Eyal Weizman

Lethal Theory

The maneuver conducted by units of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in Nablus in April 2002 was described by its commander, Brigadier General Aviv Kokhavi, as *inverse geometry*, the reorganization of the urban syntax by means of a series of microtactical actions. During the battle, soldiers moved within the city across hundred-meter-long "over-ground-tunnels" carved through a dense and contiguous urban fabric. Although several thousand soldiers and several hundred Palestinian guerrilla fighters were maneuvering simultaneously in the city, they were so "saturated" within its fabric that very few would have been visible from an aerial perspective at any given moment. Furthermore, soldiers used none of the streets, roads, alleys, or courtyards that constitute the syntax of the city, and none of the external doors, internal stairwells, and windows that constitute the order of buildings, but rather moved horizontally through party walls, and vertically through holes blasted in ceilings and floors.[1] This form of movement, described by the military as "infestation," sought to redefine inside as outside, and domestic interiors as thoroughfares. Rather than submit to the authority of conventional spatial boundaries and logic, movement became constitutive of space. The three-dimensional progression through walls, ceilings, and floors across the urban balk reinterpreted, short-circuited, and recomposed both architectural and urban syntax. The IDF's strategy of "walking through walls" involved a conception of the city as not just the site, but the very *medium* of warfare – a flexible, almost liquid medium that is forever contingent and in flux.

The fact that most contemporary military operations are staged in cities suggests an urgent need to reflect on an emergent relationship between armed conflicts and the built environment. Contemporary urban warfare plays itself out within a constructed, real or imaginary architecture, and through the destruction, construction, reorganization, and subversion of space. As such, the urban environment is increasingly understood by military thinkers not simply as the backdrop for conflict, nor as its mere consequence, but as a dynamic field locked in a feedback-based relationship with

1. In fact, after serving their original purpose, the openings forced through the walls become part of the syntax of the city and are not reused for military purposes.

the diverse forces operating within it – local populations, soldiers, guerrilla fighters, journalists and photographers, and humanitarian agents.

This essay belongs to a larger investigation of the ways in which contemporary military theorists are conceptualizing the urban domain. What are the terms they are using to think about cities? What does the language employed by the military to describe the city to themselves (for example, at international conferences dealing with urban warfare) and to the general public (most often through the media) tell us about the relationship between organized violence and the production of space? What does this language tell us about the military as an institution? Not least important is the question of the role of theory in all these operations.

At stake are the underlying concepts, assumptions, and principles that determine military strategies and tactics. The vast "intellectual field" that geographer Stephen Graham has called an international "shadow world" of military urban research institutes and training centers that have been established to rethink military operations in cities could be understood as somewhat similar to the international matrix of elite architectural academies. However, according to urban theorist Simon Marvin, the military-architectural "shadow world" is currently generating more intense and well-funded urban research programs than all these university programs put together, and is certainly aware of the avant-garde urban research conducted in architectural institutions, especially as regards Third World and African cities.[2] Interesting is the fact that there is a considerable overlap among the theoretical texts considered "essential" by military academies and architectural schools. Indeed, the reading lists of contemporary military institutions include works from around 1968 (with a special emphasis on the writings of Deleuze, Guattari, and Debord), as well as more contemporary writings on urbanism, psychology, cybernetics, and postcolonial and poststructuralist theory. If writers claiming that the space for criticality has to some extent withered away in late 20th-century capitalist culture are right, it surely seems to have found a place to flourish in the military.

What has emerged from a sustained investigation of this phenomenon is a convergence among trends in the practical application of critical theory, such that the discourses which shaped thinking in various academic fields toward the end of the 20th century have been employed – in an instrumental and straightforward manner (and thus not at all) – for the production of new architectural methodologies as well as for

2. Simon Marvin, "Military Urban Research Programmes: Normalising the Remote Control ofCities." Paper delivered to the conference "Cities as Strategic Sites: Militarisation, Anti-Globalisation & Warfare," Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures, Manchester, November 2002. The proliferation ofthese institutions could be in part the result ofthe reduced presence of the military on university campuses since the Vietnam War.

the reinvigoration of warfare. While I will not compare the uses of critical theory in architecture with its application by the Israeli military, a close examination of the latter certainly reflects on the former, insofar as it illustrates a more general problem of the relationship between theory and practice. In this context, I would like to concentrate on the ways in which theoretical discourse is being used by the IDF, with a focus on the conceptual frameworks that its strategists claim have been instrumental in the development of contemporary urban warfare tactics.

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The method of "walking through walls" that the IDF employed in the April 2002 battle of Nablus was developed from the necessities of a tactical condition. Palestinian resistance composed of about 1,000 guerrilla fighters from all Palestinian armed organizations had barricaded all entries to the Kasbah (old city) of Nablus and the adjacent Balata refugee camp by filling oil barrels with cement, digging trenches, and piling up trash and rubble. Streets and alleys were mined along their length with improvised explosives and tanks of gasoline. Entrances to buildings facing these routes were also booby-trapped, as were the interiors of some prominent or strategically important structures. Several independent bands lightly armed with AK47s, RPGs, and explosives were organized deep within the camp and based along major routes or at prominent intersections. In an interview I conducted with Aviv Kokhavi, commander of the Paratrooper Brigade, and at age 42 one of the most promising young officers of the IDF,[3] he explained the principle that guided the battle. In order to put this interview in context, it is important to note that Kokhavi took time off from active service, like many career officers, to earn a university degree. He originally intended to study architecture, but ultimately pursued philosophy at the Hebrew University. In one of his many recent interviews in the press, he claimed that his military practice is influenced to a great extent by both disciplines.[4] What was interesting for me in his explanation of the principle of the battle was not so much the description of the action itself as the way he conceived its articulation.

This space that you look at, this room that you look at, is nothing but your interpretation of it. Now, you can stretch the boundaries of your interpretation, but not in an unlimited fashion, after all, it must be bound by physics, as it contains buildings and alleys. The question is, how do you interpret the alley? Do you interpret the alley as a place, like every architect and every town planner does,

Brigadier General Aviv Kokhavi, commander of the Paratrooper Brigade of the Israeli Defense Forces. Photo courtesy the author.

3. Kokhavi was the commander of the IDF operation for the evacuation of settlements in the Gaza Strip.
4. Chen Kotes-Bar, "Starring Him (Bekikhuvo)," *Ma'ariv*, April 22, 2005 (in Hebrew).

Paratroopers moving through a ceiling in Nablus's old city center. Photo: Operation theory Research Institute (OTRI), 2002.

to walk through, or do you interpret the alley as a place forbidden to walk through? This depends only on interpretation. We interpreted the alley as a place forbidden to walk through, and the door as a place forbidden to pass through, and the window as a place forbidden to look through, because a weapon awaits us in the alley, and a booby trap awaits us behind the doors. This is because the enemy interprets space in a traditional, classical manner, and I do not want to obey this interpretation and fall into his traps. Not only do I not want to fall into his traps, I want to surprise him! This is the essence of war. I need to win. I need to emerge from an unexpected place. And this is what we tried to do.

This is why we opted for the methodology of moving through walls. . . . Like a worm that eats its way forward, emerging at points and then disappearing. We were thus moving from the interior of homes to their exterior in a surprising manner and in places we were not expected, arriving from behind and hitting the enemy that awaited us behind a corner. . . . Because it was the first time that this methodology was tested [at such a scale], during the operation itself we were learning how to adjust ourselves to the relevant urban space, and similarly, how to adjust the relevant urban space to our needs. . . . We took this microtactical practice [of moving through walls] and turned it into a method, and thanks to this method, we were able to interpret the whole space differently! . . . I said to my troops, "Friends! This is not a matter of your choice! There is no other way of moving! If until now you were used to moving along roads and sidewalks, forget it! From now on we all walk through walls!"[5]

Kokhavi's intention in the battle was not to capture and hold ground, but to enter the city in order to kill members of the Palestinian resistance and then get out. The horrific frankness of these objectives – as told to me directly by Shimon Naveh, Kokhavi's instructor, whom will we later meet – is part of a general Israeli policy that seeks to disrupt Palestinian resistance on political as well as military levels through "targeted assassinations" from both air and ground. The assumption, at least on the military level, is that, because there is no possibility of military training for Palestinians, the principal assets of the resistance are experienced fighters and political leaders.[6] It is mainly, but not exclusively, this aspect of the operation that would explain current calls for Kokhavi to face a war crimes tribunal.[7] This will be the subject of a future article.

In a meeting called by Kokhavi in preparation for this operation, he explained to his officers the problems they faced in the impending operation. The Palestinians "have set the stage for a fighting spectacle in which they expect us,

5. Eyal Weizman interview with Aviv Kokhavi, September 24, 2004, at an Israeli military base near Tel Aviv. Translated from the Hebrew by the author; video documentation by Nadav Harel and Zohar Kaniel.

6. IDF forces killed almost 80 Palestinian guerrilla fighters in this battle. The military now claims that ifthe political establishment had allowed the military to continue this operation, Kokhavi's troops would have killed hundreds, but the pressure built up in the aftermath of the battle of Jenin brought the operation to a halt. Eyal Weizman telephone interview with Shimon Naveh, March 7, 2006. In this context, Naveh later said that "the military thinks like criminals. It enters into an area and starts killing the insurgents one by one."

7. Kokhavi captured the attention ofthe media recently when the chieflegal advisor to the IDF recommended that he not make a planned trip to a UK-based military academy for fear he could be prosecuted for "war crimes" in Britain. Cf. an earlier statement implicating Kokhavi in war crimes in Neve Gordon, "Aviv Kokhavi, How Did You Become a War Criminal?"www.counterpunch.org-/nevegordon1.html (April 8, 2002).

8. Quoted in Shimon Naveh, "Between the Striated and the Smooth: Urban Enclaves and Fractal Maneuvers." Paper delivered to the conference organized by myself, Anselm Franke, and Thomas Keenan, "An Archipelago of Exception," Centre for Contemporary Culture, Barcelona, November 11, 2005.
9. Quoted in Naveh, "Between the Striated and the Smooth."
10. At least 80 Palestinians were killed in Nablus, most of them civilians, between March 29 and April 22, 2002. Four Israeli soldiers were killed; see www.amnesty.org (February 12, 2003).
11. In fact, the idea for the maneuver is attributed to a platoon commander and a sergeant from one of the units, both from the same kibbutz. See Naveh, "Between the Striated and the Smooth."
12. In the survey, Nurhan Abujidi found that 19.6 percent of buildings affected by forced routes had only one opening, 16.5 percent had two, 13.4 percent had three, 4.1 percent had four, 2.1 percent had five and 1.0 percent (two buildings) had eight. See Nurhan Abujidi, "Forced To Forget: Cultural Identity & Collective Memory/Urbicide. The Case of the Palestinian Territories, During Israeli Invasions to Nablus Historic Center 2002–2005." Unpublished paper presented to the workshop "Urbicide: The Killing of Cities?" Durham University, November 2005.

when attacking the enclave, to obey the logic that they have determined . . . to come in old-style mechanized formations, in cohesive lines and massed columns conforming to the geometrical order of the street network."[8] After analyzing and discussing this situation with his subordinate officers, Kokhavi included the following paragraph in his battle plan: *We completely isolate the camp, in daylight, creating the impression of a forthcoming systematic siege operation . . . [and then] apply a fractal maneuver swarming simultaneously from every direction and through various dimensions of the enclave. . . . Each unit reflects in its mode of action both the logic and form of the general maneuver. . . . Our movement through the buildings pushes [the insurgents] into the streets and alleys, where we hunt them down.*[9]

The attack started on April 3, 2002, when IDF troops cut off electrical, telephone, and water connections to the entire city, positioned snipers and surveillance posts on the mountains and on the high buildings that surrounded the area, and cordoned off the city and its surrounding camps in a perimeter closure.[10] At this point, a large number of small military units entered the camp from all directions simultaneously, moving through walls and the homes of civilians rather than along the routes where they were expected.[11]

A survey conducted after the battle by the Palestinian architect Nurhan Abujidi showed that more than half of the buildings in the old city center of Nablus had routes forced through them, resulting in anywhere from one to eight openings in their walls, floors, or ceilings, which created several haphazard crossroutes that she could not understand as describing simple linear progression, and which indicated to her a very chaotic maneuver without a clear direction.[12]

For anyone who might imagine that moving through walls is a relatively "gentle" form of warfare, the following is a description of the sequence of the events: Soldiers assemble behind a wall. Using explosives or a large hammer, they break a hole large enough to pass through. Their charge through the wall is sometimes preceded by stun grenades or a few random shots into what is most often a private living room occupied by unsuspecting civilians. When the soldiers have passed through the party wall, the occupants are assembled and locked inside one of the rooms, where they are made to remain – sometimes for several days – until the operation is concluded, often without water, toilet, food, or medicine. According to Human Rights Watch and the Israeli human rights organization B'tselem, dozens of Palestinians have died during such operations. If moving through walls is
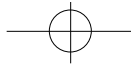
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The Assault on the City of Nablus
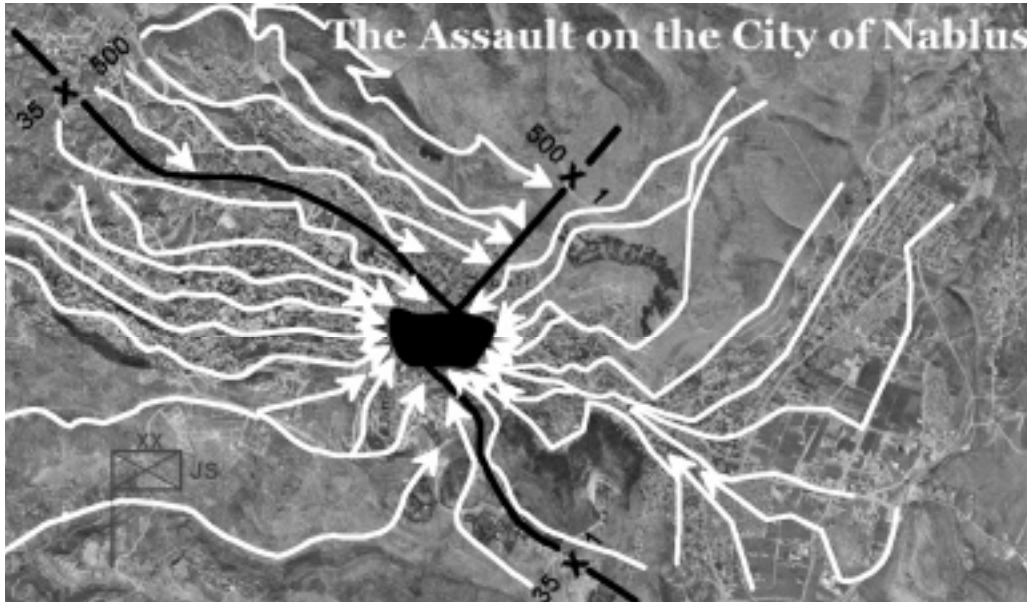
pitched by the military as its "humane" answer to the wanton destruction of traditional urban warfare, and as an "elegant" alternative to Jenin-style destruction, this is because the damage it causes is often concealed within the interiors of homes. The unexpected penetration of war into the private domain of the home has been experienced by civilians in Palestine, just like in Iraq, as the most profound form of trauma and humiliation. A Palestinian woman identified as Aisha, interviewed by a journalist for the *Palestine Monitor*, Sune Segal, in November 2002, described the experience:

Imagine it – you're sitting in your living room, which you know so well; this is the room where the family watches television together after the evening meal. . . . And, suddenly, that wall disappears with a deafening roar, the room fills with dust and debris, and through the wall pours one soldier after the other, screaming orders. You have no idea if they're after you, if they've come to take over your home, or if your house just lies on their route to somewhere else. The children are screaming, panicking. . . . Is it possible to even begin to imagine the horror experienced by a five-year-old child as four, six, eight, twelve soldiers, their faces painted black, submachine guns pointed everywhere, antennas protruding from their backpacks, making them look like giant alien bugs, blast their way through that wall?[13]

Pointing to another wall now covered by a bookcase, she added: "And this is where they left. They blew up the wall and continued to our neighbor's house."[14]

Shimon Naveh, a retired brigadier general, directs the Operational Theory Research Institute, which is affiliated

13. Sune Segal, "What Lies Beneath:
Excerpts from an Invasion," *Palestine
Monitor*, November 2002;
www.palestinemonitor.org/eyewitness
/Westbank/what_lies_beneath_by_sune
_segal.htm (June 9, 2005). See also
Abujidi, "Forced to Forget."
14. Segal, "What Lies Beneath: Excerpts
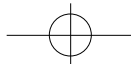from an Invasion."

with the military and trains staff officers from the IDF and other militaries in "operational theory" – defined in military jargon as somewhere between strategy and tactics. In an interview, Naveh summed up the mission of his institute, which was founded in 1996.
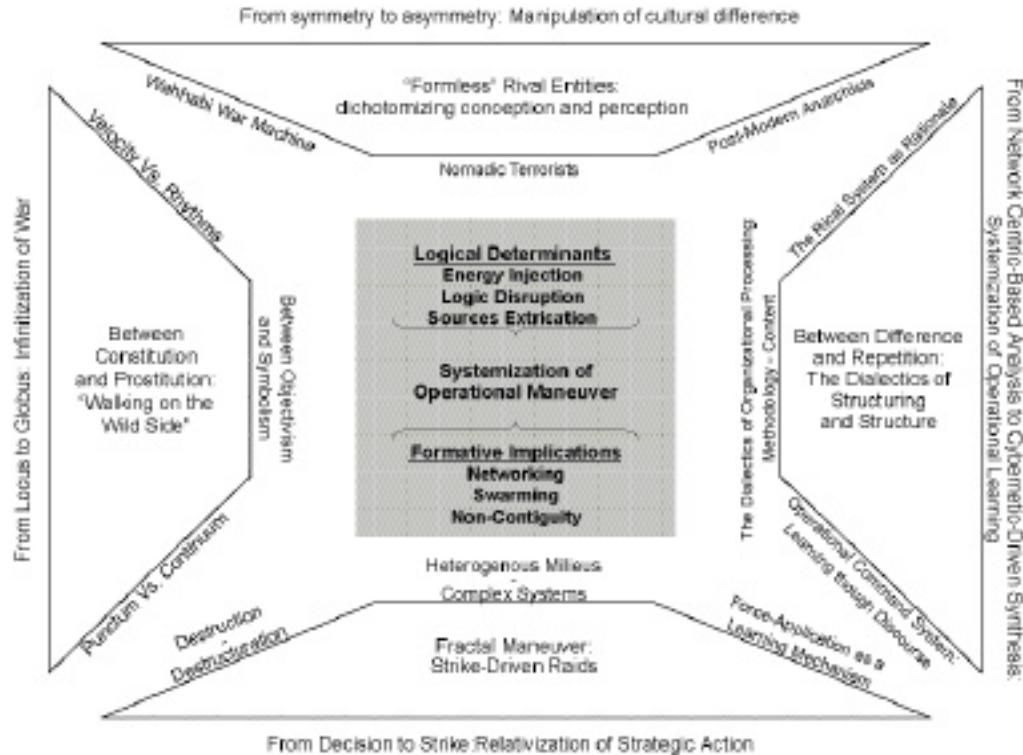
We are like the Jesuit order. We attempt to teach and train soldiers to think. . . . We read Christopher Alexander (can you imagine?). We read John Forester, and other architects. We are reading Gregory Bateson, we are reading Clifford Geertz. Not just myself, but our soldiers, our generals are reflecting on these kinds of materials. We have established a school and developed a curriculum that trains "operational architects."[15]

In a lecture, Naveh presented a diagram resembling a "square of opposition" that plots a set of logical relationships among certain propositions relative to military and guerrilla operations. Indications like *Difference and Repetition – The Dialectics of Structuring and Structure*; *"Formless" Rival Entities*; *Fractal Maneuver: Strike-Driven Raids*; *Velocity vs. Rhythms*; *Wahhabi War Machine*; *Post-Modern Anarchists*; *Nomadic Terrorists*, and so on, resonate with the language of Deleuze and Guattari.[16] In our interview, I asked Naveh, why Deleuze and Guattari?[17] He replied:

Several of the concepts in A Thousand Plateaus *became instrumental for us . . . allowing us to explain contemporary situations in a way that we could not have otherwise explained them. It problematized our own paradigms. . . . Most important was the distinction they have pointed out between the concepts of "smooth" and "striated" space . . . [which accordingly reflect] the organizational concepts of the "war machine"*[18] *and the "state apparatus." . . . In the IDF we now often use the term "to smooth out space" when we want to refer to operation in a space as if it had no borders. We try to produce the operational space in such a manner that borders do not affect us. Palestinian areas could indeed be thought of as "striated," in the sense that they are enclosed by fences, walls, ditches, roadblocks, and so on. . . . We want to confront the "striated" space of traditional, old-fashioned military practice [the way most IDF units presently operate] with smoothness that allows for movement through space that crosses any borders and barriers. Rather than contain and organize our forces according to existing borders, we want to move through them.*[19]

And when I asked him if moving through walls was part of it, he explained that "in Nablus, the IDF understood urban fighting as a spatial problem. . . . Traveling through walls is a simple mechanical solution that connects theory and practice. Transgressing boundaries is the definition of the condition of 'smoothness.'"[20]

15. Shimon Naveh, discussion following the talk "Dicta Clausewitz: Fractal Manoeuvre: A Brief History of Future Warfare in Urban Environments," delivered in conjunction with "States Of Emergency: The Geography of Human Rights," a debate organized by myself and Anselm Franke as part of "Territories Live," B'tzalel Gallery, Tel Aviv, November 5, 2004.

16. Naveh, "Dicta Clausewitz"; cf. Naveh's titles to those in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (New York and London: Continuum: 2004); Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), among others.

17. Eyal Weizman telephone interview with Shimon Naveh, October 14, 2005.

18. War machines, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are polymorphous and diffuse organizations characterized by their capacity for metamorphosis. They are made up of small groups that split up or merge with one another depending on contingency and circumstances. Deleuze and Guattari were aware that the State can willingly transform itself into a war machine. Similarly, in their discussion of "smooth space," it is implied that this conception may lead to domination.

19. See also Shimon Naveh, *Asymmetric Conflict, An Operational Reflection on Hegemonic Strategies* (Tel Aviv: The Eshed Group for Operational Knowledge, 2005), 9.

20. Interview with Naveh, October 14, 2005.

Weizman3 5/9/06 3:07 PM Page 60

From symmetry to asymmetry: Manipulation of cultural difference

"Formless" Rival Entities: dichotomizing conception and perception

Nomadic Terrorists

Wahhabi War Machine

Velocity Vs. Rhythms

Post-Modern Anarchism

From Network Centric-Based Analysis to Cybernetic-Driven Synthesis: Systemization of Operational Learning

From Locus to Globus: Infiltration of War

Between Constitution and Prostitution: "Walking on the Wild Side"

Between Objectivism and Symbolism

Logical Determinants
Energy Injection
Logic Disruption
Sources Extrication

Systemization of
Operational Maneuver

Formative Implications
Networking
Swarming
Non-Contiguity

Between Difference and Repetition: The Dialectics of Structuring and Structure

The Rival System as Rationale

The Dialectics of Organizational Processing Methodology – Content

Punctum Vs. Continuum

Destruction Destructuration

Heterogenous Milieus – Complex Systems

Operational Command System: Learning through Discourse

Force-Application as a Learning Mechanism

Fractal Maneuver: Strike-Driven Raids

From Decision to Strike:Relativization of Strategic Action

SHIMON NAVEH'S POWERPOINT SLIDE MARKING "CONNECTION" BETWEEN THEORETICAL CATEGORIES THAT INFORM HIS OPERATIONAL THEORY. NOTE MOST CATEGORIES REFER TO WORK OF DELEUZE AND GUATTARI.

Laws and unmarked frontiers remain . . . unwritten laws. . . . And thus when frontiers are decided the adversary is not simply annihilated; indeed, he is accorded rights even when the victor's superiority in power is complete. And there are, in a demonically ambiguous way, "equal" rights: for both parties to the treaty it is the same line that may not be crossed.

– Walter Benjamin[21]

21. Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott(New York: Schocken Books and Random House, New York, 1989), 295–96.

This also corresponds to strategic positions developed at the Operational Theory Research Institute which bear on general political questions. Naveh supported the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, as well as the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon before it was undertaken in 2000. He is similarly in favor of withdrawal from the West Bank. In fact, his political position is in line with what is referred to in Israel as the Zionist Left. His vote alternates between Labor and Meretz parties. And his position is that the IDF must replace *presence in* occupied areas with the capacity to *move through* them, or produce in them what he calls "effects," or "military operations such as aerial attacks or commando raids . . . that affect the enemy psychologically and organizationally." As such, "whatever line they [the politicians] could agree upon – there they should put the fence. This is okay

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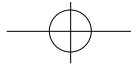
with me . . . as long as I can cross this fence. What we need is not to be there, but . . . to act there. . . . Withdrawal is not the end of the story."

Naveh's precondition for withdrawal – "as long as I can cross this fence" – implies a conditional withdrawal that can be annulled in times of emergency. In fact, Israel's preconditions for any territorial compromise and the drawing of temporary borderlines since the Oslo Accords have been accompanied in every case by a clause of exception that guaranteed Israel's right, under certain circumstances which it could itself declare, to "hot pursuit," that is, to break into Palestinian controlled areas, enter neighborhoods and homes in search of suspects, and take suspects into custody for purposes of interrogation and detention in Israel. This undoubtedly undoes much of the perceived symmetrical nature of walls implied in Benjamin's poignant reflection on laws and borders. As long as this clause pertaining to "hot pursuit" is included in Israeli–Palestinian agreements, Israel still remains sovereign in Palestinian territories, if only because it can declare the exception that would allow it to move through the wall and then within Palestinian cities.[22]

22. In a press conference on the Hebron Accord, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quoted as saying, "Hot pursuit is a sub-issue. It's a specific instance of a generic issue, and the generic issue is the freedom of action of Israel to protect its citizens wherever they are. And against whatever threats emanate from anywhere";
www.mfa.gov.il (January 13, 1997).
23. Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London and New York: Verso, 1979), 295.
24. Interview with Naveh, October 14, 2005.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out the sphere of life – bios – graphically on a map. First I envisaged an ordinary map, but now I would incline to a general staff's map of a city center, if such a thing existed. Doubtless it does not, because of the ignorance of the theatre of future wars.

<p style="text-align:right">– Walter Benjamin[23]</p>

To understand the IDF's tactics for moving through Palestinian urban spaces, it is necessary to understand how they interpret the by now familiar principle of "swarming" – a term that has been a buzzword in military theory since the start of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) after the end of the Cold War. In our interview, Kokhavi explained the way he understands the concept:
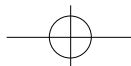
A state military whose enemy is scattered like a network of loosely organized gangs . . . must liberate itself from the old concept of straight lines, units in linear formation, regiments and battalions, . . . and become itself much more diffuse and scattered, flexible and swarmlike. . . . In fact, it must adjust itself to the stealthy capability of the enemy. . . . Swarming, to my understanding, is simultaneous arrival at a target from a large number of nodes – if possible, from 360 degrees.[24]
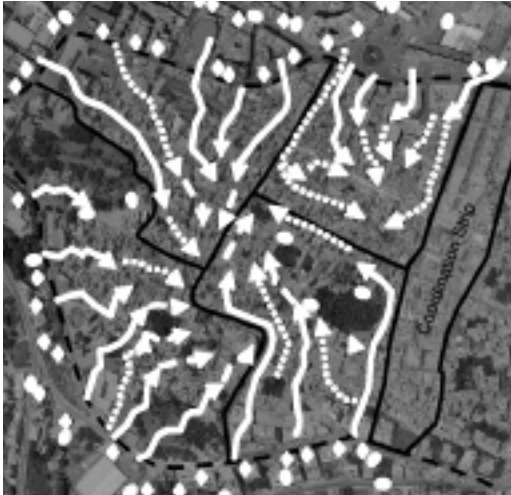
Elsewhere, Naveh has said that a swarm "has no form, no front, back, or flanks, but moves like a cloud" (this seems

25. Greenberg, "The Limited Conflict."
26. See Eric Bonabeau, Marco Dorigo, and Guy Theraulaz, *Swarm Intelligence: From Natural to Artificial Systems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also Sean J. A. Edwards, *Swarming on the Battlefield: Past, Present and Future* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000) and John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, eds., *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001).
27. Naveh, "Between the Striated and the Smooth."

to be a direct reference to T. E. Lawrence [of Arabia], in whose book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* he mentioned guerrillas ought to operate "like a cloud of gas") and should be measured by location, velocity, and density, rather than power and mass.[25] The swarm maneuver was in fact adapted from the Artificial Intelligence principle of "swarm intelligence," which assumes that problem-solving capacities are found in the interaction and communication of relatively unsophisticated agents (ants, birds, bees, soldiers) without (or with minimal) centralized control. "Swarm intelligence" thus refers to the overall, combined intelligence of a system, rather than to the intelligence of its component parts. It is the system itself that learns through interaction and adaptation to emergent situations.[26]

For Naveh, the swarm exemplifies the principle of "nonlinearity." This principle is apparent in spatial, organizational, and temporal terms. In what follows I will explain the way the military understands this nonlinearity. Although this concept implies some structural changes, claims for radical transformation are largely overstated. In *spatial* terms, swarming seeks to conduct its attacks from the inside out and in all directions simultaneously. This is in contrast to linear operations (what Naveh calls the "subjection of maneuvers to Euclidean logic")[27] that rely on the authority of borderlines, on distinctions between front, rear, and depth, and on military columns progressing from outside into the city. Lines of movement are not straight, but tend to progress in wild zigzags in order to disorient the enemy. The traditional maneuver paradigm, characterized by the simplified geometry of Euclidean order, is transformed, according to the military, into a complex "fractal"-like

geometry. One must remember that this break with linearity
could obviously only be achieved because the military con-
trols all the roads in the West Bank and all other very *linear*
supply lines. It is a nonlinearity that is thus positioned at the
very end of a very linear geometrical order of IDF control in
the West Bank, as well as a command system that is explained
as "nonhierarchical," but is in fact located at the very tactical
end of a *hierarchical* system.

In *organizational* terms, instead of fixed linear or ver-
tical chains of command and communications, swarms
are coordinated as polycentric networks with a horizontal
form of communication, in which each "autarkic unit"
(Naveh's term) can communicate with the others without
going through central command. The physical cohesion of
the fighting units is, according to the military, replaced with
a conceptual one. Naveh believes that this "form of maneuver
is based on the break with all hierarchies, with the command
practice on the tactical level coordinating discussion. It's a
wild discourse with almost no rules," one that creates "a
community of practice."[28] The claimed breakdown of vertical
hierarchies in militaries is very much rhetorical, military
networks still being largely nested within strong, inbuilt insti-
tutional hierarchies. The hierarchy, according to Kokhavi,
can be seen as a fractal logic that is exemplified by the fact
that "each unit . . . reflects in its mode of action both the
logic and form of the general maneuver."[29] Naveh explained
the reason for this: "Although so much is invested in intel-
ligence, fighting in the city is still incalculable and messy.
Battles cannot be scripted. Command cannot have an
overview. Decisions to act must be based on chance, contin-
gency and opportunity, and these must be taken only on the

28. See Ryan Bishop, "The Vertical Order
Has Come to an End: The Insignia of the
Military C3I and Urbanism in Global
Networks," in Ryan Bishop, John Phillips
and Wei-Wei Yeo, eds., *Beyond Description:
Space Historicity Singapore, Architext Series*
(London and New York: Routledge,
2004).
29. Interview with Kokhavi, September
2004.

30. Interview with Naveh, October 14, 2005.

31. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (1832), trans. Peter Paret, eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 119–21. See also Manuel De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 78–79.

32. Manuel De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, 71.

33. Michel Foucault's description of theory as a "toolbox" was originally developed in conjunction with Deleuze in a 1972 discussion. See Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power," in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. and intro. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 206.

34. Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars*. See also Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1997).

ground and in real time."[30] The theory is that by lowering the thresholds of decision-making to the immediate tactical level, and by the encouragement of local initiative, different parts of the swarm can provide answers to unpredictable encounters, to rapidly developing situations, and to changing events – to all the forms of uncertainty, chance, and uncontrolled eventualities that Carl von Clausewitz called "friction."[31] Indeed, according to Manuel De Landa, already in von Clausewitz's theory of the war of the post-Napoleonic era, local initiative and diffused command and control allowed a dynamic battle to self-organize to some extent.[32]

In *temporal* terms, traditional military operations are linear, in the sense that they seek to follow a determined, consequential sequence of events embodied in the idea of "the plan." In traditional military terms, the idea of "the plan" implies that actions are preconditioned to some degree on the successful implementation of previous actions. Battles progress in stages. A swarm, by contrast, induces simultaneous actions, but these actions are not dependent on one another. The narrative of the battle plan is to be replaced by what the military calls "the toolbox" approach,[33] according to which units receive the tools they need to deal with several given situations and scenarios, but cannot predict the order in which these events would actually occur. A qualifying remark must be added here as well: The toolbox approach, which indeed restructured the formation of operative units on the battlefield, is relevant mainly on the tactical and microtactical level, whereas any general operation is still given a clear (traditionally) planned form and timeline. Another aspect is the tempo of urban operations: In contrast to the traditional military paradigm, IDF operations in urban areas are not based on speed and do not seek fast and decisive results. Operations are days if not weeks long, and operate at a rather slow pace as the infiltrated forces spend most of their time waiting for opportunities or for the enemy to make mistakes.

In general terms, with swarm maneuvers, the military seeks to reorganize in a way that is influenced by the organization of a guerrilla network. This act of mimicry is based on the assumption, articulated by military theorists John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, that "it takes a network to combat a network."[34] Naveh's analaysis may explain the military's fascination with the spatial and organizational models and modes of operation advanced by theorists like Deleuze and Guattari:

The concept of the swarm corresponds with military attempts to understand the battle space as a network, and the city as a very

URBAN TERRAIN

Supersurface

Airspace

Airspace

Interior

Exterior

Surface

Surface
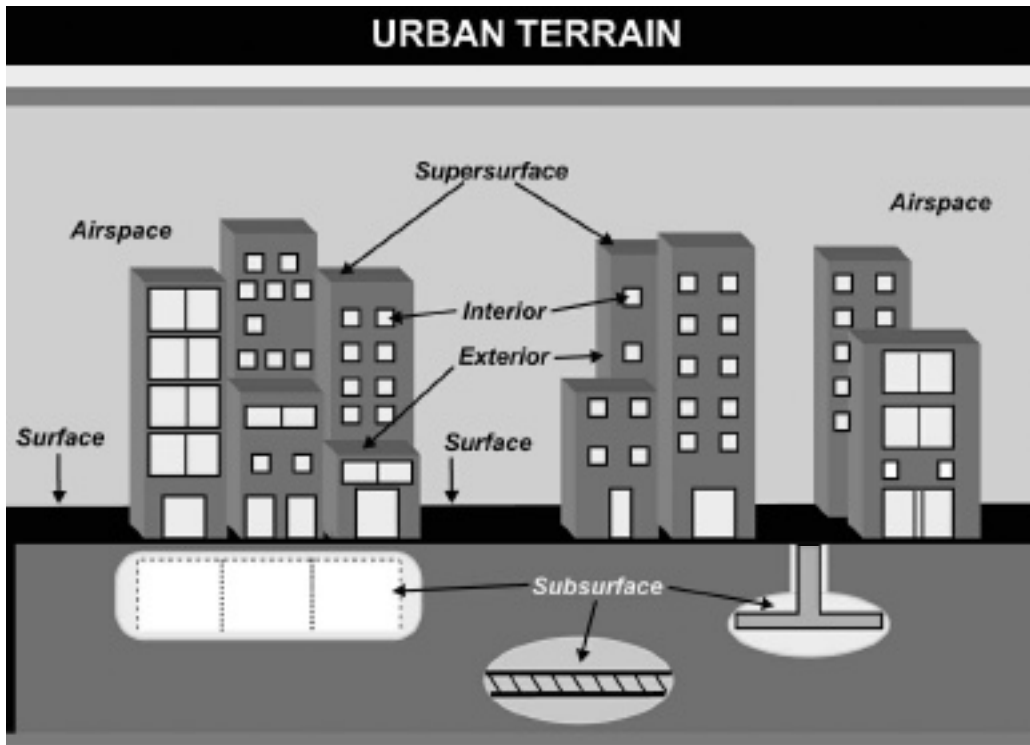
Subsurface

complex system of interdependent networks. Furthermore, urban combat takes place within a field in which two opposing military networks overlap spatially. The battle must be understood as a dynamic, relational force-field in which soldiers, objects, and actions must be seen in constant and contingent relation with other soldiers, objects, and actions. . . . These relations imply intersection, convergence, cooperation, or conflict. Their relationality must be seen as the central feature of military spatiality.

Relationships among the operating soldiers create what we call "a community of practice": Operative and tactical commanders depend on one another and learn the problems through constructing the battle narrative. . . . Action becomes knowledge and knowledge becomes action. . . . Without the possibility of a decisive result, the main benefit of operations is the very improvement of the system as a system.[35]

35. Interview with Naveh, October 14, 2005.

In fact, although celebrated now as radically new, many of the procedures and processes described above have been part and parcel of urban operations throughout history. The defenders of the Paris Commune, much like those of the Kasbah of Algiers, Hue, Beirut, Jenin, and Nablus, navigated the city in small, loosely coordinated groups moving through openings and connections between homes, basements, and courtyards using alternative routes, secret passageways, and trapdoors. Unable to control the pockets of Red Army resist-

36. Col. Eric M. Walters, "Stalingrad, 1942: With Will, Weapon, and a Watch," in Col. John Antal and Maj. Bradley Gericke, eds., *City Fights* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 59.
37. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Plum Books, 1991).
38. Sharon Rotbard, *White City, Black City* (Tel Aviv: Babel Press, 2005), 178.
39. Marshal Thomas Bugeaud, *La Guerre des Rues et des Maisons* (Paris: J.-P. Rocher, 1997). The manuscript was written in 1849 at Bugeaud's estate in the Dordogne, after his failure to quickly suppress the events of 1848. He did not manage to find a publisher for the book, but distributed a small edition among colleagues. In the text, Bugeaud suggested widening Parisian streets and removing corner buildings at strategic crossroads to allow a wider field of vision. These and other suggestions were implemented by Haussmann several years later; see Rotbard, *White City, Black City.*
40. Auguste Blanqui, *Instructions pour une prise d'armes* (Paris: Société encyclopédique française, 1972); see www.marxists.org/francais/blanqui/1866/instructions.htm (September 25, 2005).

ance scattered through Stalingrad, Vasily Ivanovich Chuikov gave up centralized control of his army. The result was later analyzed as a form of "emergent behavior," where the interaction between the independent units created a so-called "complex adaptive system," rendering the total effect of military action greater than the sum of its parts.[36]

"Maneuver Warfare," as developed by several military theorists in the period between the two world wars and practiced by the Wehrmacht as well as the Allies in European battles of World War II, is based on principles such as increased autonomy and initiative.[37] Similarly, the strategy of walking through walls, as Israeli architect Sharon Rotbard reminds us, is reinvented for every urban battle in response to local conditions.[38] It was first described in Marshal Thomas Bugeaud's 1849 draft of *La Guerre des Rues et des Maisons,* in the context of anti-insurgency tactics used in the class-based urban battles of 19th-century Paris.[39] Instead of storming the barricades from the front, Bugeaud recommended entering the barricaded block at a different location and "mouse-holing" along "over-ground tunnels" that cut across party walls, then taking the barricade by surprise from the flank. On the other side of the barricades and a decade later, Louis-August Blanqui wrote this microtactical maneuver into his *Instructions pour une prise d'armes.*[40] For Blanqui, the barricade and the mouse-hole were complementary elements employed for the protection of self-governing urban enclaves. This was achieved by a complete inversion of the urban syntax. Elements of circulation – paving stones and carriages – became elements of stasis (barricades), while the existing elements of stasis – walls – became routes. The fight in the city, and for the city, was equated with its interpretation. No longer merely the locus of war, the city became its medium and its very apparatus.

However, despite historical similarities, contemporary swarming is dependent not only on the ability to move through walls, but on the technological capability of independent units to orient, navigate, and coordinate with other units across the city's depth. In order to perform such maneuvers, each unit must understand its position in the urban geography, its position relative to those of other units and "enemies" within its operational space, as well as its position in relation to the logic of the maneuver as a whole. An Israeli soldier I interviewed described the beginning of a similar battle like this:

We never left the buildings, and progressed entirely between homes. . . . It takes a few hours to move through a block of four

SHIMON NAVEH, RETIRED BRIGADIER GENERAL AND DIRECTOR OF THE OPERATIONAL THEORY RESEARCH INSTITUTE. ABOUT 60 YEARS OLD, HIS BALD HEAD AND SOME MEASURE OF PHYSICAL RESEMBLANCE HAVE LED SOME TO REFER TO NAVEH AS "FOUCAULT ON STEROIDS." PHOTO: NADAV HAREL.

41. Eyal Weizman interview with Gil Fishbein, Tel Aviv, September 4, 2002. Fishbein describes the first stages of the battle of Jenin and not Nablus, however, the early stages of the two battles were rather similar before the bulldozers were brought into Jenin.
42. Quoted in Yagil Henkin, "The Best Way Into Baghdad," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2003, Section A, 21.
43. Interview with Naveh, October 14, 2005.

homes. . . . We were all – the entire brigade – inside the homes of the Palestinians, no one was in the streets. . . . During the entire battle we hardly ventured out. . . . Anyone who was on the street without cover got shot. . . . We had our headquarters and sleeping encampments in carved-out spaces in these buildings.[41]

Indeed, as far as the military is concerned, urban warfare is the ultimate postmodern form of warfare. Belief in a logically structured and single-track battle plan is lost in the face of the complexity and ambiguity of the urban reality. "It becomes," as the same soldier later indicated, "impossible to draw up battle scenarios or single-track plans to pursue." Civilians become combatants, and combatants become civilians again. Identity can be changed as quickly as gender can be feigned: the transformation of women into fighting men can occur at the speed that it takes an undercover "Arabized" Israeli soldier or a camouflaged Palestinian fighter to pull a machine gun out from under a dress. For a Palestinian fighter caught in the crosshairs of this battle, Israelis seem "to be everywhere: behind, on the sides, on the right, and on the left. How can you fight that way?"[42] Since Palestinian guerrilla fighters were sometimes maneuvering in a similar manner, through preplanned openings, most fighting took place in private homes. Some buildings became like layer cakes, with Israeli soldiers both above and below a floor where Palestinians were trapped.

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During our interview, Naveh explained how critical theory has become crucial for his teaching and training:
We employ critical theory primarily in order to critique the military institution itself – its fixed and heavy conceptual foundations. . . . Theory is important for us in order to articulate the gap between the existing paradigm and where we want to go. . . . Without theory, we could not make sense of different events that happen around us and that would otherwise seem disconnected. . . . We set up the Institute because we believed in education and needed an academy to develop ideas. . . . At present, the Institute has a tremendous impact on the military . . . . [It has] become a subversive node within it. By training several high-ranking officers, we filled the system [IDF] with subversive agents . . . who ask questions. . . . Some of the top brass are not embarrassed to talk about Deleuze or Tschumi.[43]
My question to him was, why Tschumi?!
The idea of disjunction embodied in Tschumi's book Architecture and Disjunction *became relevant for us. . . . Tschumi had another approach to epistemology; he wanted to break with single-perspective knowledge and centralized thinking. He saw the world*

44. Naveh is currently working on a Hebrew translation of Bernard Tschumi's *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997).

45. Interview with Naveh, October 14, 2005.

46. A Palestinian woman described her experience of the battle in this way: "Go inside, he ordered in hysterical broken English. Inside! I am already inside! It took me a few seconds to understand that this young soldier was redefining inside to mean anything that is not visible, to him at least. My being 'outside' within the 'inside' was bothering him. Not only is he imposing a curfew on me, he is also redefining what is outside and what is inside within my own private sphere." Segal, "What Lies Beneath: Excerpts from an Invasion."

through a variety of different social practices, from a constantly shifting point of view. . . . [Tschumi] created a new grammar; he formed the ideas that compose our thinking.[44]

Again, I asked, why Tschumi? Why not Derrida and deconstruction?

Our generals are architects. . . . Tschumi conceptualized the relation between action, space, and its representation. His Manhattan Transcripts *gave us the tools to draw operational plans in a manner other than drawing simple lines on maps. Tschumi provided useful strategies for planning an operation. Derrida may be a little too opaque for our crowd. We share more with architects; we combine theory and practice. We can read, but we also know how to build and destroy, and sometimes kill.*[45]

In addition to these theoretical positions, Naveh references such canonical elements of urban theory as the Situationist practices of *dérive* (a method of drifting through a city based on what they referred to as *psychogeography*) and *détournement* (the adaptation of abandoned buildings for purposes other than those they were designed to perform). These ideas were, of course, conceived by Guy Debord and other members of the Situationist International as part of a general strategy to challenge the built hierarchy of the capitalist city and break down distinctions between private and public, inside and outside,[46] use and function, replacing private space with a "borderless" public surface. References to the work of Georges Bataille, either directly or as cited in the writings of Tschumi, also speak of a desire to attack architecture. Bataille's own call to arms was meant to dismantle the rigid rationalism of a postwar order, to escape "the architectural straitjacket," and to liberate repressed human desires.

For Bataille, Tschumi, and the Situationists, the repressive power of the city is subverted by new strategies for moving through and across it. In the postwar period, when the broadly leftist theoretical ideas I have mentioned here were emerging, there was little confidence in the capacity of sovereign state structures to protect or further democracy. The "micropolitics" of the time represented in many ways an attempt to constitute a mental and affective guerrilla fighter at the intimate levels of the body, sexuality, and intersubjectivity, an individual in whom the personal became subversively political. And as such, these micropolitics offered a strategy for withdrawing from the formal state apparatus into the private domain, which was later to extend outward. While such theories were conceived in order to transgress the established "bourgeois order" of the city, with the architectural element of the wall projected as solid and fixed, an

Israeli engineers in the Tul
Qarem Refugee Camp. Photo: Nir
Kafri, 2003.

embodiment of social and political repression, in the hands
of the IDF, tactics inspired by these thinkers are projected as
the basis for an attack on an "enemy" city.

In no uncertain terms, education in the humanities –
often believed to be the most powerful weapon *against* im-
perialism – is being appropriated as a powerful weapon *of*
imperialism. The military's use of theory is of course noth-
ing new – a long line extends all the way from Marcus
Aurelius to Patton. The figure of the soldier-philosopher is
also the cliché of Israeli military history. In the 1960s, when
academic education became a standard component of a mili-
tary career, many high-ranking officers returning from
studies in the United States, for example, invoked Spinoza to
describe the battle space (especially with respect to the 1967
occupation), referencing his concept of "extension." I would
argue that instead of laying blame at theory's doorstep, it is
more productive to concentrate on recognizing and attempt-
ing to understand the contemporary uses of particular
strands of leftist critical theory that are being deployed not
to *subvert* power (as they were originally intended to do), but
in order to *project* it. In this sense, leaving aside for the time
being the operative aspect of practice-based theory, it is
important to understand the way in which the military's use
of theoretical language reflects back upon itself as an insti-
tution. The IDF thrives on its image – at least in Israel and

the United States – as an ethical "citizen army." Although this has been eroded since the 1980s, the IDF still seeks to project the image of a different, more civilized military force than the Arab militaries and Palestinian guerrilla fighters it opposes. In this context, high-end theory functions to confirm the "enlightened" nature of the IDF (this is paradoxical, of course, since much critical theory takes an anti-Enlightenment stance). If the IDF reads theory, what do its enemies read? The Koran?[47]

When I asked Naveh about the ideological basis of the theories he employs, he had this to say:
We must differentiate between the charm, and even some values, within Marxist ideology and what can be taken from it for military use. Theories not only strive for a utopian sociopolitical ideal with which we may or may not agree, but are also based on a methodology that wants to disrupt and subvert the existing political, social, cultural, or military order. The disruptive capacity in theory [elsewhere Naveh uses the term nihilist*] is the aspect of theory that we like and use. . . . This theory is not married to its socialist ideals.*[48]

Married to ethics or not, when Naveh invokes the terms *disruptive* and *nihilist* to explain his use of theory, something else is at stake. Theory functions here not only, and probably not even primarily, as an instrument in the power struggle against the Palestinians, but as an instrument of power relations within the institutional logic of the military itself. Insofar as it is used to challenge existing military thinking, critical theory becomes for the military (as it has for academia) a means of transforming the institution and its practices. And when it ossifies into a doxa, it may function just as well to preserve institutional hierarchies.

<div align="center">***</div>

Future military operations in urban terrain will increasingly be dedicated to the use of technologies developed for the purpose of "un-walling of the wall," to borrow a term from Gordon Matta-Clark.[49] As a complement to military tactics that involve physically breaking and walking through walls, new methods have been devised to allow soldiers not only to see but also to shoot and kill through walls. The Israeli company Camero has developed a handheld imaging device that combines thermal imaging with ultra-wideband radar, which, like ultrasound imaging, has the ability to produce three-dimensional renderings of biological life concealed behind walls or other barriers.[50] Human bodies appear on the screen as fuzzy heat sources floating (like fetuses) within an abstract clear medium wherein everything solid – walls,

47. In this context, an interesting story was printed on the dust jacket of the first Hebrew edition of Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, published by the Babel Press in 2005. Apparently, the first copy of this book (in the original French edition) known to have reached Israel was found on the body of a dead guerrilla soldier for the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), who in mid-1970 entered from Jordan with this book in his shirt pocket. For soldiers of the PFLP, Fanon was the equivalent of the *Bible* for American soldiers, part of the basic kit.

48. Interview with Naveh, October 14, 2005.

49. Brian Hatton, "The Problem of Our Walls," *The Journal of Architecture* 4 (Spring 1999): 71.

50. Zuri Dar and Oded Hermoni, "Israeli Start-Up Develops Technology to See Through Walls," *Ha'aretz*, July 1, 2004. Amnon Brazilay, "This Time They Do Not Prepare to the Last War," *Ha'aretz*, April 17, 2004, www.haaretz.com. See also Amir Golan, "The Components of the Ability to Fight in Urban Areas," *Ma'arachot* 384 (July 2002): 97.

furniture, objects – has melted away. On the other hand, weapons using the standard NATO 5.56mm round are complemented with some using the 7.62mm round, which is capable of penetrating brick, wood, and adobe without much deflection of the bullet-head. These practices and technologies will have a radical effect on the relation of military practices to architecture and the built domain at large. Future developments in this vein may have the capacity to render not only the built environment but also *life* itself transparent, making solid architecture effectively disappear. Instruments of "literal transparencies" are the main components in a ghostlike military fantasy world of boundless fluidity, in which the space of the city becomes as navigable as an ocean. By striving to see what is hidden behind walls and to move and propel ammunition through them, the military seeks to elevate contemporary technologies – using the justification of (almost contemporary) theories – to the level of metaphysics, moving beyond the here and now of physical reality, and effectively collapsing time and space.

This has its corollary in new engineering technologies that seek to effect "controlled" destruction. Given the international outcry that followed the April 2002 debacle of the Jenin refugee camp, the IDF realized that it had to push its engineering corps to improve their "art of destruction," which had apparently spun out of control. In a military conference held in Tel Aviv, an Israeli engineering officer explained to his international audience that, thanks to the study of architecture and building technologies, at present "the military can remove one floor in a building without destroying it completely [sic] or remove a building that stands in a row of buildings without damaging the others."[51] However exaggerated, this statement testifies to a new emphasis on the "surgical" removal of building elements, essentially the engineer's response to the logic of "smart weapons" (such as those used to enforce Israel's policy of "targeted assassinations"). The latter have paradoxically resulted in higher numbers of civilian casualties simply because the illusion of precision gives the military-political complex the necessary justification to use explosives in civilian environments where they cannot be used without endangering, injuring, or killing civilians. In Gaza, for example, there were two civilian deaths for every targeted victim during the al-Aqsa Intifada – a ratio of civilian casualties higher than in many wars in which conventional "dumb" weapons were used exclusively.[52]

The imagined benefits of "smart destruction" and

51. Greenberg, "The Limited Conflict."
52. From September 2000 to the time of the evacuation, 1,719 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, two thirds ofthem unarmed and uninvolved in any struggle, and 379 children. See Amira Has, "The Other 99.5 Percent," *Ha'aretz*, August 24, 2005, www.haaretz.com.

attempts to perform "sophisticated" swarming thus bring
more destruction over the long term than "traditional"
strategies ever did, because these ever more deadly methods,
combined with the highly manipulative and euphoric theo-
retical rhetoric used to promulgate them, have induced deci-
sion-makers to authorize their frequent use. Here another
use of "theory" as the ultimate "smart weapon" becomes
apparent. The military's seductive use of theoretical and
technological discourse seeks to portray war as remote, ster-
ile, easy, quick, intellectual, exciting, and even economic
(from their own point of view). Violence can thus be pro-
jected as tolerable, and the public encouraged to support it.
As such, the development and dissemination of new military
technologies promote the fiction being projected into the
public domain that a military solution is at all possible – in
situations it is clearly not. As countless examples have
already demonstrated, not least the attacks on Balata and
the Kasbah of Nablus, the realities of urban warfare are
much messier and bloodier than the military would like us
to think.

So, could we consider the use of Deleuzian theory to be
mere propaganda? I think it would be too easy to dismiss it as
such. Although you do not need Deleuze to attack Nablus,
theory helped the military reorganize by providing a new

The areas destroyed by the IDF in the Jenin refugee camp indi-cate a "planner's logic" of widening inroads and clearing a space that allows for future incursions. At right, on-the-ground views of the actual dam-age to the Jenin building stock in 2002. Photos coutesy the author.

53. In the context of a discussion on war as communication, the logic of blow and counterblow means that there is an inherent tendency in war to escalate to extremes, to ever greater violence, the ultimate state von Clausewitz calls "absolute war."

54. This resonates with Naveh's attitude toward American military action in Falluja: "A *disgusting* operation, they flat-tened the entire city. . . . Ifwe would have done just that we would have saved ourselves many casualties." Interview with Naveh, October 14, 2005.

language in which to speak to itself and others. As a "smart weapon," theory has both a practical and a discursive func-tion in redefining urban warfare. The practical or tactical function, the extent to which Deleuzian theory influences military tactics and maneuvers, raises questions about the relation between theory and practice. Theory obviously has the power to stimulate new sensibilities, but it may also help to explain, develop, or even justify ideas that emerged inde-pendently within disparate fields of knowledge and with quite different ethical bases. In discursive terms, war – if it is not a total war of annihilation – constitutes a form of dis-course between enemies.[53] Every military action is meant to communicate something to the enemy, to demonstrate, to threaten, to signal. Talk of swarming, targeted killings, and smart destruction may thus help the military commu-nicate to its enemies that it has the capacity to effect far greater destruction. In this respect, a swarming operation could be said to constitute a warning that "next time we could indeed save ourselves many casualties" by exercising more brutality – as occurred at Jenin.[54] Raids can thus be projected as the "lesser evil," the more moderate alternative to the devastating capacity that the military actually possesses and will unleash if the enemy exceeds the "acceptable" level of violence or breaches some unspoken agreement. In terms of military operational theory, it is essential never to use one's full destructive capacity, but rather to maintain the potential to escalate the level of atrocity. Otherwise, threats become meaningless.

When the military talks theory to itself, it seems to be about changing its organizational structure and hierarchies. When it invokes theory in communications with the public – in lectures, broadcasts, and publications – it seems to be about projecting an image of a civilized and sophisticated military. And when the military "talks" (as every military does) to the enemy, theory could be understood as a particu-larly intimidating weapon of "shock and awe," the message being: "You will never even understand that which kills you."

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73

The words of built space, or at least its substantive, would seem to be rooms, categories which are synthetically or syncategorematically related and articulated by the various spatial verbs and adverbs – corridors, doorways, and staircases, for example, modified in turn by adjectives in the form of paint and furnishings, decoration and ornament . . . . These "sentences" are read by readers whose bodies fill the various shifter-slots.

– Fredric Jameson[55]

55. Fredric Jameson, "Is Space Political?" in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), 261.
56. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University ofChicago Press, 1998), 63-64.
57. This is developed in Plato's *Laws* 8.843; quoted in Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 30
58. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 63–64.
59. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 187.

In historical siege warfare, the breaching of the outer city wall signals the destruction of its sovereignty. Accordingly, the "art" of siege warfare engaged with the geometries of the perimeter of city walls and with the development of equally complex technologies for breaching them. Contemporary thinking about urban combat operations is increasingly concerned with methods of transgressing the limitations embodied by the domestic wall. In this respect, it might be useful think about the city's (domestic) walls as one would think about the (civic) city wall – the operative edge of the law and the very condition of democratic urban life.

According to Hannah Arendt, the political realm of the Greek city was guaranteed, quite literally, by these two kinds of walls (or wall-like laws): the wall surrounding the city, which defined the zone of the political, and the walls separating private space from the public domain, ensuring the autonomy of the domestic realm. "The one harbored and enclosed political life as the other sheltered and protected the biological life process of the family."[56] For Arendt, the rise of society corresponds with the rise of the *oikia*, or the household:

Even Plato, whose political plans foresaw the abolition of private property and the extension of the public sphere to the point of annihilating private life altogether, still speaks with great reverence of Zeus Herkeios, the protector of borderlines, and calls the horoi, the boundaries between one estate and the another, divine, without seeing any contradiction.[57]

Without these walls, she continues, "there might have been an agglomeration of houses, a town (asty), but not a city, a political community."[58] The differentiation between a *city*, as a political domain, and a *town* is based on the conceptual solidity of the elements that safeguard both public and private domains. For Giorgio Agamben, who follows in the footsteps of Arendt, the antithesis of the city is not the *town*, but the *camp* – for our purposes, the refugee camp. For Agamben, in "the camp, city and house became indistinguishable,"[59] to the extent that the twin domains of *private*

60. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 4 and 9.
61. Because walls function not only as physical barriers but as devices to exclude both visual and aural phenome-na, they have provided since the 18th century, according to architectural histo-rian Robin Evans, the physical infra-structure for the construction of privacy and modern subjectivity. See Robin Evans, "The Rights of Retreat and the Rights of Exclusion," in *Translation from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (London: Architectural Association, 1997).
62. Evans, "The Rights of Retreat and the Rights of Exclusion," 38.
63. Hatton, "The Problem of Our Walls," 66–67.

life (whose sphere of influence is the home) and *public life* (in the sense of a political subject whose sphere of activity is the public sphere of the *polis*) are blurred. The destruction – whether physical or conceptual – of walls blurs these bor-ders further, and directly exposes the private domain of life to political power.[60]

At stake within the juridico-urbanistic interplay that constitutes the *city* are thus two interrelated political con-cepts: sovereignty and democracy. We may understand the former as the "wall" (or border, in the case of a state) assigned to protect the latter (defined not only as the private interior of the home, but also – since the Reformation – as freedom of conscience), and thus the "wall" in turn is patently dependent on the protection of the private sphere.[61] Sovereignty is thus embodied in the idea of the city wall (or the border), defining and protecting the sovereign boundary of the (city) state, while democracy is embodied in the pro-tection of the party wall that defines and separates private dwellings. The breaching of the domestic wall as a physical, visual, and conceptual border could signal one of the most radical representations of the "state of exception." In this act, the obliteration of the status of privacy has become one of the fundamental tools.

The military practice of walking through walls thus links the physical properties of construction with the syntax of architectural and social orders. New technologies devel-oped to allow soldiers to see living organisms through walls, and to give them the ability to walk (and fire weapons) through them, address not only the materiality of the wall, but its very essence. Activities whose operational means effect the "un-walling of the wall," thus destabilize not only the legal and social order, but democracy itself. With the wall no longer physically or conceptually sacred or legally impene-trable, the functional spatial syntax that it created – the sepa-ration between inside and outside, private and public – collapses.[62] The very order of the city relies on the fantasy of a wall as stable, solid, and fixed. Indeed, architectural history tends to otherwise see walls as a constant or basic – archi-tecture's irreducible given. The almost palindromic linguis-tic structure of law/wall binds these two structures in an interdependency that quite literally equates built and legal fabric. The un-walling of the wall invariably becomes the undoing of the law.[63]

In the battle of Jenin, for example, the entire center of the camp was destroyed, but in a strange paradox, the boundary lines between homes were remembered and
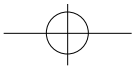
THE PROCESS OF WALKING THROUGH
WALLS. VIDEO STILLS COURTESY THE
AUTHOR.
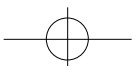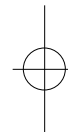
reerected almost exactly as they were originally. The order of the city – the arrangement of conceptual boundary lines that divide the city into a series of discrete "floating" volumes – remained, even though the camp was destroyed. In Nablus and the Balata refugee camp, on the other hand, homes were left intact, but the boundary lines were blurred and erased.

When Kokhavi claims that "space is only an interpretation," and that his movement through and across the built fabric of the city reinterprets architectural elements (walls, windows, and doors) and thus the city itself, he uses theoretical language to suggest that one can "win" an urban battle, not by the destruction of a city, but by its "reorganization." If a wall is only the signifier of a "wall," un-walling also becomes a form of rewriting – a constant process of undoing fueled by theory. Could rewriting amount to killing? If moving through walls becomes the method for "reinterpreting space," and the nature of the city is "relative" to this form of interpretation, could "reinterpretation" murder? If "yes," then the "inverse geometry" that turns the city "inside out," shuffling its private and public spaces, would imply consequences for urban operations that go beyond physical and social destruction and force us to reflect upon the "conceptual destruction" they bring.

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Observations on Urbanism 70-feet Deep

Entrance to drug tunnel, Tijuana. AP Photo/David Meung.

When Kevin Lynch was commissioned by a local environmental group to come up with a "regional vision plan" for the US-Mexico border zone in 1974, he dreamed of a "temporary paradise." Addressed to the City Planning Commission of San Diego, his binational planning strategy focused on the network of canyons and watersheds that traverse the landscape on both sides of the San Diego-Tijuana border. Lynch could never have predicted that neither the natural landscape nor city planners would define the real action plan for transborder urbanism, and that instead it would be an emergent network of underground tunnels masterminded by drug lords and "coyotes" that would quietly and invisibly efface the formidable barrier that separates the two cities. Now, 34 years later, at least 30 tunnels have been discovered, a vast "ant farm"-like maze of subterranean routes criss-crossing the border from California to Arizona – all dug within the last eight years. At the very least, this creates a "permanent hell" for the US Department of Homeland Security.

An archaeological section map of the territory today would reveal an underground urbanism worming its way into houses, churches, parking lots, warehouses, and streets. The most outlandish and sophisticated of these tunnels, discovered by US border officials in January of this year, is clearly the work of professionals: up to 70 feet below ground and 2,400 feet in length, its passageways are five to six feet high and four feet wide to permit two-way circulation. Striking not only for its scale, but also for its "amenities," the tunnel is equipped with ventilation and drainage systems, water pumps, electricity, retaining reinforcements, and stairs connecting various levels. Beyond its use by drug traffickers, it was also "leased out" during "off" hours to coyotes transporting illegal aliens into the US, making it perhaps the first mixed-use smuggling tunnel at the border. Some might see this as a marvel of informal transnational infrastructure, but most locals understand it as just another example of the vigorous Mexican-American economy at work.

– Teddy Cruz, with Gregorio Ortiz