Eyal Weizman. Diagram showing the routes through buildings taken by Israeli troops during "swarming" maneuvers (attack on Nablus, April 2002), OTRI, 2004.

# Going Astray: Network Transformation and the Asymmetries of Globalization

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Whether in the form of transnational political initiatives, global economies, new technologies, or urban social movements, networks are the distinctive characteristic of spatial organization in the twenty-first century. Networks have changed our forms of cultural coexistence and communication just as they have the way in which we produce and experience spaces. Cities, regions, countries, and continents are being experienced less and less as fixed territories and increasingly as fluid and contested landscapes, formed and mobilized by networks of integrating realities. Networks are a form of organization, an operational politics, and a generative process. On all these levels networks foreground the relationships among objects rather than the objects themselves. Network thinking revolves around connections, processes, and courses of action that initiate exchange and that link things with one another. Such thinking maintains logics that are oriented to the intensity, range, and quality of relationships and generates forms of knowledge that accrue from conversations, dialogues, interactions, and interventions. At the beginning of the new millennium networks have become the most powerful figure of thought operating on the way we conceive the organization of our world: networks dominate the prevailing structures of cultural, economic, and military power. They are the digital age's ubiquitous object of desire, a new force that directs our feelings, thoughts, and actions with the promise of making our relationships more flexible and our possibilities more expansive. But how do such networks transform and how do they intersect with agencies that drive globalization?

We want to address this question by bringing together two different cultural urgencies: first, a rethinking of the relation between space and conflict, in particular, the move from fixed topographies of contested spaces to a more mobilized situation of spatial contestation; second, the proliferation of spontaneous and fleeting alliances between different practices and "fields," forms of alliance that are appropriate to their collective action and operate outside the regimes of institutional, historical, or ter-

ritorial dependences. The way we want to approach these urgencies is through the multitude of laboratory situations that have recently been produced by networked art and architectural practices: in the engagement with conflict terrains over the past few years, various aesthetic approaches that focus on the forces and dynamics of conflict instead of its harmonization have gained momentum. What they all have in common is the simultaneous critique and use of prevailing conflicts (1) as political acts that constitute spatial organization and (2) as phenomena that operate on a translocal level. Their distinctive characteristic is the different ways they access areas of conflict and the formats they develop. Proceeding from these differences, we can identify a variety of methodological approaches, each of which establishes its own field of action. The first approach, which uses records, maps, archives, and diagrams, aims to produce alternative knowledge of the conditions of conflicts and the borders they create. A second approach challenges the operability of conflicts by intentionally creating disruptions and confusion—not only laying bare the form of the conflict and its operative strategy but also establishing its own field of action. A third aesthetic mode of operation deregulates conflict-produced borders by means of a concentrated intensification of cross-border forms of action. Finally, a fourth approach responds to the growing fleetingness and mobility of conflictual forces by creating its own mobile, virtual spaces where conflicts can be engaged and negotiated.

Eyal Weizman's studies of the political space created by Israel's late-modern colonial occupation are a key example of the first methodology. Using diagrams, maps, film footage, and historical research, Weizman traces the transformation of a multiethnic region into an all-consuming military landscape: all elements of this landscape—settlements, buildings, streets, bridges, hills, trenches, and dams—have become strategic tools in the Israeli-led transformation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Fashioning these elements into political weaponry is part of a complex pedagogical program of the Israeli state, one that is guided by practice and creates spatial facts. Weizman's work highlights the manner in which Israeli state policy shapes not only complex territorial structures but also the organization, format, and legitimacy of its operations in a series of elastic inclusions and exclusions. The logic governing the development and construction of this border system gives birth to a completely new world, one that intertwines walls with tunnels, checkpoints with elevated pathways, and roadblocks with air corridors, thus producing a vertical stratification of different mobility rights. This conflict policy and the territories and networks it produces are not merely exposed for a specific geographic case study. Weizman also shows that state military operations are not the
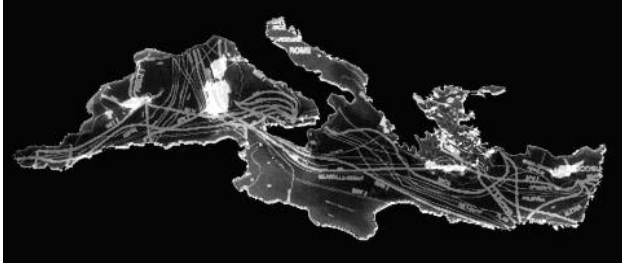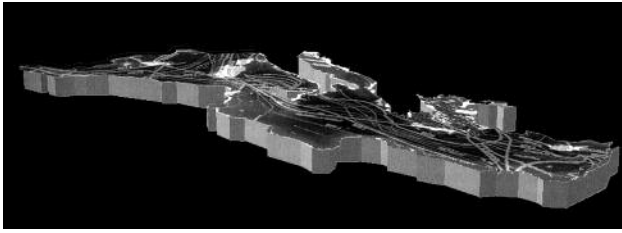
Multiplicity. *Solid Sea,* 2002.
Part of ongoing work first
presented at Documenta 11.

sole claimants to this type of working method. In other words, the research into the architecture of this conflictual space does not critique the operation of concrete state and military power by presenting it as specific but by transferring its logic to a wealth of other contexts. In these contexts it brings forth the components of terminologies and counterterminologies that themselves compile knowledge of a new field of articulation.

Research into the unequal effect of borders also forms the basis of work by the transnational research platform Multiplicity. Its atlases of the Mediterranean bring to light the ambiguities surrounding the growing territorial solidification of this region. The Mediterranean is predominantly depicted as the cradle of civilization, as a place of encounter between different cultures. However, on a more quotidian level, it is also a place where the global division between North and South is being implemented under a regime of electronic borders, military patrols, undocumented border incidents, and the rhetoric of illegality and national security. The Mediterranean is a contested geography of journeys and border crossings, each with its own intention and purpose. The maps drawn by Multiplicity show the different movements of disadvantaged and advantaged groups, creating a geography of stark contrasts determined by the territorial logic of a one-sided world order. In this connection, Ursula Biemann studies just how this logic intervenes in a colonial fashion in the spatial order beyond the border—and the way the border is undermined by self-created forms of logic. Drawing on a growing archive of documentary video footage, Biemann explores various geophysical conflicts, not with a top-down view, but from the perspective of creating social living spaces. Such micropolicies of survival trace a complex network of detours, back doors, "underground railroads," hiding places, tunnels, and tricks that make up everyday life beyond the border. In work on the Spanish-Moroccan border region around the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, Biemann investigates how, in the interplay between technological control mechanisms and illegal border crossings by smugglers and migrants, the border is simultaneously sealed off and porous: on the one hand, the profitable supply of the global market for goods is promoted; on the other hand, the undesired flows of people to Europe are prevented. The contested border is transformed into a camp for an army of border crossers and day laborers. As formulated by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer,* their bodies become a biopolitical border, a zone where interior and

exterior, exception and rule, legality and illegality are impossible to distinguish.[1]

Thousands of miles away, Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri tracked the spread of this mobile zone across the entire national territory of the United States in a project called *Camp Campaign*. On their journey they made contact with local communities, activists, and intellectuals, gathering material for a cartography of the history of encampments. Their map shows a geography of temporally and spatially dispersed camp situations that highlight a hidden matrix of political space in the United States—a biopolitical horizon determining the political relevance of life. Marked on Anastas and Gabri's map are military camps, tent cities, working camps, reservations, rendition airstrips, scenes of protest, relocation centers, relief camps, and civilian campsites. The spread of these camps across the entire territory of the United States shows the suppressed traces of a polycentric conflictual terrain: a disintegrated outer border that multiplies within in order to project itself onto the outside world. As Victor Burgin writes, "Repression acts not so much on the trace itself as upon *connections* between traces."[2] Burgin compares the analytic process to the act of exposing dangerous, hidden relations: it severs well-established ties, making possible the creation of new relations by reconfiguring current patterns. Viewed this way, the value of a map like *Camp Campaign*'s lies not so much in the fact that it sheds light on suppressed traces as in the fact that it provides the chance both to recognize the connections between the various articulations and inscriptions of a ubiquitous camp and to produce new traces of the imagination.

A desire to challenge the politics of the border by insisting on the existence of border activities and by intensifying these activities also constitutes the motivation behind cooperative platforms between contested border areas. The borders of poststate federations, above all the European Union, seem to function as hermetic seals, but these federations in fact pursue a policy that aims for the control and management of mobility. The emerging network of filters and channels ensures that the border is sufficiently porous for the economic advantages of global migration flows. For greater control of labor and production, the authority associated with the spatial borders of state territory is transformed into a flexible, mobile authority of civic control. Instead of keeping immigrants at bay by means of hermetic seals, such
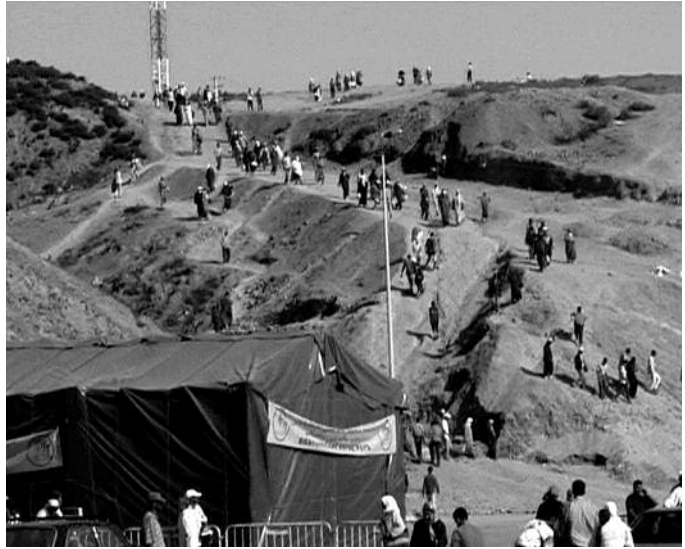
Above: Ursula Biemann. *Europlex,* 2003. Video still.

Opposite: Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri. *Fear Is Somehow Our For Whom? For What? + Proximity to Everything Far Away,* 2006. Map that forms part of *Camp Campaign,* a journey through the United States activating the relations between the camps in Guantánamo Bay with contemporary and historical examples, Summer 2006.
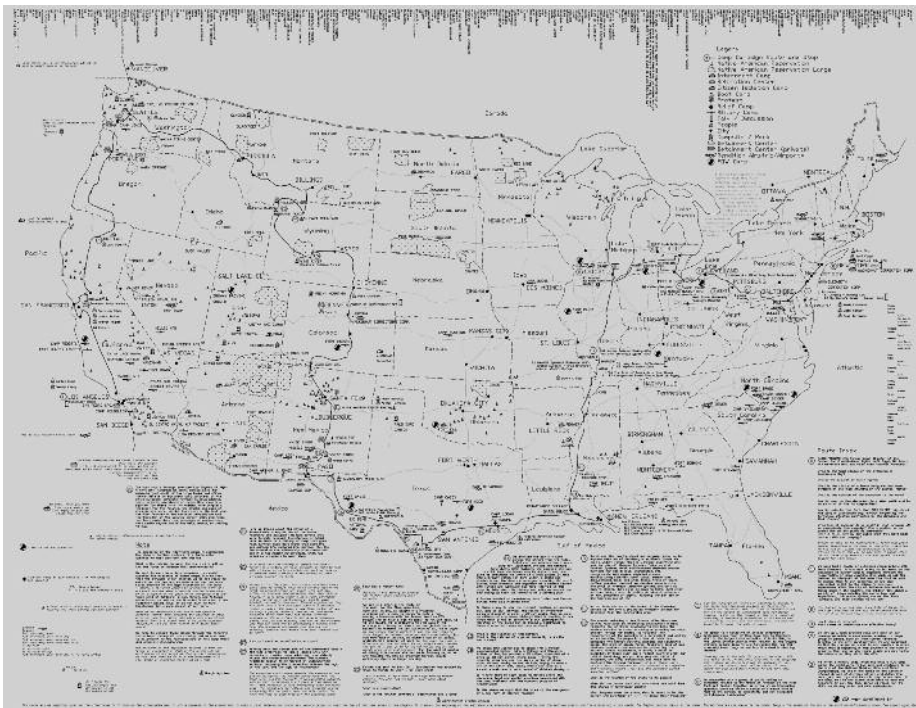
federations use immigrants by forcing them into illegal employment and black markets.[3] A highly idiosyncratic, goal-oriented economy arises on the other side of the border, one consisting of textile manufacturers, telecommunication businesses, refugee camps, labor migrants, intermediary dealers, human traffickers, legal advisers, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Forces of production and migration meet in narrow border channels, forming a marginalized territory of contested enclaves, buffer zones, military areas, protective strips, and no-man's-lands: an intensified supply and negotiation space of geopolitical warfare, one that aesthetic practices regard not only as their subject but increasingly as a sphere of activity.

In this situation, networks become important platforms of action because they create the opportunity to overcome a dependency on offers of participation and, instead, to actively question the conflictual mechanisms and regulatory powers concealed behind rites of participation. Because the creativity involved in producing such self-empowered participation in urban or geopolitical processes is not pooled in a single central body but dispersed across networks, the form of involvement in these processes does not operate via central authorization but via self-authorized participation in network activities. This has changed the prevalent forms of critical intervention: only on one level does the fabric joining areas, subjects, and interests represent a concrete spatial locality in the sense of geographic proximity. On another level, these urban social movements mobilize a transterritorial network that sets different nodes of social restructuring in relation to one another. In this politically motivated process, the network is at once the product and producer of social move-
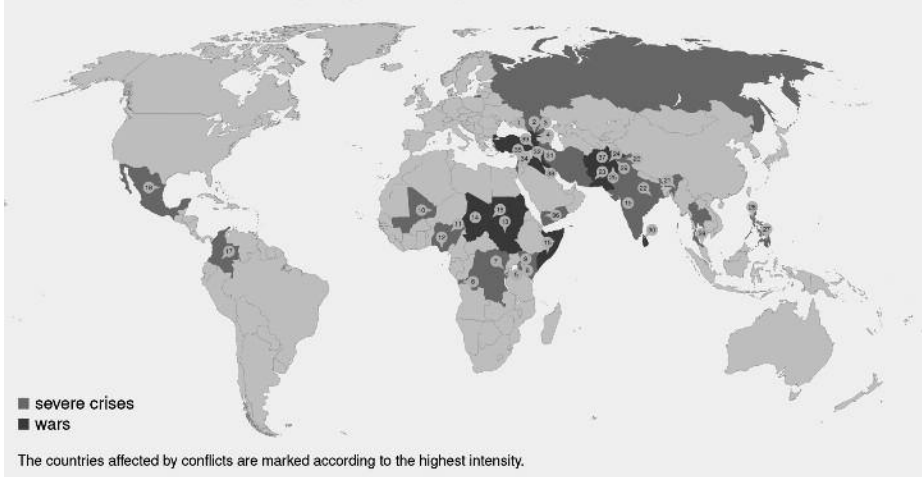
ments. Instead of representing interests by means of homogenizing logics of identity, its strength lies in the joint, cross-border execution of acts of change.[4] These acts show that borders and border regions are highly imaginary constructs, brimming with illusions, false memories, and myths. Operating in these areas entails crossing the thresholds of both physical and imaginary space.

Fragmentation and Dispersal

In 2008, the Heidelberger Institut für Internationale Konfliktforschung (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, HIIK) recorded 345 political conflicts throughout the world, of which 134 were of a violent nature. HIIK's annually published "conflict barometers" and "conflict panoramas" indicate the strength and quantity of these conflicts and reconstruct the development of crises, wars, negotiations, and peace agreements. The result is a geography of conflictual intensity displaying a specific constellation of regions, countries, and continents as a single conflict zone spanning the globe. This zone is distinguished by "the clashing of interests (positional differences) over national values of some duration and magnitude between at least two parties (organized groups, states, groups of states, organizations) that are determined to pursue their interests and achieve their goals."[5] On HIIK's maps the conflict zone—in the form of an archipelago—lays siege to a "low-conflict" inner zone covering Western and Central Europe, North America, Japan, and Oceania. The inner zone's contours conspicuously coincide with those of another geography: the global "territorial security system" that, developed over the past few years, uses electronic sensors, infrared cameras, naval convoys, air patrols, fences, and fortifications in a bid to banish "conflicts" from the shielded interior. The EU's Schengen Information System, the military fortification of the EU's outer borders, the Israeli West Bank barrier, the SIVE (Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior) surveillance system between Europe and North Africa, the razor-wire fencing along the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta, the United States–Mexico barrier ("Tortilla Wall"), the technologically armed Australian Coastal Defence, and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea—this ring of defense technologies, which is supported by state and international doctrines, partitions off an economically prosperous inner area. Surrounded not only by conflicts but also by this technological defense ring, the Global North appears as an enclave in a seething international conflict.

The ever-denser chain linking symbolic sites of conflict creates a figure of exteriorization that shifts the focus of conflict from within to without. The image created by HIIK masks the deliberate elimination of difference that Henri Lefebvre describes

World Map: High-Intensity Violent Conflicts in 2008

■ severe crises
■ wars

The countries affected by conflicts are marked according to the highest intensity.

Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research. World map of violent conflicts, 2008. © HIIK.

in conjunction with the elimination of all that eludes the dominant urban policy of homogenization and normalization: "What is different is, to begin with, what is *excluded:* the edges of the city, shanty towns, the spaces of forbidden games, of guerrilla war, of war."[6] In the politics of global economic control, a conflictual space is always a space of exclusion, a space on the periphery, a space that defies abstraction. Conflicts are supposed to take place off the beaten trail, at places whose contiguity cannot be broken but harnessed ideologically. The power of abstraction operates under cover: it spreads via fragmentations, zonings, borderlines, crossings, and penetrations. As the policy of concealment becomes more complex, so, too, does the set of instruments it employs and the spatial structures it produces.

The range of high- and low-tech mechanisms used by the military to enclose prospering areas, together with the conflict zones of HIIK, portrayed as a world map, marks out the paradoxical policy of the global reterritorialization of conflict: although conflicts are never related to issues that are strictly territorial in nature, attempts are increasingly being made to present them as territorial disputes that can be resolved by fortifying these areas. The realities constructed in this dynamic—the cleansed spaces of the first world—do not represent homogenous containers but the effects of a spatial policy based on spatial abstraction and global homogenization. As part of this policy, resistant territories are no longer fought over but bracketed, placed under quarantine and enclosed in order to produce a dualism of inner and outer spheres. Enclaves in which other enclaves are embedded signal an equilibrium that can be maintained only by a sophisticated border system. What emerges is a complex spatial organization of intertwined inner and outer zones. As a result of this organization, social conflicts are not so much regulated as defended against. Both the increased fortification of space in the form of an agglomerate of hypertrophic protective cells and the enlargement of scale from the urban to the regional and continental serve to create the illusion that complex systems of experts are required

to create a balance in the tensions that supposedly originate in the properties of space. The difficult balance of urban and geo-cultural morphologies, so the argument runs, is the successful result of rational conflict control. This process, which is shaped by architectural methods (the organization, design, construction, and representation of spatial structures), exposes a globally operating spatial praxis that is founded on fragmentation and dispersal—a praxis in which detention camps, secret prisons, and military camps function as the smallest unit. Forming on the other side of the border are autonomous enclosures such as gated communities, all-inclusive resorts, enclosed malls, fenced-off campuses, and leisure parks and their all-purpose mobile form, the sports utility vehicle. Viewed on a large scale, "functional" zones are thereby created vis-à-vis the complexly structured zone of unrest and hotspots.

In 2001 Great Britain introduced a new Terrorism Act to prevent terrorist activities. Section 44 of the act enables the government to treat any form of deviant behavior as a state of exception and to deal with it accordingly. Since the act became law, the police have stopped and questioned more than 30,000 people each year without a compelling reason. Emergency authority is potentially expanded to include all areas of political life and can be used by the police at any time as the legal basis for stop-and-search operations. The Terrorism Act represents an extreme manifestation of the elastic border, offering maximum flexibility in an effort to monitor the interior life circumscribed by the power of the sovereign. This elasticity is designed as a projection onto the future, as a mobile and virtual border that can be executed wherever future conditions make it necessary. The border is directed against a largely undefined exterior whose threatening nature is first ascertained in the act of its execution. This makes the creation of a border into an act of performative knowledge production. The border gains legitimacy, as it were, by establishing a hostile nature; in its most elastic form, it gains legitimacy from an ideology that envisions a ubiquitously hostile urban environment, one that extends from the micro-areas of urban gang warfare to the hideouts of terrorist networks organized in the suburbs.

The use of conflict and crisis in the visual aesthetics of the media, in the design of crisis spaces, and in the global policy of conflict management goes hand in hand with the guiding concept of conflict management that gives conflict avoidance priority over conflict engagement. Here conflicts are almost exclusively discussed in terms of "defusing tensions" and "clarification," and the most refined state of conflict is seen in crisis prevention. This traces back to an understanding of crisis derived from the ancient Greek verb *krínein* (to "separate" or "discern"), wherein "crisis" means "decision" or "decisive turning point"—a break with an

existing situation at its most sensitive developmental point and the emergence of an exceptional state. This turning point—as the most pressing point for a decision on action—contains not only the chance to avert the threat of a crisis and to restore normalcy but also the opportunity to radically reconstruct the subject. If we approach conflict from the perspective of consolidating an order that is governed by general norms, we can ascertain this turning point only *ex posteriori*—at a point, that is, when the crisis has already been overcome. This is not the case if we approach conflict as the singular expression of a decision concerning action; that is, if its radius of action is positioned outside the norm. Here the potential of the decision-making power circulating in conflicts points to a fundamental separation between the norm and its application. At the most extreme point of the crisis, both spheres keep the greatest distance to each other if the application of the norm is annulled in order to assert the norm's validity. That is, cognition of the norm takes place from the perspective of extremes, via the point of exception. A fissure opens up—one that Agamben describes as the topological structure of the state of exception. "That is, the state of exception separates the norm from its application in order to make its application possible. It introduces a zone of anomie into the law in order to make the effective regulation [*normazione*] of the real possible."[7]

According to Agamben, this lawless space has increasingly advanced to the center. As peripheries have grown more fluid and mobile, the exception, as a territorial form, is shifting from the edge to an encampment within the political center. Banishment no longer entails expelling something to the margins of geocultural existence but rather rending and dividing coexistence at the heart of the social order. The state of exception has therefore become the organizational principle of a social crisis that appears to be ubiquitous: it does not lead to normalization but, under the banner of the fight against terrorism, serves as a permanent provisional arrangement and a form of government. The "camp" is the architectural expression of this government, an instrument of control over the body that gains legitimacy through crisis scenarios and that brings about the work of other apparatuses, protocols, and authorities. This process removes the negotiation of conflicts from the public sphere and delegates it to experts. Under this new crisis management, the object of public debate is no longer the contents of the crisis. The debate is shifted to a constellation of professional crisis forums whose work is geared toward efficient action. Consistent with this thinking, all involvement with conflicts is regarded as successful only if it results in their elimination. Conflicts are subordinated to a conflict-free state, which becomes a mandatory goal: conflict makes sense only when it is engaged in with an eye toward its resolution.

From the demise of the New Economy and the rise of the global protest movement to the emergence of the militant network of the global jihad and the violent attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the manner in which centers of social power have perceived the network has changed. Once viewed as a tool of trouble-free control, the network is now feared as a source of uncontrollable danger. In this regard, networks have replaced the most powerful figure of modernity: the threatening figure of the masses. Elias Canetti's concept of the masses as a symbol of being *touched* by the unknown has given way to a trope of being *connected* with the unknown.[8] Increased mobility, accelerated contacts, and the declining relevance of spatial distance—as an expression of our sense of proximity and distance—have allowed new parameters to emerge and have generated not only a new connective quality but also elements of uncertainty and fear: fear of the unchecked spread of global epidemics, fear of terrorist networks, and fear of a profound social, financial, and military crisis in the old center of world power. The network has become a diffuse symbol of the enemy, one encrusted with fears—just as diffuse—of disintegration, transmission, and contamination. In the widespread talk of a "war on terrorism," the network has become a useful tool to give fear a place. Of infinite scope, this place can be experienced everywhere—which is why it must also be reorganized, monitored, and protected everywhere by political leaders. The use of the "network" concept cleverly disguises a global policy of regulatory mechanisms that attempts to control network dynamics but must also provide space for its expansion in order to achieve its own goals.

Not only the spread of networks but also the defense against them shapes the spatial form of crises. These defenses include the security architecture of gated communities, the walls enclosing states in the Israeli-Palestinian border conflict, the use of electronic fences to seal off the European continent from North Africa, as well as Dubai's planned resort project "The World," designed as a miniature universe and manmade refuge. Now that the network enemy is at home on all scales, no single scale is off-limits when it comes to attempts to avert the crisis. The struggle taking place in these zones over how to design the state of crisis demonstrates that the network is no antipode to border policy. In policies of spatial distribution and spatial control, networks play an important role in efforts to strategically secure borders and expand border regions. The intelligence of networks, with their logic of flexible combination and control, is needed to provide a dynamic challenge to the accelerated interaction between distant nodes. Like the border, the network is a concept and not a spatial object;[9] it is a divided fiction that, depending on the desired type of spatial and social organization, gives rise to a particular material form.

Conflict Politics

In our reflections, we therefore do not wish to address networks as *places* of conflict and crisis—which is the case when terrorist networks are described as the sources of conspiratorial violence or when networks are seen as the "problem spaces" of globalization.[10] Of primary interest to us is how networks can be seen as a situational *form* of transformation, as a spatial manifestation of upheaval that has largely emancipated itself from any direct link to local topographies. Networks mark out a sociospatial process whose properties emerge from a situation rather than essentially existing in local or historical conditions. The dynamic form of such processes is shown by many examples. With the emergence of the money market and the exchange of goods, services, and balance-of-payment funds across borders, the mercantilist trade networks of the seventeenth century produced both cross-border competition and new control instruments, one being the 1651 Navigation Act, which established a closed trade zone over large areas of the world. This competition and new set of instruments shaped the crisis of the absolutist state. Each new generation of expansionary technology introduced in the nineteenth century— the railroad, telecommunications, electricity—gave expression to the crisis affecting the patronage of Western civilization over ever-growing colonized regions. Later, in the twentieth century, the network architecture of guerrilla warfare, taking the concrete form of the underground tunnel begun by the Viet Minh in the late 1940s, played a central role in the tactics of the Vietnam resistance. Yet this network architecture also provided an effective structure for the crisis in Western power during the Cold War. In 1969 the Advanced Research Project Agency Network (ARPANET)—the first data transmission network and the predecessor to the Internet—emerged from the context of the U.S. state security crisis but also helped shape this crisis with its sophisticated distribution of information flows, designed to ensure security.[11] In much the same way, today's internationally networked NGOs do not passively reflect but formatively influence the crisis in nation-state government caused by globalization. Similarly, in the period after 1989, the social networks in Eastern Europe, which originated in the age of *Realsozialismus* (real socialism), have not only cushioned the sudden disruptions of state regulations and welfare authorities, but also transformed them into a new set of instruments for cultural coexistence under the conditions of unregulated self-enterprise.

This metonymic relationship between crisis situations and network formation provides us with a form-giving model that does not isolate spatial renewal from crisis-ridden spatial conditions but regards this space as a source of generative potential for new forms. Networks are transformational spaces, and precisely

that is their strength. In light of this quality, networks can be seen as fluid peripheries organized around a central void. The best way for such a structure to grow and change is if it refuses a clearly outlined central project. In a deliberate, active process of dispersing attention and obfuscating a middle figure, networks open up paths that circumnavigate a central emptiness. These paths crystallize around something that exists, not as a clearly drawn object, but as an indeterminate region, as a gap that cannot be filled. They repudiate not only their past, but also the clearly defined form of their future as a joint project. Entirely committed to the terrain of the present, structural control and collaboration must be created anew at every moment. Networks are an expression of an ongoing beginning. This geometry of transformation makes possible an upsurge in spontaneously designed, flexible, temporary spaces, especially in remote and less stabilized regions in which labor migration, economic deregulation, social separation, and religious movement have created a spatial patchwork of migratory infrastructures. These infrastructures consist of kiosks and minibuses, prayer rooms and pickup points for day laborers, transit camps and street kitchens, social clubs and local radio stations. New social spaces are not being created in place of or atop existing ones but in the middle of existing sociocultural orders.[12] The transformation of these economies provides an expansionary space for networks—one in which new cultures seize ground.

In this way, networks are able to create a place where conflicts are handled in a different way. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe show that the creative potential of conflict lies in its ability to keep blind totality at bay.[13] This totality is oriented toward two poles: the first is reached by measures of cleansing, and the second by measures of harmonization. In the first case, the democratic public sphere is conceived as a cleansed space of individual expression; in the second, as a harmonized social whole. For both, conflict is a force that undermines the genesis of the functioning spaces of democratic society. But if we assume that the potential platform for articulating a global public sphere—the network of transversal interaction—is not a structure that can be planned and fixed but represents the transfer of ideas and debates to the arena of politicospatial action, then conflict is the criteria for creating and appropriating spaces of democratic coexistence. So, conflict is precisely the condition that is required for their genesis and growth. Conflict functions as a force of negotiation that is carried from moment to moment, a force that in many small steps structures our understanding of the future in relation to the past. The fundamental potential contained in conflict is that it opens up possibilities for political action, of which violence is just one.

However, in official policy, conflicts are negotiated in mitigation processes whose endpoint is not a dynamic state of embraced difference but a struggle over the control of what is excluded. As Judith Butler argues, the state of being human is defined by a matrix of inclusions and exclusions in which spectral existences justify an endless warfare against the phantasmal infinity of the enemy:

> It is not a matter of a simple entry of the excluded into an established ontology, but an insurrection at the level of ontology, a critical opening up of the questions, What is real? Whose lives are real? How might reality be remade? Those who are unreal have, in a sense, suffered the violence of derealization. . . . Violence renews itself in the apparent inexhaustibility of its object.[14]

Although the debate on the use of rights performs a central ethical and political function, the relationship between law and justice has no greater meaning in the expanding discussions on political and economic spatial control.[15] The apparatus underlying a legal practice is not the result of its own nature; it is a changeable, contingent construct of political and theoretical engagement. An idiosyncratic commonality exists between the denial of this connection and the denial of the link between the organization of violence and urban life: their construction as incompatible zones and the consciousness this creates (i.e., that there can be no place for dissent in the law and no place for conflict in the city) are related to a particular conception of culture in which difference poses a danger. The ideological function of the agreement between law and justice therefore coincides with the normative organizational design of the city as a nonviolent zone of civilization.

If, as Georg Simmel writes in "The Sociology of Conflict," engagement in conflict is intended to serve an "uncultivated" release of tension between opposing forces, this opposition must preexist as a structure of different characteristics that can be related to one another only by means of their susceptibility to a harmonization process aiming for the well-being of "culture."[16] However, as Homi Bhabha argues in his discussion of hybridity, that which is cultural is neither the *source* of the conflict nor an *alternative* that can be abstracted from it. Rather, the *effect* of distinguishing practices is to create authority: "A disposal of power, a negative transparency that comes to be agonistically constructed *on the boundary* between frame of reference/frame of mind."[17] The insistently used concept of a clash of civilizations is an effect of power—an effect with which certain traits, bodies, gestures, discourses, and desires of a culture are identified.

This practice, which operates on a discursive and material

level, results not only in the growing fragmentation of spatial coexistence but also in the institutionalization of conflicts in a policy of global division. Conflicts become the dominant framework for determining the way a certain territory and a certain population are perceived. Architecture is an expression of this policy; it creates divisional lines, trenches, fortifications, and partitions within an elastic geography of interior and exterior zones surrounded and organized by a large number of players. As Eyal Weizman writes, the architecture of the frontier is not simply "political" in the sense that it is manifested in political, ideological, and economic controversies. Rather, it is "politics in matter," a form of political conflictual practice.[18] "In this context the relation of space to action could not be understood as that of a rigid container of 'soft' performance. Political action is fully absorbed in the organization, transformation, erasure and subversion of space."[19] Precisely this overlapping of space and politics makes conflict all-encompassing and simultaneously determines its irresolvability, thereby opening up the opportunity to performatively create spatial meaning. Space is not merely a "container" for our action. Nor is architecture a container for politics, and nor are cities, regions, and states containers for the seething conflicts within. Conflicts are shaped by mental geographies and their physical enactment. Space is thus a possible form for articulating conflicts—a very concrete form of conflictual practice and not a container for conflict. Conflict does not reside outside our existence; it is lived out and spatialized by all of us.

Network Agency

This new networked situation is double edged: on one side it tends to signify the end of our control of the territorial map, of the idea that the world is composed of objects and not of relationships, processes, and dynamics; on the other side these very relationships are regulated through technological and political means that do little more than consolidate the control society. That more and more transversally structured art and architectural practices get involved in the production of connective relationships, be it through interventionist or cartographic work, seems consistent with the growing strata of geographies and countergeographies, technologies and countertechnologies. The question that remains, though, is how to *use* the tools and representations generated by this multidisciplinary research—how to use an atlas like Multiplicity's *Solid Sea* project, and how to use the operational model of a networked research group like Multiplicity or Ursula Biemann's collaboration with Frontera Sur RRVT.[20]

In trying to address this question, we turn to the idea of provisionality that replaces the mere toleration of contradictions and incongruities with an active moment of change. Sigmund Freud

develops the psychoanalytic notion of *Ersatz* (substitute) in relation to magic and myth in his essay "Totem and Taboo," where he suggests that art replaces an unattainable real object with an illusory one.[21] Aesthetic production and the pleasure obtained through it are in this way characterized by the figure of *Ersatz* in which the artist subscribes to a fantasy world rather than finding gratification in the real world. Freud sees no point in healthily sustaining the function of the surrogate throughout adult life. Rather, he thinks that the substitution operates as a retreat into compensatory gratification. But what if we were to recognize conflicts and disruptions in a sphere of connectedness and allow for a climate of sustained and permitted conflicts? This would constitute a step toward a possibly imperfect yet *perfectly appropriate* model of development. Such a model breaks with a clear separation of the world of fantasy and the world of reality;[22] it advocates a transformative experience that localizes an experimentation with possible worlds in the world of existing relational structures. Competing systems and their construction of discontinuity are replaced by a shared praxis of maintained contradictions, a simultaneity of several worlds that creates space for change. "To ask for recognition," writes Judith Butler, "or to offer it, is precisely not to ask for recognition of what one already is. It is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition a future always in relation to the Other."[23] Although the tension of perpetual contradictions may be accompanied by irritations, intrusions, and exhaustion, what really matters is the capacity to repair and reconstitute relationships. The rejection of the concept of clear breaks and separations and a preference for perpetual contradictions point to an understanding of connectedness not as a model of enduring harmony but as an arc of tension that is maintained and altered by constant disruptions and repairs. In this model, no normative ideal of balance equates rifts with failure. Rather than acceding to the obsession with perfect realizations of a particular form of organization, the model advocates a space in which the disordered and contradictory sides of creativity can act out their generative force and in the process precisely revise the conditions of growth.

This argument finds a dual echo in the often used relational construct of the multitude, as outlined by Paolo Virno in *A Grammar of the Multitude.* One echo concerns the way in which the subject represents a zone of dispute between different forces that leave individuation incomplete and fragmentary. The mesh-like, amphibious subject of this confrontation is always tied to the force of the preindividual. The other echo concerns the way network action acquires new models of social expression and interaction from a revision and redefinition of prevailing ideas and not from a transition from one point to another.[24] This assess-

ment of the appropriation and reconfiguration of the network society thus rests on a concept of the substitute that has less to do with the principle of closure than with the practices of continued contradictions. This is a substitute that does not elude external reality; it neither represses this reality nor emulates it with the aid of a surrogate. It simply operates from the inside. This form of substitute is neither parasitic nor unfathomable; it is a structural mode that is conditioned by the same forces that have generated it, and it therefore shares their operational logic. For example, in dominant map-making practices, the trajectories of tourists crossing the Mediterranean can be regarded as more representative of this particular geography than those of sea-going migrants on their way to the northern shore. As the latter are not only not allowed to cross over to the other shore but not allowed to cross over to become part of the matrix of canonical representation, their possibilities of entering a space of intervention are closely tied to the struggle to rearrange normalized uses of cartography.

This becomes apparent in the formation of networked practices around *Fada'ìat* ("through spaces"), a project that regularly holds workshops, seminars, and joint happenings along the Straits
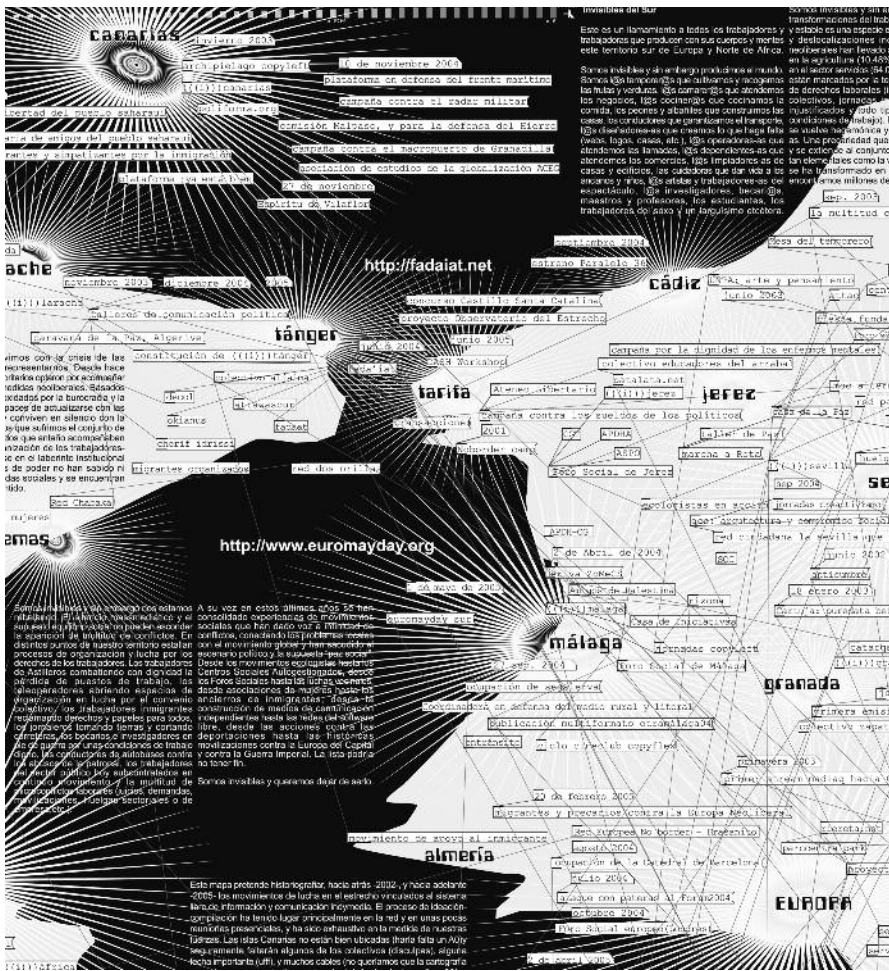
Opposite and above:
Hackitectura and Observatorio Tecnológico del Estrecho.
Fada'iat, **2004. Cartography of the geopolitical territory of the Straits of Gibraltar.**

of Gibraltar. Since 2004, this network of groups in Spain and Morocco has been attempting to create a manifold social and infographic terrain that allows a community to emerge that can defend itself against policies of spatial division and urban cleansing. One of the most important goals of this initiative—which is formed by architectural and media collectives such as hackitectura, Indymedia of the Straits, and Straddle3—is to jointly establish a free, cross-coastal communication zone linking the Spanish town of Tarifa with Tangiers in Morocco, a zone that promotes dissident knowledge and temporarily suspends the region's clear divide between North and South. The network deploys satellite dishes, Wi-Fi links, and mobile architectures as civil technologies in the struggle against the border geography dominating the region and its further implications for all of Europe. The network's sphere of action extends beyond any single concrete locality and has included, for example, activities undertaken against urban redevelopment policy, such as protests against the axis created for the 2004 Universal Cultural Forum in the city of Barcelona. This axis runs between Jean Nouvel's landmark building, Torre Agbar, and the new park on the seafront, where buildings by Herzog & de Meuron and Foreign Office Architects have been

attracting an international urban public. In the middle of the axis is the former Can Ricart industrial complex, which looks back on a different neighborhood history and has become the symbol of the tenacious struggle by the local population of Poblenou to reconquer public space. When the Cultural Forum was built, this local culture was marginalized and vilified as obsolete. Bringing together different population groups at a variety of events, including discussions, exhibitions, and street festivals, the protest by the local population was supported by a large network of artists, architects, and media activists who called for collective public planning processes and more sustainable spaces of cultural coexistence. The focus of such protests is not the demand for integration but efforts to explain the exclusionary process underlying social homogenization. As Jacques Rancière stated, "Politics is not about integrating the excluded in our societies. It is about restaging matters of exclusion as matters of conflict, of opposition between worlds."[25]

In this variable geometry of networks lie the structural preconditions for collective action.[26] Networks constitute attractive action alliances not because they form a closed power structure but because they promise the possibility of transformation. In the moment of upheaval they become reservoirs for the hope of finding collective possibilities of participation and change. As a result, network action constitutes a continual regrouping and reshaping of goals and components that allow sites of passive experience to be transformed into sites of resistance. Transformation is itself thus claimed as a site of resistance. Network creativity repositions the enforced participation in upheaval as a form of utilization in which the network becomes not a means but a site of its own transformation. Put another way, what we are designating here as a network encompasses a topological tension between the connectivity of this structure and the ideas and meanings continually being developed by its actors.[27] The role of this tension consists in fend-

Top: Can Ricart (Barcelona), 2005. A historic factory complex occupied by small workshops and studios until early 2006 that has become a focus of conflict between planning authorities and local initiatives.

Bottom: Jean Nouvel. Torre Agbar (Barcelona), 2001–04.

ing off the topological stability that would transform the network into fixed structures with an inherent identity. In a political sense, network action is thus based on a concept of deformation: networks form topological possibilities from which new protagonists are generated as network effects. This means that a fundamental asymmetry exists between the prevailing morphology of a network and its actors, an elementary moment of nonrecognition and conflict that is incorporated in the relationship between present and future structures. This asymmetry provides not only the basis for a reshaping of the individual within a new relational ethics; it also shapes the unstable site of network creativity through an incessant and irreducible transformation of ends that are never given.

Notes

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3. Sandro Mezzadra, "Borders/Confines, Migrations, Citizenship," in *Fada'iat: Freedom of Movement, Freedom of Knowledge* (Barcelona: Imagraf Impresores, 2006), 178.

4. Brian Holmes, "'We Are the Media': The Dream of the Transnational-Popular," in *Populism Reader,* ed. Lars Bang Larsen, Christina Ricupero, and Nicolaus Schafhausen (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2005), 23–24.

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11. Sadie Plant, "Network Wars," *Blueprint,* September 1998, 26–27.

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13. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics,* 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001).

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15. Samantha Besson, *The Morality of Conflict: Reasonable Disagreement and the Law* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2005).

16. Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Conflict: I," *American Journal of Sociology* 9 (1903): 490.

17. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 114. Emphasis in original.

18. Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007), 5.

19. Weizman, 7.

20. See Brian Holmes, "Kartografie des Exzesses, Suche nach Nutzung: Über die Mapping-Projekte der beiden Konzeptgruppen Bureau d'études und Multiplicity," *Springerin* 1/02 (2002): 18ff.

21. Sigmund Freud, *Totem und Tabu (Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker)* (1912/1913), in *Fragen der Gesellschaft/Ursprünge der Religion,* vol. 9 of *Studienausgabe* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 2000), 287–444.

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in "Recognition and Destruction," in *Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

23. Butler, 44.

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