📍 Hassu Khel, North Waziristan,
Pakistan

Three reported killed in the Mir Ali area.
On the same day, a US drone crashed in
South Waziristan.

Proportionality, Violence, and the Economy of Calculations —Eyal Weizman in Conversation with Heather Davis

Dronestagram excerpts
from James Bridle.

📍 Tappi Village, Pakistan

3–5 reported killed, 1 civilian reported killed, 2–4 reported injured. Three missiles fired destroying a house and a vehicle. Three cows intended to be sacrificed for Eid were also killed.

The *Guardian* recently reported that the US has set up a predator drone base just outside of Niamey, Niger, extending its surveillance regime while providing another base for extra-judicial killings and internationalized terror.[1] Meanwhile, US Secretary of State John Kerry is trying to reinvigorate peace talks between Israel and Palestine amidst rumors of a new intifada and renewed rocket fire from Gaza. To confront these realities without accepting their terms as given, Eyal Weizman's work as an architect, professor, theorist, and activist addresses the use of systems of surveillance, mapping, NGOs, and international human rights law. His ongoing work and collaborations with artists, architects, and theorists in Forensic Architecture (FA), the Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR), and the Centre for Research Architecture, navigate current political realities through a direct engagement with, and elaboration of, incommensurable positions. This is precisely why his work is so compelling. Weizman's concept of forensic architecture analyzes the contradictory role of critical thought within international humanitarian law, using the tools of journalistic investigation and the humanitarian figure, that he himself critiques. In both his writing and ongoing architecture projects, Weizman demonstrates that the division between amelioration and revolution is false; instead, his practice shows that we must learn to negotiate intense and radical contradictions in order to restructure our political reality. He insists on a political strategy that names specific individuals for their culpability in the deaths of others in ongoing colonial and frontier wars, while at the same time articulating the ways in which force, materials, and nonhuman actors diffuse and exacerbate these differential conditions. Weizman and his wide network of collaborators use counter-surveillance methods and the figure-ground relation as the beginning of a new topological articulation, linking cracks in architecture to geological fissures, within the field of immanent power.

After a series of advanced seminars at Duke University in mid-February 2013, and in the midst of his busy schedule, Eyal generously agreed to sit down with me to discuss his recent work on forensic architecture, international human rights law, and the relation of critical thinking and artistic practice to political interventions. A partial transcript of this conversation is included below.

📍 Datta Khel, Pakistan

A drone strike near the Afghan border kills at least three people. Possible houses or vehicles hit on the road to Datta Khel, with conflicting reports of the target.

Heather Davis How has your thinking and approach to the neocolonial occupation of Palestine by Israel changed over time? I am particularly interested in the movement of your thought from *Hollow Land* (2007) and its elaboration of the "political plastic" to your more recent development of forensic architecture in *The Least of All Possible Evils* (2011), *Forensic Architecture* (2012), and *Mengele's Skull* (2012), where the subject as witness is being replaced and surpassed by an emergent forensic sensibility, an object-oriented juridical culture. How much of this movement is influenced by the changing situation itself?

Eyal Weizman I think the latter works are to a certain extent a set of methodological reflections on *Hollow Land*. I had to find the language to understand—and it took some time and effort—in what ways materiality and territoriality participate in shaping conflict, rather than simply being shaped by it. *Hollow Land* was already structured around various material things at different scales, so the logic of a kind of forensic investigation was essential. I guess I was personally attracted to the investigative intensity in forensics, less to the legal context in which its findings are presented, which are oftentimes, especially in an international legal context, quite skewed, as I showed in the latest books. And yes, the shift from *Hollow Land* to *The Least of All Possible Evils* also marks a shift in my attention from the West Bank to Gaza. This has obviously been shaped by events. In Gaza, one can notice a system of rule that is based more on humanitarian violence through the modulation of supply, the application of standards of the humanitarian minimum, and the seeming conduct of war by human rights (HR) and international humanitarian law (IHL) principles. So some of the attention shifted from territoriality to principles of "humanitarian" government. Although, of course, materiality entered in a different way—I tried to show how it interacts with law through forensics.

In any case, the investigation that culminated in my recent work started with a certain refusal of spatial research methodologies, commonly held at the time, derived mainly from certain readings of Henri Lefebvre. I thought they needed a more dynamic, elastic, topological, and force-field-oriented understanding of space, as well as an understanding of the immanent power of constant interaction between force and form. Across what I described as the "political plastic," space is continuously in transformation. This was a politics *of* space, and here I mean material space as something that acts. War is a dynamic process of space-making. Frontier colonization is a slowed-down war, but still very elastic; the frontier is very different from a city like Paris, which has figured as *the* imaginary for a lot of spatial theory, and is often misplaced and applied to the frontier. Paris is a planned city, a very hard city, and its hardness has haunted the imagination of some spatial scholars studying very different things today. I thought we had to get rid of Paris to liberate Palestine. And then I kept pushing toward the idea of immanent materiality on different scales; not only on the scale of the territory, but on a micro-scale, through the details and substances—water, fields, forests, hills, valleys—which all play a role in shaping conflicts, and therefore have an effect on the forensic imagination.

So, to refer to an idea you brought up in an earlier conversation, the idea of *elasticity*, or what you called *plasticity*—ending at a moment of a bomb blast—I would say that I think that a blast is simply an acceleration of relations of force and form in the same way that wars in the city are an actualization and acceleration of the latent and slower processes of conflict and negotiation that define the city. I think it is more interesting to think of the continuities between elasticities and explosions than about the differences. I was working very closely with analysts of bomb blast sites, and you see millisecond by millisecond—there is a description of this in the last chapter of the *Lesser Evil* book—what happens to a building when it is bombed. It is like taking on 15 years of gradual disintegration, which is what every building is undergoing from the moment it is built, in 5 milliseconds.

HD So what you have called "the pyramids of Gaza" are just the sped-up force of the "natural" collapse of a building?[2]

EW The collapse of a refugee house is the making of the pyramids of Gaza. There are many pyramids throughout the strip, mainly in the camps and neighbourhoods that ring Gaza City and along the short border to Egypt.
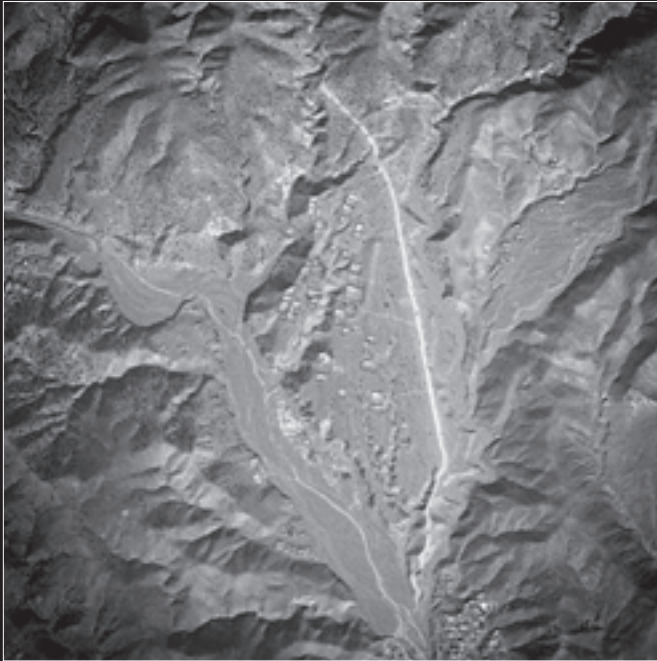
📍 Datta Khel, Pakistan

2–3 killed by a strike in North Waziristan on the Afghan/Pakistan border, riding horses or motor-bikes. Identities unknown. Rescue work was reportedly delayed as drones hovered over the area after the strike.

They are a new typology that has emerged out of the encounter between a three-story residential building, of the kind that pro-vides a home for refugees, and an armored Caterpillar D9 bulldozer. The short shovel of the bulldozer can destroy only the col-umns closer to the façade of the building, but the single centre column is left intact, and it makes the peak of the pyramid. The fact that the centre column remains is what makes this new type of ruin; it is important because one can actually enter—very care-fully, as some forensic architects have done—the ruin itself. But not only is this a new typology, there are important differences within it, i.e. irregularities which register differences in the process of construction, the uneven spread of concrete, or the vari-ous modes of destruction such as the in-ability or reluctance of the bulldozer oper-ator to go completely around the building. A particular irregularity could be the re-sult of a previous firefight, for example, which would then become an important aspect in the investigation. The task is ob-viously to connect the differences in the patterns of concrete to a general history of war—or in this case, an attack on Gaza—to connect the micro-details to a larger, sys-temic violence.

Here is another example where such analysis is crucial: geological formations exist both inside and outside buildings. They are obviously in the ground on which buildings stand, but are also integral to construction materials, even the gravel within concrete, so we need to see how rocks behave in order to undo a certain conceptual gap between geology and archi-tecture. A denser concentration of mine-rals within a rock will often become the line of least resistance, along which a crack will tear it, and the building, apart. So cracks are extremely interesting because they connect the geological, the urban, and the architectural. Cracks are a fantas-tic demonstration of a shared material-ity of the planet—moving from geology to architecture—and studying cracks, which is a task of forensic architecture, demon-strates the necessity to rid our thinking of the borders between objects and the fig-ure-ground relation of a building sitting on a landscape.

For example, Dara Behrman, a member of the Centre for Research Architecture, looked at how pirate archaeological exca-vations—for a biblical history project under-taken directly beneath the Palestinian neigh-bourhood of Silwan in occupied Jerusalem—generated cracks that travelled from bedrock formations through the voids of the under-ground archaeological sites, to roadwork, to walls within the interior of buildings. Crack appear and disappear, translating force into the lines of least resistance. In this case, they also have a political and legal meaning. They testify to an underground colonization, and each material they go through—asphalt, concrete, plaster—could be unpacked as a different architectural, geological, and political layer.

HD   In an interview with Robin Mackay in *Collapse*, you said in relation to the oc-cupation of Palestine by Israel: "Every form that the occupation has taken since 1967 has been presented as an attempt to end the oc-cupation. Perhaps the only constant thing about the occupation is that there are always attempts to end it. [...] The occupation is fin-ally nothing but its constant end. [...] There-fore we need to be suspicious of anyone that runs under the slogan 'end the occupation'—they must have yet another spatial appara-tus in mind."[3] In Decolonizing Architecture (DAAR), a residency project started by Sandi Hilal, Alessandro Petti, and yourself in Beit Sahour, you take the approach that the occu-pation, and its interminable end, should be reconfigured as a question of "decoloniza-tion." Can you say more about what you mean by decolonization here? Toward what kind of a future does a practice of decolonization move if there is no end to the occupation?

EW   I think that one of the biggest prob-lems in thinking about the future of Pal-estine, a problem that somehow defines one's "camp" within the Israeli or Pales-tinian anti-colonial left, is defined by what "state" you support as a solution. So we get the positions of one-statists versus two-statists versus no-statists, and a lot of very important and creative discussions are organized in relation to that. Surely, think-ing politically, we are one-statists, but in DAAR, the studio that Sandi, Alessandro and I set up, we try to propose a different relation to the future, articulated through the process of decolonization.[4]

To do architecture in an area of such in-tense conflict is always to engage in a less-than-ideal world. This has to do not only

📍 Shin Warsak, South Waziristan,
Pakistan

A strike near Wana, capital of South Waziristan, close to the Afghan border. Pakistan media reports up to four unnamed deaths, and more injured. The first strike in Pakistan in 36 days. A military intelligence official told *The Long War Journal* that "it certainly wasn't due to a lack of targets. Pakistan is a target-rich environment. We're only scratching at the surface, hitting them in the tribal areas, while the country remains infested with al Qaeda and their allies."

with the violence that contaminates every aspect of life there, but also with determining the point from which speculation could begin. Conflicts create a sense of postponement and hence these future projections; we wait for the post-conflict to begin imagining. But the Palestine conflict is an endless conflict, so we feel that the "*x*-state solutions" are trapped in a top-down perspective. We did not start the project from the utopia of an end state in order to move backwards to the present; instead, we started from "real existing colonialism," from the trash, buildings, infrastructure, and law that it creates. Our approach has been to reuse, rather than reject, the material conditions of the present. So we want to mobilize architecture as an optical device through actually existing structures—such as a military base, a settlement, the Palestinian parliament building, a particular Palestinian house in Battir, different houses in Jaffa in what is called '48 Palestine—to study the conflict and to act within it.

HD   Can you talk a little more about the project where you proposed to repurpose an evacuated settlement for public use by Palestinians? One of the things that I am especially curious about is how you decide what kinds of public spaces might be useful. In the refugee camps, where most "publicness" has been eliminated, how do you rebuild? What sort of community consultation does DAAR engage in?

EW   The project started with the Palestinian Ministry of Planning in 2005, which had to advise on the fate of the settlements that were about to be evacuated in Gaza. The Palestinian Ministry of Planning became the centre of intense meetings between Palestinians and a variety of NGOs, different UN agencies, the World Bank, foreign governments, and international investors, all of whom outlined their proposed uses for the evacuated settlements. I was called on to advise. At the time we did not know whether they were going to be evacuated intact or whether they would be destroyed. We thought, or assumed at least, that they would be left intact. The ministry wanted experts, or quasi-experts—architects—to partake in these discussions that were otherwise political and diplomatic. The problem we were

facing was that the land division in the West Bank and Gaza is such that most of the land is private (and for many different reasons, not just the system of Israeli domination), it is owned by private families, and people do not sell land, so to have the settlements evacuated would give a precious basis and infrastructure for a set of common areas. So this was the idea we were working with. Sandi, Ale, and I were working a lot with NGOs. They function as a kind of government, because the military rule doesn't want to deal with the occupied population and the Palestinian government is very absent and incompetent, so a network of NGOs somehow emerges to fill in, and it was really with those NGOs that we were deciding the uses of land. And then there is another aspect, I mean, what you plan is one thing and what happens on the ground is often another. In the end, the settlement was destroyed, so we could not repurpose the buildings. We did other things.

But there was a lot of resistance to this project, which was not really surprising. Many Palestinians said Israel should "dismantle the houses and take them away." Or they wanted to "have a big bonfire," which at DAAR we thought was great, because access to the colonies or military outposts should be experienced differently by all people who were at this place at that time. This popular impulse for destruction sought to give a sense of relief; architecture had to burn. Through this process of repossession we were experiencing a radical condition of architecture—the moment power is unplugged, when the old use is gone and new uses are not yet defined. It is the limit condition of architecture. But whatever may happen on the ground, the possibility of further evacuation should be considered. We were also worried that the infrastructure would simply be reused to reproduce colonial power relations: colonial villas to be inhabited by new financial elites, etc. In this sense, historical decolonization never truly did away with the spatialized power of colonial domination. So we acted according to a different option that sought to propose subversion of the originally intended use, repurposing it for other ends.

HD   The artist Adam Harvey has developed what he calls "Stealth Wear": he mani-

📍 Location: Tabbi, North Waziristan, Pakistan

3–4 killed by a drone strike in a village north of Muran Shah, 10km from the Afghan border. Reuters reports that one of the casualties was Mohammed Ahmed Almansoor, a midlevel al Qaeda commander. The Pakistani Express Tribune reported that the three others were members of his family.

pulates the double ability of fashion and clothing to both reveal and conceal, creating clothing that shields the wearer from drone attacks by using a reflective material that effectively seals in the heat of the body so that it cannot be detected from the air.[5] You write that all architecture is a process of making and unmaking, an ideological restructuring of surface, yet so much of your work seems to be about making things visible, bringing injustices to light. Is it sometimes more desirable to create a surface of invisibility?

EW   Yes, I understand what you are saying. I think that rather than operating on a single trajectory of increased visibility, mapping is always an intervention in the field of the visible. What is being foregrounded, what is being shown, and what is being "un-shown"—these are choices that we had to make when making every map. When one thinks about the logic of sensing and aesthetics, one understands the logic of disappearance as an aesthetics as well. For example, the resolution of commercially available satellite imagery of the kind we see in newspapers, such as suspected nuclear sites in Iran or destroyed villages in Darfur or Gaza, are limited to a resolution of half a metre per pixel, which means the size of a pixel is exactly the size, or the box, in which a human body fits. Within that logic of visibility, there is also a structured, built-in lacuna: the loss of the figure, or the human.

When one looks at facial recognition software, one understands that there are pretty simple ways of creating camouflage that is no longer a visual camouflage for the eye, but camouflage from algorithms, which are now doing a lot of the seeing. There are ways in which algorithms can be disturbed and confused with techniques that a human eye might have picked up on, but that an algorithm cannot discern. For example, there was a very strange accident in Dubai in 2010 where Israelis were trying to kill a Hamas operative who was using camouflage from the eye and from a certain face-recognition algorithm. Hamas thought they were camouflaged against one algorithm without realizing that the algorithm had changed! The Dubai police used different software and they were exposed. There are all sorts of counter-forensic practices.

HD   In *The Least of All Possible Evils*, you identified a shift from thinking about genocide through primary effects toward the secondary effects outlined in a number of cases. I see this as a particularly powerful way to think about the relationships of complicity in warfare and of escaping some of the problems of "acceptable" deaths—because they have been calculated in advance—in acts of war. It also opens up the possibility of thinking about environmental catastrophe as a type of inflicted and purposeful genocide. Can you talk about this framework and how Forensic Architecture takes it up through the project on oceanic forensics and the "left-to-die boat?"

EW   You are referring to the work of Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani, who worked with Situ Studio on this project. Charles and Lorenzo are PhD students at the Centre for Research Architecture and research fellows on the Forensic Architecture project, and Situ Studio is an emerging architectural firm in New York. Together with FA, they have set up an important project of accountability in the Mediterranean.[6] The "left-to-die boat" that Charles, Lorenzo, and Situ have been mapping and writing about has become an issue within IHL because, to a certain extent, it is the first time the trace of a boat on water has been mapped. Things moving in water usually leave no trace. The team discovered GPS coordinates by tracing phone calls and then worked with an oceanographic institute to re-create the drift pattern of the Mediterranean. The migrants on board were drifting in one of the most cluttered parts of the Mediterranean, in the middle of a siege with a lot of military and NATO vessels—and nobody intervened. So their idea was to reverse the regime of surveillance: if Western states claim this is the most surveyed sea in the world, they also have the responsibility to protect those people who drowned. According to international laws of high seas, if you hear an SOS call you must intervene. So, there is a series of legal challenges now based on the very unique ability to trace the movement of the boat in the sea.

This research represents an important and paradigmatic moment in the forensic architecture project that I run with a great team of artists, architects, and filmmakers—including Susan Schuppli and Thomas Keenan—in which various fellows, students,

📍 Location: Pakistan

4–6 killed. Tribesmen reported as many of six drones circling the area during the afternoon "spreading panic among the residents". One drone fired two missiles around sunset, hitting a house. The bodies were too burned to be identified.

and Situ Studio are developing different abilities to visualize, map, and sense events, as well as advance political and legal claims, or political claims in the form of legal claims. Our method of investigating this particular complex field involved two things that were both interdependent and contradictory. On the one hand, we practiced forensic architecture, which means that we conducted spatial research in the fields and forums of contemporary conflicts; on the other hand, we conducted a critical and theoretical evaluation of the very assumptions, protocols, procedures, and processes of knowledge production of forensic practices. In short, we both used and examined the tools we were operating with and within. This doubling was essential, but it also posed the danger of rendering the two parts mutually ineffective. When standing in the forums to defend our findings as "solid facts," our opponents could surely point to our writing on the elastic nature of facts, and when we were among more critical thinkers, they would rightly point out that we were complicit with the very processes that are the problem.

Still, this approach challenges a form of aesthetic practice within human rights and politics. With some important exceptions, like Trevor Paglen, artists are conventionally asked to simply add affect to the investigative reporting of human rights groups. Artists usually reflect an earlier conception of human rights, one that is advocacy-based and emotive. But we think that the aesthetic field should be seen as a mode of inquiry that is both integral to knowledge production and representation but also to questioning the politics of knowledge gathering and production. The main question is: how can architects and artists do forensics?

As critical scholars and practitioners we arrived at this project armed with critique. We felt confident in our ability to detect, unveil, and analyze instances where power is camouflaged as benevolence. Not only in the fields in which we investigated war crimes, but in the operation of the forums that administered this evidence and arbitrated on the basis of it. We have no illusions about the forums: we know they internalize the power field external to them, and that they are skewed towards the powerful. We have no illusions about the poli-

tics of international humanitarian law. We know that human rights forensics can become an extension of western surveillance practices. We have seen the way in which the HR and the legal process can be abused by states to amplify violence. We assumed, however, that the only way to conduct critical research in the world today is in close proximity to, and even complicity with, the subjects of our investigation. Like the traditional *Operaist* motto, we wanted to act inside and against!

HD   There seems to be a tension in your work between wanting to mobilize investigative journalism to denounce individuals publicly, as in the case of the Guatemalan genocide when you listed the accused (José Efraín Ríos Montt, Héctor Mario López Fuentes, Óscar Humberto Mejía Victores, and José Mauricio Rodriguez Sánchez), but also to articulate the diffused networks of responsibility, across human and nonhuman actors, through forensic architecture. When thinking about whether you are going to take one tactic or another, is it just a question of the particular forum in which you are presenting?

EW   This issue has already erupted in the context of my previous work on critical theory in the military. In 2008, one of the military commanders I was writing about hired one of the largest legal firms in Israel to threaten me and my publishers in Israel for libel. The accusations were frankly ridiculous and concerned with technical matters.[7] I had research to support my allegations, but the real aim, I think, was to scare me and my peers from further publishing critical material that involved such detailed analyses of the military that named names and suggested personal responsibility and even liability. What this suit did was to remind us in the anti-colonial Israeli left of the power of this type of investigation. Indeed, within the controversy that ensued, one of the things that was brought to the forefront was our tendency to generalize and concentrate analysis on depersonalized large systems—the military, the state, etc.—rather than concentrating our attention on the role that certain characters might have within these systems. It is exactly this interaction between larger forces and individual intention that is necessary

Proportionality, Violence…

to examine. We thought that we needed to have two machines, so to speak, to operate simultaneously in one's text; a theoretical one and a journalistic one, with the latter ferociously investigating certain issues and then placing them within a large theoretical frame of the former. But we did not have the legal infrastructure, nor the money to defend ourselves (even against the most spurious of libel claims), for the journalistic machine to work.

So this connects to your question about forensics and the relation between the individual and larger, shaping forces. Human rights have what we call a figure-ground problem. On the one hand, human rights discourse operates very much through a process of foregrounding individual victims and perpetrators. It is a conception that is based on a single human figure who is tortured or killed, repressed by an authoritarian regime. This is a process of figuration, the extraction of a figure from a political background. The individual is the subject of human rights analysis and her or his testimony is the way of getting into the logic of the event. Retribution is too often seen as the punishment of individual perpetrators, rather than as the dismantling of all structural shaping forces within which injustice is perpetrated. This is figuration. An individual extracted from a political field and history narrated as a crime—as if it were a "simple" criminal case.

However, war crimes investigations call for a more complex analysis than those in the context of domestic criminal law. War crimes, like other wartime events, are produced by a multiplicity of agents woven together by networks that further distribute action and responsibility, using technologies that now increasingly have semi-autonomous decision-making capacities. For example, militaries are themselves diffused bodies that are, in turn, governed by political, institutional, and administrative logics.

On the other hand, current human rights techniques have shifted attention to the ground. Satellite imagery, as Laura Kurgan beautifully shows in her new book, has become a relatively recent tool for HR investigators.[8] In satellite imagery, we no longer see figures. What becomes visible in these images is the background to human action— the land, the landscape, the built fabric, the destroyed buildings, the burnt fields, de-

forestation, flooding, etc. Instead of the figure, we have the ground that now stands for the condition of the human. This challenges an important principle within HR work, which is traditionally about the human (state of the individual) by the human (testimony). Given that viewing is now not only undertaken by prosthetic sensors, but interpreted by algorithms, it is no longer strictly by the human. So, by inverting figure and ground in this gestalt, we have turned the ground into the object of study. We have "figured" the ground.

In our analysis of Operation Sofia—what is called "the last Indian massacre"—during the Guatemalan Civil war in the early 1980s, our team (including Situ Studio, Paulo Tavares, Daniel Pasqual, and myself) has sought to extend the understanding of genocide by shifting our attention to the ground condition, using maps and remote sensing of the region. We are trying to produce maps of the processes of large-scale deforestations, of road-building, and concentration-towns, of destruction of the villages of the native Ixil people, of fencing and "privatizing" their mode of cultivation in fields that were common property, to account for the changing of plant species, especially maize, that led to the massive destruction of this protected group and their way of life. We seek to account for the reorganization of people and material that has resulted in the destruction of the conditions that would sustain life. Indirect killing, which occurs more slowly and not by direct trauma such as bullet holes or machete wounds, challenges traditional forensic work.

This is what we call *field causality*, which is tied to debates around the entanglement of politics and the environment. Unlike the direct linear causality of criminal law, field causality does not seek to connect a chain of events. Instead, causes are understood as diffused aggregates that act simultaneously in all directions. They are shaping forces and they affect the formation of larger territories and larger political events. In other words, rather than looking simply at mortality, we take an epidemiological approach and look at patterns.

From the mid-nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, the most important foundation of forensic science was the understanding that every contact leaves a trace and therefore if something touches something, one can actually rec-

reate the moment of encounter. Adrian Lahoud, my successor at the Centre and member of our research team, has continuously insisted that we must look at the ways in which contact and trace have become separated and scattered, that is, that an action might happen in a certain place—an emission, for example—but its consequences might be felt across oceans and air currents.

This goes beyond the simple gestalt that concentrates on the human figure. We have lost sight of the ground, the political and environmental context; but while looking at the ground, we have lost the figure, as in the lacunae in satellite surveillance that I mentioned earlier. The task is to articulate new relationships between figure and ground, to find ways of understanding and illustrating rapid shifts in scale and the importance of events.

In the case of Guatemala, as in previous work on Palestine, this brings in all kinds of different actors—architects, road builders, agriculturists, farmers, bankers—who are all a part of a much more diffuse responsibility that must be addressed in a fashion outside of the usual legal system. Indirect, aggregate, or field causality seeks to undo another important distinction between different kinds of values we attach to death. There were people that were killed and people that died. To die, in this discourse, implies a secondary, non-intentional death. Recently, more work has been undertaken by epidemiologists in relation to non-direct mortality in wars. There was even an attempt by Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the first Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, to include indirect mortality figures in his controversial charging of the president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, with genocide in Darfur.

HD   It is an incredibly poignant argument to say that genocide is not just the barrel of a gun, but that it involves, instead, a network of diffused responsibility; still, aren't there only a few legal venues to enforce these arguments? It makes me wonder what avenues for redress there could be.

EW   I agree. Moreno-Ocampo faced huge criticism for his decision to do that, as well as accusations of "inflating numbers" in the context of a very politicized campaign against Sudan. And I partially agree, but

I think that this is the frontier of conflict investigation, and the consequences of such development could be felt in different forums, as you say, not only in legal ones. Field causalities have a very different implication than direct causes for the way the forums have been made. Indeed, field causality could be the bastard's best defence in court. It would be what every perpetrator would like to claim in order to avoid conviction, and is therefore not enough as a single line or argumentation; we need to learn how to link singularities to structural conditions. However, it is very important to insist on this because field causality describes a political diagram that must be dismantled, and not just by courts. It does not necessarily imply a judgment, but rather a more radical action in changing the political force field.

HD   Have the kinds of arguments developed through forensic architecture been used outside of the context of recent genocides and IHL? This kind of analysis, for example, could do a lot of justice in the context of the ongoing genocide of indigenous people in North America—how governments and industry force people into settlements, the ongoing contamination of lands, and the hazardous exploitation of resources through oil and mining practices, etc. Has the project of FA been advanced in these situations?

EW   The senior person on our project, Susan Schuppli, is a Canadian theorist and artist, and she is looking at new claims brought up by indigenous communities in northern Canada and the new forums that have emerged to deal with these issues. She is also helping convene a group of M.A. members at our Centre who are working with the American NGO, *Three Degrees Warmer*, on a case brought by the Native Village of Kivalina, Alaska against Exxon Mobil Corp. These are, strictly speaking, outside of the legal frames of human rights and international humanitarian law, but as other members in our research groups have shown, and as I briefly alluded to above, environmental issues are increasingly resembling states of conflict. And, environmental law increasingly resembles the laws of war.

HD   In *The Least of All Possible Evils*, you explain that part of the justification for

the use of drones is their "emotionlessness"; as Ronald Arkin, an American scientist and a leader in the field of weaponized robotics explained, robots have no joy in violence. It seems to me that part of the ongoing justification for extra-judicial killings by states rests not only on processes of rationalization, but also the diminishment of excess. There is, then, the fantasy of the elimination of the excesses of war. What has become distasteful to certain forms of state power in late capitalism is not "evil" or "violence," but excess, Arkin's "joy in violence." To a certain extent, the materials you are dealing with in forensic architecture, as in any environment, are inherently excessive, they spill over their boundaries and defy easy classification. How does your work negotiate these two different ways of dealing with excess?

EW   Yes, in *The Least of All possible Evils*, the argument is that dealing with the excesses of war, rather than its more structural political causes, could be abused by militaries and states. The calculated conception of violence it puts forth can justify almost any atrocity. In this way the logic of the "least of all possible evils" is invoked to justify the use of a lesser violence to prevent the excesses you mentioned. This is the principle of proportionality, which is about the "too much" of war, without ever saying how much is too much. So, the argument conjures a cold calculus, a kind of economy of ethics where good and evil are traded like commodities, and speculated on in the financial economy. But economies are dangerous and volatile, as we have seen again recently. So, proportionality always has a relation to the disproportional, or the excess you mentioned. Violence beyond reason, beyond calculation, the war of the mad, like the one Israel declared when it said that they were going to apply disproportional violence to Lebanon. In other words, they were going to break the law to maintain it. But disproportional violence is also the violence of the weak, those who cannot calculate, or wish not to, and those who are kept outside the economy of calculations. This violence is disproportional because it cannot be measured or calculated, and because, ultimately, when justice is not answered by the law, violence will continuously seek to altogether restructure the basis of law. ✕

Bios

Heather Davis is a researcher and writer from Montreal. Her current work, as an FQRSC Postdoctoral Fellow at Duke University, investigates friendship and relationality in social practice arts under the pressures of its increasing popularity in both the art world and as a surrogate for social services otherwise funded by the state. She explores and participates in expanded art practices that bring together researchers, activists, and community members to enact social change. She has written about the intersection of art, politics, and community engagement for *Fibreculture*, *Public*, *Politics and Culture*, *Le Merle*, and *No More Potlucks*.

James Bridle is an artist, writer, and publisher based in London, UK. His work, including A Ship Adrift commissioned by Artangel, and The Iraq War Historiography, have been shown in galleries and museums internationally and seen by hundreds of thousands online. His formulation of the New Aesthetic research project has spurred debate and creative work, online and off, around the world. Bridle also writes for publications such as Wired, ICON and The Observer, where he publishes a regular column. He is a partner at the Really Interesting Group, a design partnership based in East London. His blog is http://www.booktwo.org.

Endnotes

1   Craig Whitlock, "Drone Warfare: Niger Becomes Latest Frontline in US War on Terror," *The Guardian*, 26 March 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/mar/26/niger-africa-drones-us-terror.
2   For a detailed description, analysis, and illustrations of the "pyramids of Gaza," see Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Notes from Fields and Forums* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 4–5.
3   Eyal Weizman, "Political Plastic (Interview)," *Collapse* VI (January 2010): 279–80.
4   For a full list of DAAR projects, as well as theoretical reflections on those projects, see http://www.decolonizing.ps/site.
5   This project can be found at http://ahprojects.com/projects/stealth-wear.
6   "In the case of what is now referred to as the 'left-to-die boat,' 72 migrants fleeing Tripoli by boat on the early morning of 27 March 2011 ran out of fuel and were left to drift for 14 days until they landed back on the Libyan coast. With no water or food on-board, only nine of the migrants survived. In several interviews, these survivors recounted the various points of contact they had with the external world during this ordeal. This included describing the aircraft that flew over them, the distress calls they sent out via satellite telephone and their visual sightings of a military helicopter which provided a few packets of biscuits and bottles of water, and a military ship which failed to provide any assistance whatsoever." For their complete analysis, see Forensic Oceanography, http://www.forensic-architecture.org/investigations/forensic-oceanography.
7   For a complete analysis of these events, see David Cunningham, "Walking into Walls: Academic Freedom, the Israeli Left and the Occupation within," *Radical Philosophy* 150 (July–August 2008): 67–70, http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/news/walking-into-walls-academic-freedom-the-israeli-left-and-the-occupation-within.
8   Laura Kurgan, *Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology, and Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books, 2013).