iraqis continue to grapple with. The occupying forces dissolved the old order by ridding it entirely of the officials from the old regime, resulting in a bureaucratic vacuum. In this context, according to Feldman's reading of Max Weber, bureaucracy is essential–even to the enemy–to maintaining a stable sense of governance.

The British Mandate in Gaza, and to a lesser degree the Egyptian Administration, presided over a bureaucracy run by Gazans which ensured the continuity of services for the people: "[W]hen government worked in Gaza, when it participated in the shaping of place and people, as it clearly did, it did so in ways that neither policy makers nor practitioners could entirely control or even understand" (p. 153). Bureaucratic practices did not dramatically change with each administration. This came at the expense of people's national rights and their struggle against an essentially colonial system, a situation which was exacerbated by the UNRWA after (1949), when refugees were reduced to an aid-dependent category, rather than people with political rights and aspirations. Despite all the patterns of oppression that have been wrought in Gaza in the last sixty years, Gaza still provides an example of how identities are made and how they manifest themselves in a place rife with divisions.

Feldman's book deserves a wide reading; it is modest in tone and acutely rigorous in argument and presentation. If anything, Feldman reveals that Gaza has never experienced stability in governance as such. Instead, each successive foreign government has instituted a set of rules and patterns that legitimated its authority, a mode of tactical governance that Feldman describes as "legitimacy in abeyance," which is a mode of tactical governance. Successive foreign governments did not contribute to what could be called an evolutionary process of governance, whereby strategic decisions were made and applied in the interest of long-term stability. Rather, Gazans stagnated around a set of polices of less significance than what should have mattered most to them, namely their independence and their national rights.

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