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**Global Architectural Urban History in the Modern Era**  
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**Israeli Settlements: The Architecture of Oppression**  
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*Abstract*

“The(ir) weapons and ammunitions are very simple elements: they are trees, they are terraces, they are houses. They are barriers.”

Eyal Weizman

*From the orthogonal urban layout in Athens to the angular boulevards in Paris, the importance of architecture and urban planning on societies, economies and cultures has been at the forefront of architectural scholarship and discourse since ancient times. In general, these practices have been associated with constructive as opposed to destructive enterprises, but this hasn't always been the case. The construction of Israeli settlements on occupied lands, contrary to international law, is a good example of the way in which these processes have been used as a means of warfare. This paper will explore the role of both architecture and urban design in advancing the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, with specific reference to the Sharon-Wachman plan and Ma'ale Adumim, one of the largest and oldest illegal settlements in the region. In addition to examining the military and imperialistic functionality of these settlements, their effect will also be considered; not only in terms of unifying Israeli nationalism but as a way of furthering Palestinian oppression and arguably, a Palestinian genocide. Lastly, the use of architecture as an instrument of war or oppression gives rise to a number of ethical issues with respect to the practice of architecture. This paper concludes with a discussion of professional ethics, including recent motions by the Royal Institute of British Architects with respect to this issue and the role of the International Union of Architects in upholding a global code of conduct.*

**Introduction**

Architecture and urban planning has been used throughout history to separate, exclude

Architecture and urban planning has been used throughout history to separate, exclude and oppress people. This was evident in the internal divisions within the City of Cape Town during apartheid and the binary constructions incorporated into public buildings in the southern U.S. during segregation (Peters, 2004 and Weyeneth, 2005). The use of design as an instrument of war, however, has never been implemented on as great a scale as it has by the Israelis with the construction of settlements in the occupied territories (Weizman, 2007). A brief history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict confirms not only the illegality of these constructed communities but also the gross social injustice that has been occasioned by them (Felner, 1995). The manner in which these settlements have been constructed have been referred to as the “Architecture of War”, the “Architecture of Violence” and the “Architecture of Occupation” (Weizman, 2006, 2007). Regardless of the terminology, however, it’s clear that architecture and urban design have been part of the Israeli arsenal and that specific design elements have been used by them to advance their military and imperialistic interests in the region. The following discussion endeavors to provide some historical context for this issue, to examine the architecture and urban design of these settlements with specific reference to Ma’ale Adumin (one of the largest and oldest Israeli settlements), to review the effects of this design on the people of Palestine and lastly, to consider the ethical implications that this presents for the profession of architecture.

## **The History**

The Israeli-Palestine conflict began toward the end of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of both Jewish and Arab nationalist movements in the southern Levant (Sela, 2002).

Conflict within that region ensued with violent clashes occurring sporadically up until the beginning of World War II (Sela, 2002). Despite quotas imposed by the British after the War, a Zionist insurgency, which included a significant number of Holocaust survivors, re-ignited the problem (Sela, 2002). In response to the situation, the United Nations passed Resolution 181, which proposed a 65%-35% split of the land in that region between the Jews and the Palestinians (Bourke, 2013). The State of Israel was formally created in 1948 and as a result, over 750,000 Palestinians were immediately displaced from their homes (Shah, 2006). In 1967, the Israelis commenced a “pre-emptive strike” against Egypt, Syria and Jordan and seized further Palestinian lands, more than doubling the size of their country (Shah, 2006). Since then, they have significantly increased the extent of their occupation by extending settlements into Palestinian territory contrary to international law, and as set out in the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention (Shah, 2006).

Although the United Nations and other governments have repeatedly called for their withdrawal, to date, no concessions have been made (Shah, 2006). The conflict has persisted and has been marked with continued violence and human rights violations, largely directed toward the Palestinians (Shah, 2006).

## **The Settlements**

Israeli settlements on occupied lands have been heavily criticized by the international community (Weizman, 2007). Notwithstanding the clear violation of law, the Israeli government has attempted to justify the settlements as a necessary measure in order to accommodate their growing population (Weizman, 2007). Of interest, however, is that the Israeli settlement population has increased four times as much as the country’s general population (Ferziger, 2015).

It would appear from these numbers, that population is not driving illegal settlement expansion but rather, illegal settlement expansion is driving the population growth in these areas. An examination of the architecture and urban design of these settlements would seem to support this view.

Prior to 1967, there were very few Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands (Weizman, 2007). They arose as a result of an Israel architectural-military plan, known as the Sharon-Wachman plan (Weizman, 2007). This plan was developed in 1977 by Avraham Wachman, an Israeli architect and Ariel Sharon, who was then, Minister of Agriculture and head of the Ministerial Committee for Settlement (Weizman, 2007). Of interest, is that Wachman was not particularly well known in the field of architecture or urban planning (Weizman, 2007).

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particularly well known in the field of architecture or urban planning (Weizman, 2007). Strangely, his background was in the development of a system of notation for choreographers (Weizman, 2007). The plan that these men devised, envisioned the installment of hundreds of settlements throughout the occupied territories, interconnected with a road system, not for the purpose of protecting Israeli interests or accommodating a growing population but in order to establish a “Matrix of Control” in the region (Weizman, 2007). The plan was met with some skepticism by the government at that time and only a few settlements were approved. Sharon, nevertheless, installed many more without any official government permission (Weizman, 2007). By the early 1980’s, he had established a strong base of support and construction began in earnest (Weizman, 2007).

Pursuant to this plan, settlements were placed on hilltops so as to provide surveillance points (Weizman, 2007). The objective was to see and be seen (Weizman, 2007). To that end, it was important that each location have a strong visual line of connection, not only with other settlements but with the surrounding area (Weizman, 2007). Visual domination was important not simply to establish authority and control but also as a means of clearly communicating the magnitude of the occupation to the Palestinians who resided nearby (Weizman, 2007). As Sharon himself once said: “Arabs should see Jewish lights every night for 500 meters” (Weizman, 2007, p. 82). Not only were these settlements located so as to afford them a superior vantage point but they were configured in concentric rings around the hilltop so as to allow a full survey of the surrounding land (Segal et al, 2003). Although these settlements began with tents and mobile homes, they were soon replaced by single family dwellings of similar design and construction, including white plaster walls and red tiled roofs (Weizman, 2007). From an outward perspective, this created a massing effect, which underscored the sense of domination. From an inward perspective, it created a tightly bound and close knit sense of community. This technique is referred to as “optical urbanism” and is a highly effective method of control and subjugation (Weizman, 2007).

In addition to establishing a dominating presence, the settlements were also meant to function as barriers under this plan, by severing Palestinian communities from one another (Weizman, 2007). More specifically, this was accomplished through the use of Israeli traffic corridors and by the strategic placement of settlements upon Palestinian road networks (Weizman, 2007). This design served to fracture and impede any Palestinian response (Weizman, 2007). By contrast, these same transportation routes connected all of the settlements not only to major Israeli metropolitans but to the country at large (Weizman, 2007). This plan resulted in a series of isolated Palestinian villages, each overlooked by a major settlement, with the connections controlled by the Israel military (Figure 3). The network created a structure of interlocking control mechanisms with Israeli settlements acting as intermediaries at various check points (Weizman, 2007). Whereas Israelis could move freely, the Palestinians could not (B’Tselem, 2011). As of October 2013, Palestinian territories in the West Bank were divided into 167 separate and disconnected enclaves with over 440 kilometres of Israeli controlled roadways and 522 checkpoints and barriers erected along the routes (B’Tselem, 2011).

## **Ma’ale Adumin**

One of the first settlements constructed under the Sharon-Wachman plan was Ma’ale Adumim. It was constructed in 1979 and occupied by 23 Israeli families on the hill known as Ma’ale Adumim in the region of Samaria (Jewish Virtual Library, 2015). The framework of a municipality was quickly put in place and within ten years, the Israeli government had officially recognized Ma’ale Adumim as an Israeli city (Jewish Virtual Library, 2015). The population of the City continued to rise and a course of rapid, highly structured development continued throughout the 1990’s and 2000’s (Allegra, 2013). By 2010, the City had more than 35,000 residents, all clustered around the hilltop and connected to major Israeli cities and other Israeli settlements and towns via the Jerusalem-Jericho highway (Jewish Virtual Library, 2015).

Ma’ale Adumim is located on the top of Ma’ale Adumim hill, which is surrounded on all four sides by the Judean desert (Jewish Virtual Library, 2015). This hilltop location affords the residents a 360 degree view of the surrounding valley (Weizman, 2007). Traditionally, Palestinian villages were established in these valleys because of their ecological benefits,

residents a 360 degree view of the surrounding valley (Weizman, 2007). Traditionally, Palestinian villages were established in these valleys because of their ecological benefits, including water supplies and fertile plains for olive tree growth (PLO, 2011). The settlement of Ma'ale Adumim overlooked nearly half a dozen Palestinian villages as of 1980, but constant and rapid expansions of the territory has forced many Palestinians to flee (Le Monde, 1999). Within the settlement, architectural practices have been adopted in order to maximize optical capabilities (Weizman, 2007). As shown in Figure 2, homes are located in concentric rings, wrapped around the mountain and constructed in a staggered formation (Weizman, 2007). This configuration allows each row of homes to be placed in optical pockets, with a full range of view; no home is left without a visual access lane, giving the settlement a full panoramic perspective, as shown in figure 5 (Weizman, 2007). Community centres and schools are strategically located so as to foster stronger communal relations and homes face one another in order to create a strong and united national identity (Weizman, 2007). Cultural infrastructure has been a priority for the government and since its inception, shopping malls, art museums and industrial sectors have been established (Nefesh B'Nefesh, 2011).

Ma'ale Adumim is located outside the Green Line (31°46'30"N 35°17'53"E) within Palestinians lands, on a NE/SE ridge that overlooking a valley that is home to a number of Palestinian villages (Abu-Sitta, 2004). As of 1948, there were 69 Palestinian villages in this valley, all within a 200km radius of Ma'ale Adumin (Abu-Sitta, 2004). This strategic placement of this settlement allowed for the construction of barricades, walls and major traffic arteries along the NW/SW axis (Weizman, 2007). This had the effect of isolating Palestinian villages from one another (Weizman, 2007). This settlement has continued to expand over time, with each new section branching further and further into Palestinian territory (Allegra, 2013). The infrastructure of the settlements is such that each new section expands in an axial pattern across the landscape (Google Maps, 2015). Currently, this settlement links directly to Ma'ale Adumim Bloc and Kafar Adumin in the NW and Qedar in the South (Google Maps, 2015). Each of these settlements direct and restrict the movement of Palestinians through the region (B'Tselem, 2011).

## **The Effect of Oppressive Architecture**

The use of architecture as an instrument of war has been commonly overlooked and yet it's impact can be staggering. Although political incursions tend to be viewed within a very limited scope that includes active militarization and demonstrative acts of aggression, architecture and urban design, as evidenced by the Israeli settlements, can be extremely effective from a tactical perspective (Weizman, 2007). This was something that Sharon understood very early on in his career. As Weizman describes at page 84 of "The Hollow Land":

*For Sharon, the architect/general, politics was war as much as war was politics and both were exercised in space making. The concept of 'depth' was civilianized. Flexibility became the hallmark of Sharon's work as an architect across the Israeli frontier. The mobile home and later the small red-roofed single family house replaced the tank as the basic battle unit; homes like armored divisions, were deployed in formation across the theatre of operations to occupy hills, to encircle the enemy, or to cut communication lines.*

The advantage of a well considered design initiative in this context seems to be threefold: firstly, it physically divides and conquers the enemy; secondly, it psychologically weakens the enemy; and thirdly, given its more insidious nature, it does so without attracting much attention, either from the intended victim or other interested third parties.

The physical effects of this oppressive architecture are noteworthy. Currently, 4.4 million Palestine's are physically divided and their movement restricted as a result of barriers created by the strategic placement of settlements (B'Tselem, 2011). In addition to separating community members from one another and from work opportunities, physical barriers can and do interfere with basic human rights to things like access to water, transportation, education and health care (B'Tselem, 2011).

From a psychological perspective, an imposing hilltop location constructed with a strong

From a psychological perspective, an imposing hilltop location constructed with a strong massing effect, creates an overwhelming sense of domination (Segal et al, 2003). Palestinian residents are constantly aware of a commanding Israeli presence (Weizman, 2007). This persistent reminder of occupation and domination seems to have become engrained in the Palestinian identity (Weizman, 2007). Millions of Palestinians have been driven off these lands with very little resistance. Clearly, the separation and isolation imposed by settlement patterns and transportation barriers has allowed the Israelis to overcome the Palestinians with minimal casualties. As Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*: “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting”.

As of 2015, over 7.4 million Palestinians were displaced from their homes in the occupied territories (BADIL, 2015). Of those, 6.6 million were refugees, most of whom were living in the Middle East, many in refugee camps (IRIN, 2010). In countries like Lebanon, which has 425,000 registered refugees, Palestinians are denied citizenship, have only limited access to health and educational services and are barred from at least 20 different professions (IRIN, 2010). The situation is not appreciably better elsewhere (IRIN, 2010). According to the U.N Refugee Agency, the situation is: “by far the most protracted and largest of all refugee problems in the world today.” (IRIN, 2010) In addition to the issue of displacement, Palestinians within the occupied territories, are subject to a number of gross human rights abuses, including limitations on self-government, safety, security, work, free movement, access to water, healthcare, land and due process (U.N., 2013). In the past 46 years, 750,000 Palestinians have been incarcerated by the Israelis, which represents 20 % of the population (U.N., 2013). Palestinian casualties since 1948, by the most conservative of estimates have numbered in the tens of thousands (Cook, 2010). The situation has been described as a Palestinian genocide, as defined by Article 2 of the United Nations Genocide Convention, and the facts would seem to support this position (Cook, 2010). Notwithstanding the foregoing, to date the international community has not taken any meaningful steps to resolve this occupation.

### **The Ethics of Oppressive Architecture**

Pursuant to Resolution 13 of the International Union of Architects’ (“IUA”) code of conduct:

*The UIA Council condemns development projects and the construction of buildings on land that has been ethnically purified or illegally appropriated, and projects based on regulations that are ethnically or culturally discriminatory, and similarly it condemns all action contravening the fourth Geneva Convention.*

This provision has been used in the past to sanction South African architects in connection with their role in discriminatory design during apartheid (Middle East Monitor, 2014). Consequently, it came as little surprise in March of 2014, when the Royal Institute of British Architects passed a motion calling for the IUA to suspend the Israeli Association of United Architects from membership within that organization (Sherwood, 2014). The facts are compelling. Israeli settlements in the occupied territories have been constructed with the help of Israeli architects, contrary to the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention. The best defense, which a British parliamentarian could advance on behalf of his Zionist constituent, was that the motion constituted “selective outrage” (Bar Hillel, 2014). This, of course, is no defense at all. The more surprising development, however, occurred last December, when RIBA reversed their position, stating that they acted outside their mandate in taking issue with Israeli architects in regards to the settlements (Times Of Israel, 2014). As a member of the International Union of Architects, it would seem that this issue is very much within their mandate but presumably, other agendas prevailed.

In my view a universal code of conduct is critical in terms of upholding the integrity of the architectural profession. Arguably, the malfeasance of even one architect can bring the reputation of the entire profession into disrepute. An international standard of ethics must be set, as it has been and enforced, which it hasn’t been. The reality is that architecture and urban design goes beyond simple aesthetics. It can have a dramatic effect on the economy, the culture, as well as social values and practices, including basic human rights. It is not outside the realm of morality and consequently, must be covered within the realm of morality.

design goes beyond simple aesthetics. It can have a dramatic effect on the economy, the culture, as well as social values and practices, including basic human rights. It is not outside the realm of morality and consequently, must be governed within the realm of morality.

## Conclusion

Architecture and urban design are generally associated with constructive as opposed to destructive processes, but this hasn't always been the case. Although design techniques have been used to divide and isolate people in the past, they have rarely been used as an instrument of war. The Israeli settlements on occupied lands, including but by no means limited to Ma'ale Adumin, are a unique example of militarizing architectural and urban design. The Sharon-Wachman plan was fundamentally a plan of occupation and was premised on architectural and planning initiatives as a means of achieving this objective. It has been enormously successful, not only in extending the Israeli borders but also in defeating the Palestinians, both physically and psychologically. The human suffering, which has occurred as a result of this plan is incontrovertible; the number of Palestinians displaced alone, is sufficient evidence of this fact. It has been suggested that architects have no role in geopolitics and no business in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Architects, however, by the very nature of what they do, are instrumental in shaping human experience. Moreover, the impact of architecture and urban design, as demonstrated by the Israeli settlements, should never be underestimated. For this reason, ethical standards within the profession are imperative but in the absence of enforcement, those standards become meaningless and at that point, the only interests they serve are the interests of those who choose to transgress them.

## APPENDIX



Figure 1. Ma'ale Adumin Initial Concentric Plan

## ISRAELI CIVILIAN SETTLEMENTS

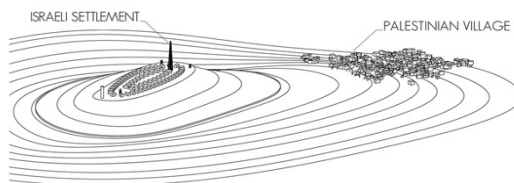


Figure 2. Ma'ale Adumin: Virtual Vantage Reproduction

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# East Jerusalem 2007

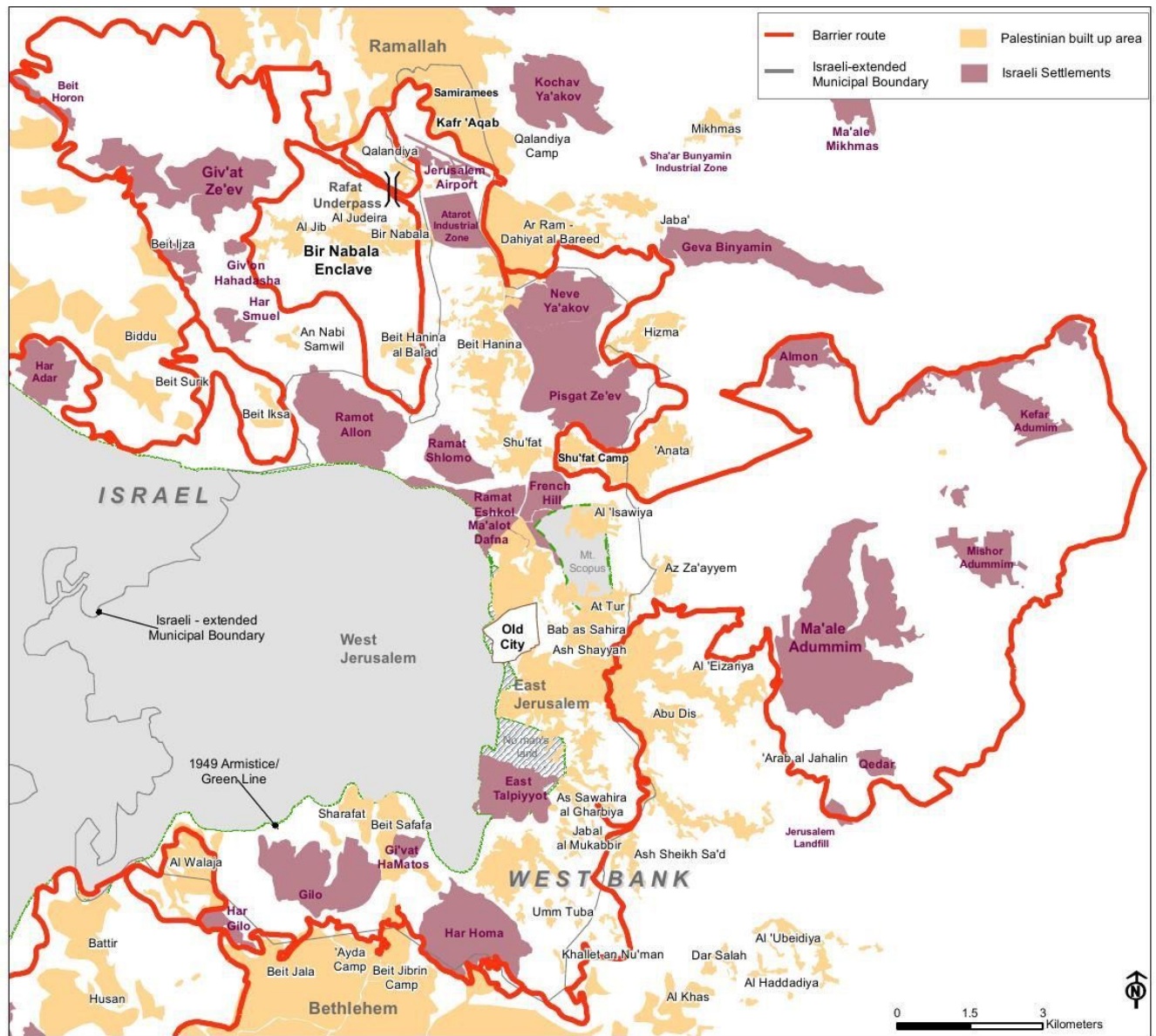


Figure 3. 2007 Map of Illegal Israeli Settlements



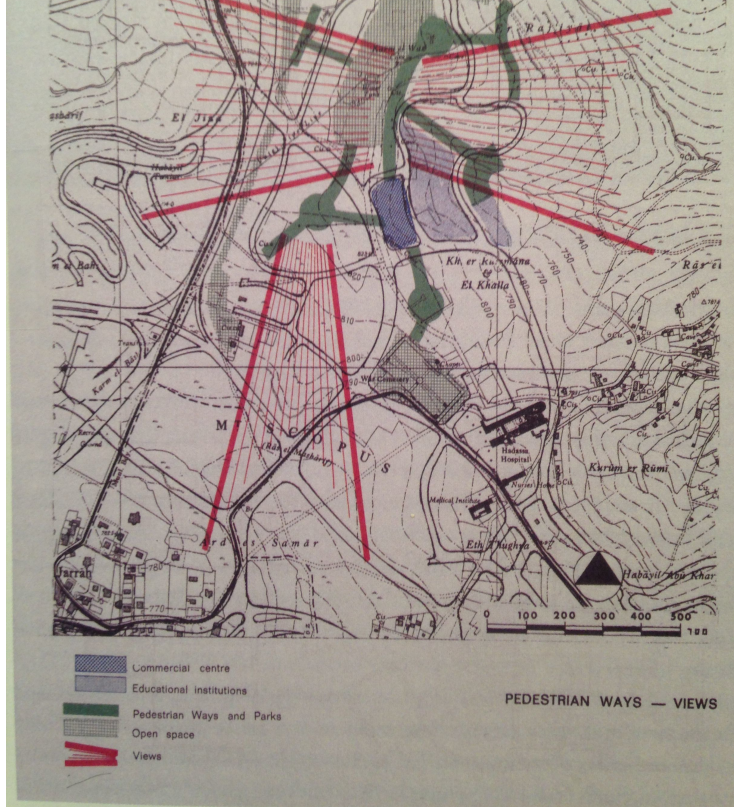


Figure 4. Sharon-Wachman Planned Optical Urbanism



Figure 5. Ma'ale Adumim overlooking a Palestinian Bedouin settlement

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Figure 1.

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