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Newspapers

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Mapping Israel/Palestine

- 1 Since the Iraq war in 2003, we are more aware than ever of the role the media can play in conflict situations. Journalists embedded with American troops advancing on Baghdad were accused of bias, propaganda, and for taking on the invaders'/liberators' perspective. At the same time, Iraqi victims dematerialized on American TV screens as they were neither seen nor heard. They had become enemy targets envisioned only through high-tech lenses (Gusterson 1991; Warburg 2003).
- 2 One of the most polarizing debates is how the media covers the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian as well as Israeli protagonists maintain that the media is explicitly either pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian. Pro-Palestinian sources argue that news stories tend to be explicitly pro-Israeli as they eliminate Palestinian accounts, rationales, and concerns. Pro-Israeli groups and lobbyists, on the other hand, complain about anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic views expressed in the media¹. With the increasing use of graphics and maps in newspapers, protagonists have also suggested that certain news outlets chose certain maps and map layers deliberately in order to further particular political positions. For these critics, there is a direct and pre-determined link between map-choice and politics².
- 3 Underlying these critiques is the assumption that journalists are like scientists following scientific methods. Their stories are to be objective, value-free, verifiable, and the

product of disinterested observers. They also should embody what neoclassical economics call 'homo economicus', people acting independently and rationally, based on a maximum level of information available. Science Studies has long dispelled the myth of the rule-following and disinterested scientist, and even economists have largely buried 'homo economicus' so as to better understand economic action in the social world. Why then do we still expect journalists to provide that impossible birds-eye view of contentious political events? The philosopher Jacques Derrida pointed out that one cannot stand on higher, more neutral ground and gaze objectively at the social world. On the contrary, we are always on the inside and thus "reporting from no perspective at all" is untenable (Zelizer, 2002). 'Bias' therefore is inevitably part of all reporting. This is not due to a reporters' deliberate distortion of news, but rather stories are always selective. They omit as much as they include. Indeed, according to constructivist approaches in Media Studies, news stories are selective as they unavoidably provide an interpretative frame by which to understand events. Stories are thus framed and packaged in ways that are tied to broader cultural developments and they are sustained by sets of institutions, networks, resources and power politics (Alimi 2006; Gamson *et. al.* 1989; Ryan *et. al.* 2006; Wolfsfeeld *et. al.* 2008).

- 4 Arguably such a constructivist approach to Media Studies in conjunction with insights from the Sociology of Knowledge, Science Studies, Critical Cartography and Cultural Studies provide useful conceptual tools to think about map-making as news making within its context of production (Black 1997; Crampton *et. al.* 2006; Crampton 2009; Gamson *et. al.* 1989; Hall 1997; Jasanoff 2004; Leuenberger *et. al.* 2010; Monmonier 1989; Monmonier 2006; Van Leeuwen 2001; Wood *et. al.* 2008). Accordingly, map-making, like the scientific endeavor, can be understood as 'situated' practices (Suchman *et. al.* 1999; see also Perrin 2011). In other words, the newsroom brings together various actors, materials, technologies, and resources that enable and constrain certain activities. It is therefore the peculiarity of local cultures, social and interactional contingencies, as well as various institutional and political circumstances that impact map-making as news making. It is such diverse conditions that can explain how and why maps may converge or diverge with ideologies and politics at any given time and place.
- 5 In order to understand the visual rhetoric of maps I also draw on a methodological framework developed elsewhere (Leuenberger and Schnell 2010). The analytic focus is thus on the following four aspects of map-making: visual signifiers (that includes features such as a map's projections and scale, levels of cartographic detail, and choice of colors), textual signifiers (such as the naming of places and other signifiers that load an image and reveals its target audience), and the demarcation of the space (which creates a spatial hierarchy as only certain geographical or infrastructural features are included) (Pickles, 1991; Harley, 1991). Furthermore, the analysis of a map's context of production, circulation, and use, can illuminate the choice of particular visual and textual information, the map's intended meanings and target audiences, as well as how the map's meanings are interpreted by users (see Van Leeuwen 2001). Critical cartographers have also increasingly shifted their focus from investigating the design and content of maps to analyzing them as a social practice (Kitchin and Dodge 2007). Therefore the study of maps should not only include their analysis as meaningful objects, but also how particular meanings become embedded in their making. Relevant questions then become: how are maps produced, designed, and contested in practice and how do they come to incorporate certain forms of knowledge and certain forms of politics (Crampton 2009)? How do locally

available resources, materials, and technologies impact map-making? And how do the visual and textual devices integrated into maps communicate political meanings? In order to address some of these concerns, I draw on a data corpus that contains ethnographic fieldnotes on cartographic practices and qualitative (face-to-face and online) interviews conducted between 2008-2012. The maps discussed here are drawn from a collection of maps used in various European, British, American, Arab and Israeli online newspapers. I will specifically focus on the British online news produced by *The Guardian* and the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, the American online news produced by *The New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as the Arabic news service, *Al-Jazeera* online, in order to exemplify generic mapping practices that were present across the data corpus.

Why look at maps?

- 6 Journalistic maps have become ever more widespread since the 1970s. Maps used in news media constitute a distinctive “cartographic genre” (Monmonier 1989: 14). They tend to be visually simple in terms of content and symbolization; they tend to be narrowly focused and present a very selective view of the globe; and they usually can be understood without specialized training. They are also designed to communicate a message instantly and unambiguously (Gilmartin 1985; Monmonier 1989). They need to be – more than other maps – rhetorically effective so as to remain newsworthy and hold the readers’ attention and interest. As one journalist pointed out: “we choose maps for readability and clarity” (Journalist G 2011). A journalist at *The New York Times* also maintained that: “We generally err on the side of clarity... The simplicity we try to achieve is an aesthetic in itself”³.
- 7 Traditionally, the most common maps used in newspapers are ‘locator-maps’ and ‘explanatory maps’: they focus on where an event has taken place and why. Such maps often are an extension of a textual essay, but can also present an “independent graphic essay” (Monmonier 1989, 23). The rise of online news, mobile devices, cartographic software, and interactive graphics are, however, increasingly transforming how maps in the news are used. Interactive graphics provide new possibilities and constraints for how maps are designed and contextualized within news stories, and new software provides large geographic databases that can be used to design maps in new ways⁴.
- 8 Critical cartographers also point out that map-making has ever more been transformed from a disciplinary expertise to a ‘people’s cartography’ (Crampton and Krygier 2006; Monmonier 2006). New web-based software, open source mapping applications and the Internet provide for a more and more user-defined mapping environment⁵. Therefore maps have exponentially increased in the public sphere – from the news media to the blogosphere. Journalistic maps are particularly important because they, unlike scientific or navigational maps, are the maps most encountered by the public at large (Crampton 2009). They can influence public perception of foreign, domestic, and local problems. Thus “the news media are society’s most significant cartographic gatekeeper and its most influential geographic educator” (Monmonier 1989, 19).
- 9 Despite their potential impact on the public imagination, journalistic maps, and how they are produced, circulated, and interpreted, have been understudied (Crampton 2009; Monmonier 1989). Given their increasing importance in the public sphere, however, it is ever more important to investigate how maps can become rhetorical resources to make

various social, cultural and political claims (Leuenberger and Schnell 2010). Critical cartographers have long pointed out that maps are not objective representations of the world ‘out there’, but rather mapmakers inevitably choose certain themes, scales, and relations. They hereby affirm the existence and significance of some features, signaling that “some things, some people, some places are worthy of our notice, and others are not” (Perrin 2011: 301; see also Alimi 2006). In this paper I therefore trace how various online news sites include or eliminate certain geographical features when depicting Israel and the Palestinian Territories, and how such choices become politics by other means. In the following I will first sketch out the social context of map-making as news-making and how certain structural issues, such as access to either Israeli or Palestinian news sources, impact not only news stories, but also map-making. I will then discuss how the visual and textual grammar of maps can be interpreted as politically meaningful.

Making Maps as ‘Situated’ Practice

- 10 Mapping in practice is always messier and more unpredictable than we would commonly assume. Graphic artists and journalists encounter a range of constraints and possibilities when choosing, designing, or buying a map. This can include a news agency’s resources, ability to access information, internal guidelines, and staff, as well as the need to produce a newsworthy story by a deadline and accommodate to certain political pressures. There are, for instance, always a range of technical and economic resources and constraints. Depending on the size of the news agency, cartographic material may come from public, commercial, private, or in-house sources. In-house graphics departments may have access to various maps, which can be retrieved from previous stories, the software available, or reference libraries. The material at hand can determine the maps reproduced in the story, such as the base map (that either delineates or eliminates the border markings between the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Israel). One journalist pointed out that he buys all maps online:

“On the matter of maps and graphics, I know that we buy “stock art” maps from Istock and Getty... As you will note, editors and photo editors have lots and lots of choices” (Journalist G 2011).

- 11 Such online stores include maps with varied scales, designs and content. Some maps represent the whole of Israel and eliminate the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; others delineate the territory according to internationally recognized treaties⁶. Which map is chosen can depend on various factors such as the available space and formatting of the story, the knowledge and experience of the graphic designer, or the visual appeal of the map. The political preferences of the graphic designer or the editor may also impact the choice of map. As one journalist pointed out: “it would be easy to distort representations of territory, for example, if one were trying to reinforce a bias” (Journalist G 2011).
- 12 It may not only be individual biases that can impact the choice of map, but also editorial policies and guidelines that are often specified in news agencies’ stylebooks. These are used for reference, training and as a template for ‘redesign’ (Monmonier 1989: 143) They are especially pertinent when it comes to contentious political issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as they provide guidelines as to the lexicon to be used for politically sensitive topics and cover historical, religious, diplomatic and legal issues pertaining to the Middle East conflict. For instance, the *BBC*’s style guide suggests certain terms and phrases to describe politically contentious issues such as settlements, the occupation, or

the Temple Mount. *Al-Jazeera* also specifies the use of certain terms and phrases. For instance, settlements are to be described as colonies and the 'security fence' as the 'wall' (Barkho 2011). While some scholars argue that these guidelines promote a hegemonic culture within news agencies (Barkho 2011), ethnomethodologists have emphasized the complexities involved in interpreting and applying rules and guidelines in particular settings (Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984). Indeed, news agencies' guidelines are often tempered by interactional contingencies and institutional cultures. For instance, according to a *New York Times* journalist, what is commonly considered 'good practice' matters more than a stylebook:

"the sort of principles that we sort of follow are fluid, and they depend on the situation and the kind of material you have, and we don't really try to set boundaries or rules for ourselves... There's a visual language at the *Times*, but there's no law that governs what that visual language is. It's just sort of an agreement, I think, among the designers here about what works well and is clear"⁷.

- 13 Rule following can therefore be superseded by tacit knowledge, consensually agreed upon good practices, and situated improvisation.
- 14 At times, external political pressures may also contribute to certain editorial directives being established. For example, various governmental and non-governmental organizations, ranging from Israeli embassies to right-wing Israeli and Christian interest groups, watchdogs, and lobby groups, have a range of tools at their disposal in order to put forth certain ideological positions, influence media coverage, or draw attention to what they deem to be biased news coverage (see also Götz 2008). Consequently, as a result of political pressure from right-wing pro-Israeli lobby groups, CNN headquarters in Atlanta instructed its journalists to stop referring to Gilo as a "Jewish settlement". The order stated: "We refer to Gilo as 'a Jewish neighborhood on the outskirts of Jerusalem, built on land occupied by Israel in 1967'... We don't refer to it as a settlement"⁸. However, such top-down directives do not necessarily dictate practice. Instead, CNN new stories use a range of terms that accommodate, yet deviate from the directive. In a news story in 2011, Gilo was referred to as a "Jewish settlement neighborhood", a "disputed neighborhood in Jerusalem", a "contested area of Jerusalem", and as also potentially categorizable as a "West Bank settlement"⁹. Therefore, policies, whether they are organizational directives, interventions to stipulate certain politically motivated coverage, or professional guidelines, always become adapted, transformed and amended in practice. Indeed, according to Daniel Perrin:

"policies, norms, and practices are not simply postulated and followed or not, they are reconstructed in everyday life and are thereby subject to variation and change" (Perrin 2011: 1874).
- 15 The production process is thus a 'situated activity' (Perrin 2011: 1866) in which social settings intersect with individual, organizational, and political resources and constraints.
- 16 Whether or not top-down directives are implemented also depends on the staff in charge. Scholars point out, that maps in newspapers are often designed by staff untrained in cartographic principles and thus reflect their ignorance in cartographic projection and conventions (Monmonier 1989). Also a journalist maintained: "in many U.S. organizations, selecting and manipulating (sizing) graphics and maps often falls to badly paid, very young people, just out of school..." (Journalist G 2011). Consequently, "cartographically unskilled personnel are primarily responsible for poor quality maps in American newspapers" (Gimartin (1985: 7). When combined with Americans' well-documented tendency to be 'geographically challenged' the end product becomes less a

politically motivated act, than an expression of ignorance, oversight, and haste in design. When the news broke in 2009 that the right-wing American News Channel Fox has a rather “shaky grasp of Mideast geography”, American democrats rejoiced (see Fig. 1). There is, after all, nothing much better than ‘Schadenfreude’!

Fig. 1.



Fox Channel's challenge to locate Egypt¹⁰.

- 17 Besides the fact that professional experiences and cartographic skills may impact the choice of maps in newspapers, the need to produce a newsworthy story by a certain deadline can also affect the story, its content, as well as the maps included. As one journalist pointed out: “Well, bloody hell, I’ve only three minutes to do this piece in and I’m going to spend a minute going through the arguments” (Philo and Berry, 2004: 245). Journalists are often told not to do “explainers” (Philo and Berry 2004: 215). After all, news stories are to capture attention with eye-catching headlines, powerful graphics, hot live action, and up-to-date news. Therefore there is generally: “a dearth of in-depth, analytic and explanatory material included in news reports” (Philo and Berry, 2004: 244, see also Götz 2008).
- 18 Also, as every fact concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is disputed, journalists would be hard pressed to provide enough contextual information to explain the complexities of the conflict. Therefore, news services may provide no or minimal contextual information within news stories and journalistic maps. As a result, viewers without specialist knowledge often neither understand the significance of current events nor the rationale for certain political actions (Philo and Berry 2004). Indeed, studies have shown that more than 80% of an audience does neither comprehend the news nor the significance of the lexicon used (such as military occupation or settlements) (Götz 2008). Alternatively, news services may also make sense of the conflict in terms of perpetrators and victims, as “it would... be quite confusing to have two sets of victims” (Ross 2003). In other words, they tend to explain and contextualize the actions and perspectives of only one of the sides in the conflict.
- 19 There is, however, a well-documented “structural imbalance” (Philo and Berry 2004: 138) between Israel and Palestine, which is reflected in both parties’ ability to disseminate news (Barkho 2011: 6). Media scholars have pointed out that: “it is the Israeli explanation... which is most frequently referenced” and it is most often “Israel’s voice that came across through the mouths of the reporters” (Philo and Berry 2004: 150; 246-7).

Across many US news outlets, Israeli actions are contextualized more frequently than those of Palestinians. Also Israelis' views and rationales for actions were more likely to set the news agenda, and Palestinian perspectives were frequently absent and their motives, actions, and concerns reminded often hard to grasp (see also Ross 2003; Zelizer 2002)¹¹.

- 20 There are various institutional reasons for why the Israeli perspective tends to dominate over the Palestinian perspective in the Western mainstream media. These include: Israel's sophisticated public relations infrastructure as well as the fact that foreign journalists tend to reside in West Jerusalem where they have easy access to Israeli sources, documents, and maps (see Götz 2008; Zelizer 2002). On the other hand, restrictions on the freedom of movement in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip make access to Palestinian interviewees and source material more challenging, which does not sit well with the need for rolling news (Philo and Berry 2004). Also, due to the often still weak and fractured Palestinian state institutions, Palestinians don't possess a very developed public relations' infrastructure and they lack a "clear public relations approach" (Philo and Berry 2004: 246; see also Götz 2008). Indeed, Palestinians are well aware of the need to build up local expertise and improve their public relations approaches:

"We are trying to go after putting facts more in our research or in our publications, in our presentations to the world – or how to see the conflict on a factual basis from the Palestinian perspective – because – apparently we have not been doing so good on the international arena when it comes to showing and exhibiting the facts on the ground... the first questions would be 'where is your sources, what are your facts?... [also] when... they started with the peace process apparently the Palestinian side went to the negotiations with virtually no maps – they were using Israeli maps' (Interview IJ Jan 2011).

- 21 For instance, it was not until the International Court of Justice declared the "Separation Wall" to be illegal under International Law, that the Palestinian government designated a national committee to map the barrier and to show its impact in a scientific manner. Palestinian stakeholders argue that mapping the barrier is crucial in advocating for a Palestinian perspective on its impact. As a result, various Palestinian mapping units have made concerted efforts to do so. The long absence of such maps, however, and the fact that, to this day, there is no one authoritative mapping institution in Palestine (Abdullah 2001; Scanteam and ARIJ 2009), means that such maps have long not been available and are still hard to come by, including for foreign journalists!
- 22 Even the Arabic news service *Al-Jazeera* online uses barrier maps that are produced by the Israeli human rights organization B'tselem. For instance, a 2008 story on the "Separation Barrier" provides an external link to a PDF file entitled "B'Tselem's map of Israel's separation barrier in the West Bank"¹², and does not use maps produced by Palestinian governmental or non-governmental organizations such as the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ) or the Palestinian Authorities' Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC). Diverging and non-standardized cartographic coding systems, the difficulty of one governing institution to enforce its political mandate, and the continuing lack of Palestinians' sovereignty and control over parts of the West Bank, have negatively impacted the development of Palestinian cartography. There are therefore various structural impediments to obtaining information from Palestinian sources as well as attaining generally agreed upon Palestinian-produced maps.
- 23 As we have seen, map-making as news-making unfolds within a complex social, institutional, and political context. An analysis of maps as socially situated practices points to the fact that common assumptions about journalist's pejorative to those maps

based on political biases disregards the many factors that might impact the choice of maps, such as available technical and economic resources, the need to accommodate to political pressure group, news agencies stylebooks, and governmental positions, as well as pressures to produce a newsworthy story by a deadline. Yet, maps can communicate certain political meanings, and how such political messages may be built into the content, design, and structure of maps is what I want to turn to in the following section.

The Politics of Maps

- 24 Media studies scholars have pointed out that national presses can become representative of national politics (Barkho 2011; Gamson et al. 1989; Ross 2003; Wolfsfeld et al 2007). For instance, the American press tends to depend on governmental sources, which encourages the media to privilege “the government’s construction of key issues and events” (Ross 2003). Also, the alignment of the mainstream British media, such as the *BBC*, with the views of the British government is facilitated by the fact that the *BBC*’s internal guidelines rely on the UK Foreign Office’s view on the conflict. The *BBC* therefore tends to use language and terms that go “with the British official line” on matters of international law and the territorial status of the territories (Barkho 2011: 8). The alignment of maps used by the *BBC* with the British Government’s position on the territorial status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, is reflected in the types of maps used. These maps tend to clearly demarcate the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as separate from Israel in accord with their territorial status under International Law (see Fig. 2). At the same time, there is less consistency in representative practices regarding the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, which at times appears as either part of Israel or Syria.

Fig. 2.



*BBC News map*¹³.

- 25 While most mainstream British and American news sites use maps that similarly demarcate the West Bank and the Gaza Strip so as to account for their status under international law, it is the maps’ textual and visual framing that lends them their political identity and meaning. As *NYT* graphic designer, Kevin Quaeley maintains, the aim is to not “put [the] map we do in a vacuum”¹⁴. Indeed, the textual and visual signifiers used in a map, alongside the accompanying text, can either provide or eliminate certain contextual information. For instance, in most *CNN* maps, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the

Golan Heights are delineated, but often without names or any indication of their disputed territorial status (see Fig. 3).

Fig. 3.



CNN map¹⁵.

- 26 Most of the 'locator-maps' in *The New York Times* delineate the territories similarly, yet without naming them or indicating their legal status (see Fig. 4). Putting maps 'in a vacuum' can thus have a political function.

Fig. 4.



New York Times map¹⁶.

- 27 Also in maps from the *Chicago Tribune*, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are delineated, yet are nameless (see Fig. 5).

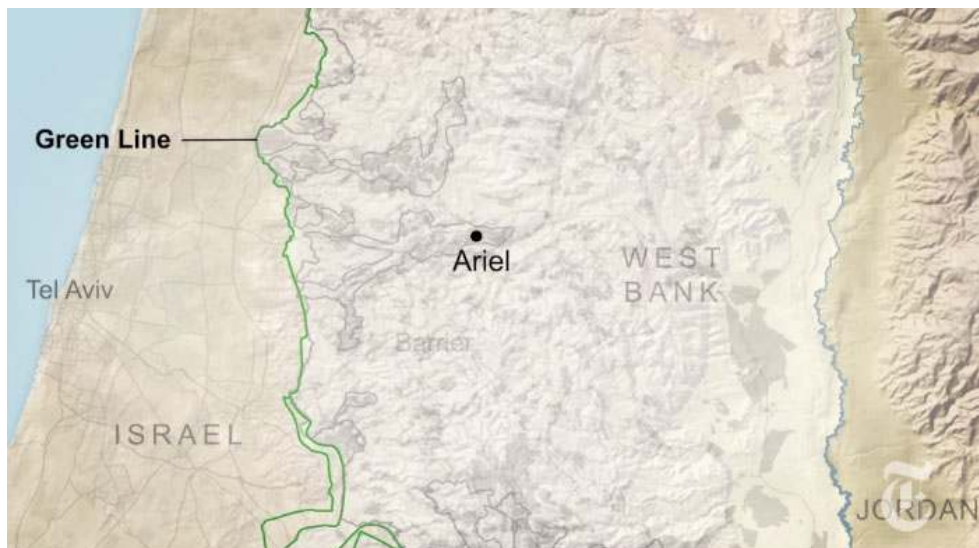
Fig. 5.



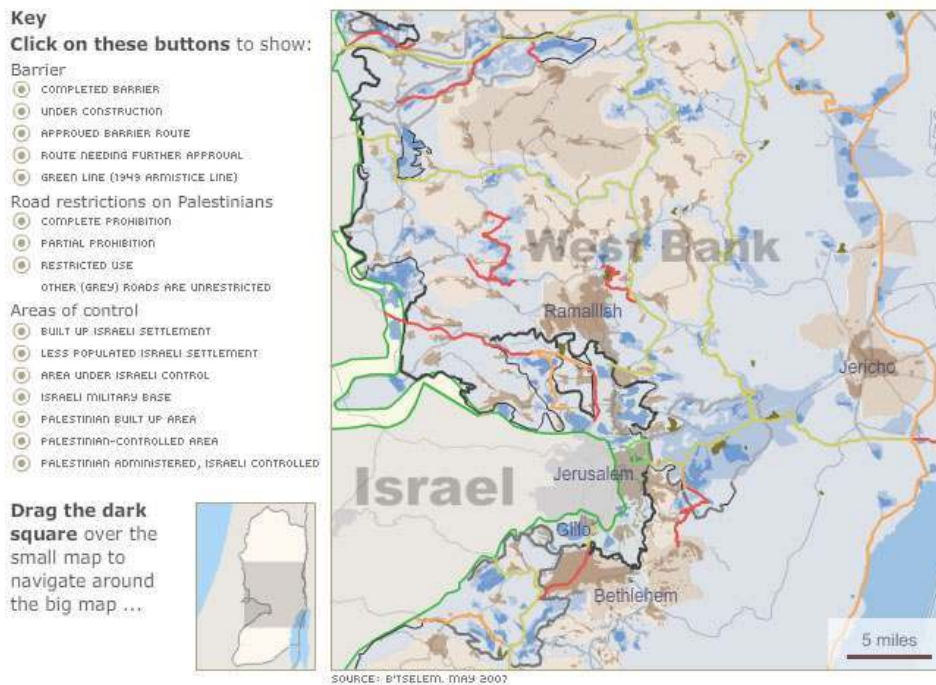
Chicago Tribune map¹⁷.

- 28 As these territories are not named, it is unclear whether they are part of Israel or not. While the mapmakers' concerns may only have been with clarity and visual appeal, the map nevertheless can have a political effect, as it passes "the buck onto the readers"¹⁸. Consequently, only people with specialized knowledge will know how to interpret the lines. It is thus the choice of discursive 'frames', that are either built into the structure of the map or appear alongside it, that construct and transmit its meanings (Ross 2003; Zelizer 2002).
- 29 While *The Guardian* (which tends to be accused of a pro-Palestinian bias) and *The New York Times* (which tends to be accused of a pro-Israeli bias) may use the same base map (that delineates Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip), the focus of the story and the level of visual and textual detail and context differ (see Fig. 6a, b).

Fig. 6a and b.



Mapping an occupation



The New York Times and *The Guardian* Mapping the West Bank Barrier¹⁹.

- 30 For instance, when providing a map of the West Bank Barrier, *The Guardian* uses a detailed interactive map entitled “Mapping the Occupation”, that was designed by the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem. Already the map’s title acknowledges the territorial status of the West Bank as ‘occupied’ under International Law. The map also traces how the barrier is part of a system of closures and settlements that fragment Palestinian-controlled areas into isolated brown patches. *The New York Times*, on the other hand, in an interactive video clip about West Bank settlements, only faintly traces the barriers’ route in relation to the Green Line (the internationally recognized temporary boundary between Israel and the West Bank that is based on the 1949 armistice line), and does not show how it relates to other geopolitical realities on the ground. This fosters an interpretation of the barrier as a way to secure Israel, rather than as an integral feature of closures that permeate the West Bank territory.
- 31 The maps used in *The New York Times* exemplify how maps do political work that seemingly favors the Israeli, rather than the Palestinian perspective. Their maps also often use geographical maps without inserting editorial comments, and they offer no or minimal visual translation of current events into the maps themselves. In other words, they provide ‘weak visual contextualization’ of information within and alongside the map provided.

Fig. 7a and b.

Individual Voices Different video perspectives from both sides of the barrier.**Individual Voices** Israelis and Palestinians speak about the settlements issue.

New York Times maps exemplifying 'weak visual contextualization' of information²⁰.

- 32 For instance, a news item in 2011 on "Challenges in defining an Israeli-Palestinian border" makes available clickable interviews with Palestinians and Israelis on these challenges (see Fig. 7a, b). While the interviewees tell their stories, various images appear next to a 'locator-map' of the West Bank that is delineated by the Green Line. Depictions of the West Bank Barrier (also known as the 'security fence') come into view, yet the barrier is not integrated into the map itself, but appears as a 'fence' to the left-hand side of the map. By only juxtaposing the 'fence' and the map, but not superimposing the 'fence' onto the map, nor providing any textual clues as to whether the 'fence' converges or diverges from the Green Line, a lay audience would be hard pressed to understand how the 'fence' relates to the Green Line and establishes certain facts on the ground. Moreover, the appearance of a red street sign indicating entry into the Palestinian-controlled Area A (which are located along the edges of 'Area A')²¹ besides an abstracted

map of the West Bank would be simply mystifying to anyone who hasn't traveled in the Palestinian Territories!

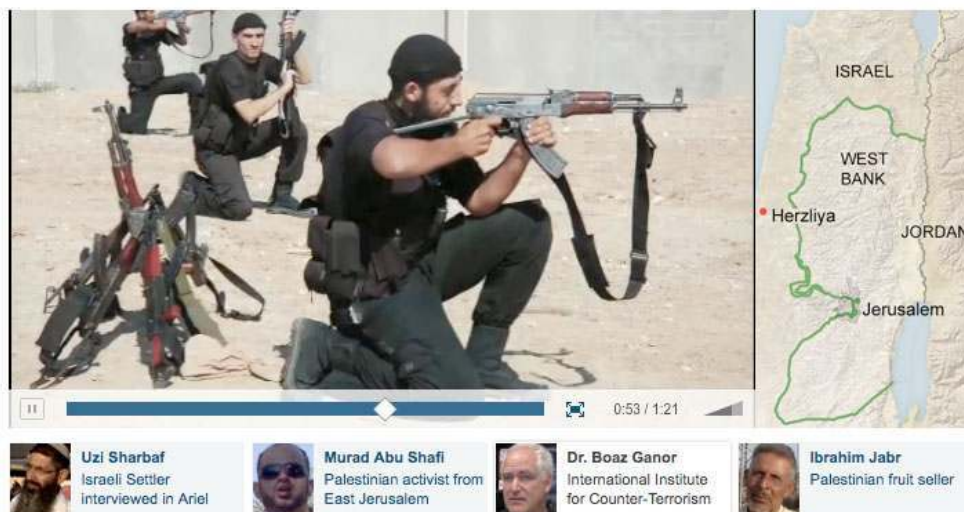
- 33 By not sufficiently contextualizing information within the visuals provided, readers can also get the impression that the West Bank is a den of extremists and terrorists and that the whole area is fraught with danger (see Fig. 8 a, b).

Fig. 8a and b.

Individual Voices Israelis and Palestinians speak about the settlements issue.



Individual Voices Israelis and Palestinians speak about the settlements issue.

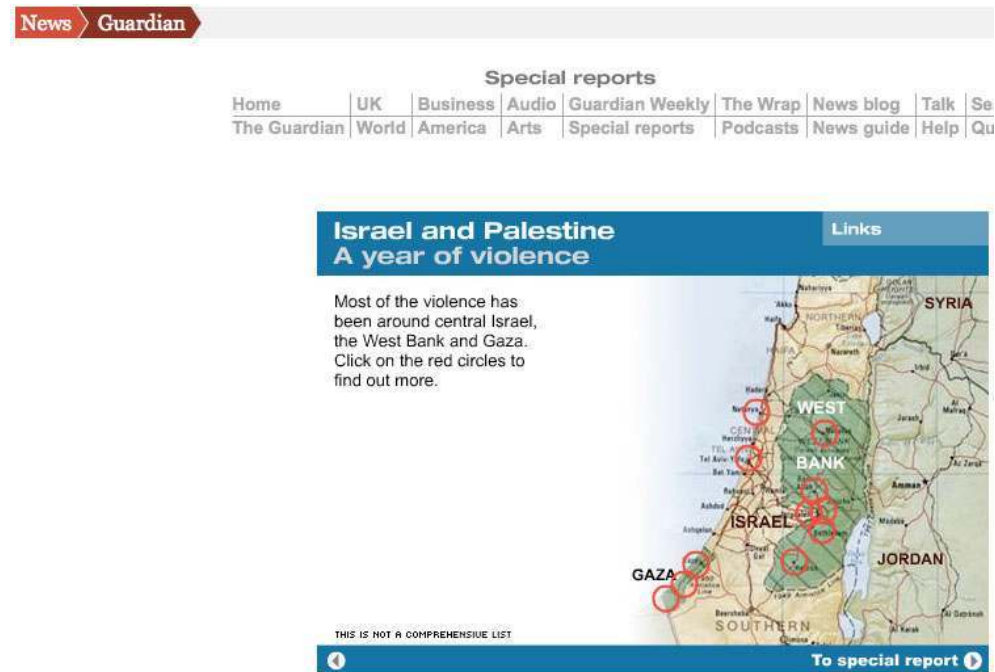


New York Times: constructing Palestinians through images and maps²².

- 34 In the same 2011 news item as mentioned above, the stories as told by Palestinian protagonists are juxtaposed with stereotypical images of Palestinians. The images speak to Western orientalist notions of Arabs as violent, zealous, untrustworthy and fundamentally 'other' (Said 1979). These sort of images are, no doubt, the reason why when I first returned to upstate New York from a 4 month-stay in Israel, my neighbor greeted me with the word: "Nice to see you still alive!" He is an avid *New York Times* reader!

- 35 While *The New York Times* also tends to provide no or minimal contextualization of violent incidents within a map, *The Guardian* is more likely to produce ‘event-centered maps’ (Zelizer 2002) that integrate occurrences into the maps’ composition (see Fig. 9).

Fig. 9.



The Guardian: Event-centered map²³.

- 36 This sort of visual contextualization facilitates readers’ understanding of the context of action (such as whether a violent event took place in the occupied Palestinian Territories or in Israel proper). *The Guardian* uses other ways to contextualize information within a map as well. For instance, in a 2011 news item on “Changing map of Israel and the Palestinian Territories”, a clickable series of maps are provided in order to present a historical timeline on the making and remaking of the map of Israel/Palestine. Hereby, the visuals, alongside the text, contribute to the historical and geographical contextualization of the conflict (Fig. 10).

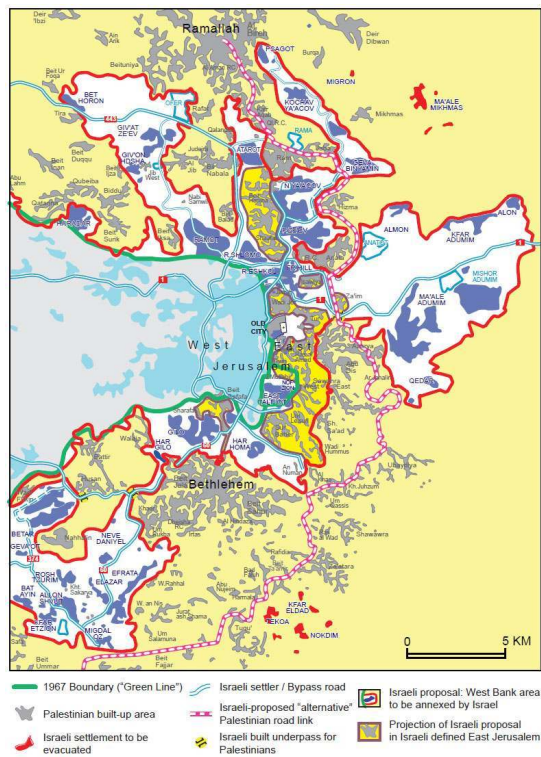
Fig. 10.



*The Guardian's Interactive Historical Timeline maps*²⁴.

- 37 Like *The Guardian*, the Arabic news service *Al-Jazeera*, is also more likely than the American online newspapers investigated here, to contextualize the Palestinian perspective. Unlike mainstream Western news outlets that tend to depict the no-man's land around Latrun (around the middle of the western rim of the West Bank) as part of Israel, the maps used by *Al-Jazeera* carefully delimit the no-man's land as specified under International Law. *Al-Jazeera's* maps also often refer to the territories as either 'Palestinian Territories' or as 'West Bank' and the 'Gaza Strip'. At the same time, Israel is named, frequently with Hebrew lettering, so as to emphasize its recognition. *Al-Jazeera's* maps, unlike maps used in many mainstream American online news sites, are also more likely to show geopolitical realities on the ground, such as the impact of settlements and the 'Separation Wall' (see Fig. 11).

Fig. 11.



*Al-Jazeera's map of geopolitics on the ground*²⁵.

- 38 It is thus such strong levels of visual contextualization of geopolitical realities that are likely to provide a more in-depth understanding of the Palestinian perspective. It is also notable that their most frequently used maps consist off satellite images upon which territorial lines are superimposed. The use of satellite images offers a powerful way to attempt to merge geopolitical realities with what is taken to be an objective representation of the physical landscape²⁶.

Fig. 12.



AL-JAZEERA SATELLITE MAP.

- 39 Moreover, *Al-Jazeera*, like *The Guardian*, accounts for the legal status of the Palestinian Territories under international law. In a politically charged environment, international law still remains a powerful rhetorical resource in order to retain credibility and legitimacy.

Summary

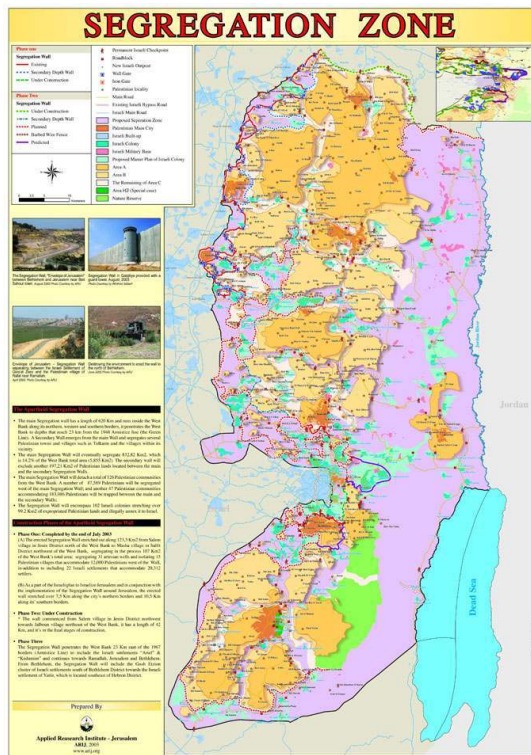
- 40 Journalists are often accused of harboring explicit political biases (Ross 2003). Underlying such accusations is the assumption that they could potentially single-handedly deliver value-free, neutral, and objective news that are not colored by the social context of their production and filtered through a range of institutional layers. However, the study of map-making as ‘situated practice’ reveals how intricately the coverage, content, and terminology of news stories are interwoven with a range of “community-internal and external conditions and practices” (Cotter 2011, 1898). These range from: tight deadlines; the need to ascertain the newsworthiness of a story and its graphics; top-down stipulations concerning the use of certain terminology, phrases, and designs; the space and formatting of a story; local institutional notions of ‘good practice’; as well as technical constraints (Barkho 2011). Besides such internal – structural, professional, and organizational – pressures, there are also wider cultural and political realities, such as the relative effectiveness of various lobby groups; the differential ability of journalists to access Israeli versus Palestinian news sources; and a government’s political stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Such a complex ecology may impact news making and map choice in often unforeseen and unpredictable ways (Ross 2003). Therefore, according to

Patricia Gilmartin: “satisfying one demand may conflict with another or eliminate other alternatives... the final commercial product is the result of the trade-offs made among mutually exclusive goals and the differing sets of values that influence the production of every map” (Gilmartin 1985: 8). The newsroom thus brings together various human and non-human actors, materials, technologies, and resources that provide spaces of practice that provide the material and conceptual tool kit from which news stories and maps are made (see also Swidler 1986; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Ryan and Gamson 2006).

- 41 Besides the messiness of practice that can account for often varied and, at times, contradictory mapping practices on online news sites, the choice of certain maps in terms of their focus, content, design and detail, is inevitably selective and can hereby become politically meaningful. Mapping, just like reporting “from no perspective at all” (Zelizer 2002) is untenable. The online newspapers examined here provide some preliminary conclusion as to how maps are chosen for online news stories and how political messages may become embedded within the design of various maps. Arguably, politics can become embedded in online news maps in various ways. Firstly, the depiction of territories in journalistic maps used by the mainstream media tends to be aligned with a national government’s position on the territorial status of Israel-Palestine. Secondly, the demarcation of space and the use of particular textual and visual signifiers can either provide or omit contextual information. For instance, whether mapmakers visually integrate events into a map can profoundly impact the ability of an audience to comprehend and contextualize the information provided; likewise, integrating a historical timeline may also increase contextual understanding. On the other hand, weak visual and textual contextualization will not only hinder an audiences’ ability to understand the news, but can also lead to misconceptions, stereotyping, and misinformation. As we have seen, pairing abstracted maps of the West Bank with commonly held national stereotypes of Palestinians may encourage, maintain, and enforce the process of ‘othering’ of a whole population. Thirdly, a map’s content and detail is informed by its underlying assumptions. In other words, international law, Israel’s security discourse, or its occupation policies can all inform and shape the content and design of a map in different ways. For instance, while *The Guardian* tends to contextualize the Palestinian perspective textually and cartographically in terms of international law, *The New York Times* is more likely to contextualize the Israeli perspective through Israel’s own security discourse. Lastly, the types and sources of maps can become a form of politics. For instance, in a politically-charged environment, the use of satellite images, upon which territorial lines are superimposed, can become a useful rhetorical tool in order to evoke the objectivity of a map. There also continues to be an absence of Palestinian-produced maps in the mainstream news media. This reflects the still persistent infrastructural inequities, which produce an information and credibility gap between Israel and the Palestinians.
- 42 While newspapers, like *The Guardian*, can represent the Palestinian perspective through the lens of international law, Palestinians still struggle to disseminate more widely their own definitions and visions of their territories. Palestinian cartographers have, at times, critiqued UN-produced maps for not representing the ‘Separation Wall’ (also known as the ‘West Bank barrier’ or the ‘security fence’) as part of a ‘Segregation Zone’, that is much wider and more extensive than the UN-produced maps suggest (see Fig. 13). Indeed, in some Palestinian-produced maps, the ‘Segregation Zone’ is clearly defined and named. According to an interviewee, “we use the term Segregation Zone because it is not only

wall, because 250 meters from the Palestinian side no construction is allowed – so it is a zone” (Interview JI 2011).

Fig. 13.



Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ)'s map of the Segregation Zone²⁷.

- 43 The question then becomes, why do Palestinians' experiences and understandings of the 'Segregation Zone' not permeate the international news media like the Israeli governments' security discourse? Israel's ability and Palestine's relative inability to make its voices heard and set the agenda in terms of which issues matter, has to do, not with the failing of individual journalists, but with current structural inequities. Until these inequities can be addressed, Israeli visions will continue to be perceived on their own terms, while for the Palestinians, international law is one of the few available mouthpieces through which their voices can be heard and translated within the international community of newsmakers.

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ABSTRACTS

This paper draws on critical cartography, science studies, cultural studies and the sociology of knowledge in order to analyze the social context of map-making and the content and structure of maps. The focus is on how and why British, American, and Arab online news outlets depict the contested territories of Israel and the Palestinian Territories in often varied and inconsistent ways. Certain online news sources have been accused of political biases concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which arguably translates into particular maps and map layers being included in news stories. Rather than they are being a direct and pre-determined link between map-choice and politics, however, I argue that map-making can be understood as a form of 'situated' practice. In other words, the newsroom brings together various actors, materials, technologies and resources that enable and constrain certain activities. It is therefore local cultures, social and interactional contingencies, and institutional and political circumstances that impact map-making and explain how and why maps may converge with or diverge from politics at any given time and place. At the same time, the choice of certain maps and map layers in terms of their focus, content, design, and detail is inevitably selective and can hereby become politically meaningful. It is thus the various textual and visual signifiers and the contextual information included in a map that can become politics by other means. Moreover, the types and sources of news stories and their maps are also co-determined by power politics, the structural inequities between the state of Israel and a Palestinian state-in-the-making, and their respective ease of access to public relations infrastructures that can reach the public at large.

Cette présentation s'appuie sur la cartographie critique, les *science studies*, les *cultural studies* et la sociologie de la connaissance pour analyser le contenu, la structure des cartes et le contexte social de leur réalisation, en se focalisant sur le comment et le pourquoi de la description souvent variée et incohérente de la terre contestée d'Israël et des territoires palestiniens dans les médias en ligne britanniques, américains et arabes. Certains ont été accusés de biais politique dans la

couverture du conflit, ce qui est censé se traduire dans la façon dont les cartes sont conçues et sont incorporées dans les reportages. Plutôt que d'y voir un lien direct entre un choix de carte et une orientation politique, je soutiens que la production de carte peut être comprise comme une forme de pratique "située". La salle de rédaction est un lieu où se rassemblent des acteurs, des matériels, des technologies et des ressources qui rendent possibles certaines activités mais aussi leur donnent des limites. Par conséquent, ce sont des contingences culturelles, sociales, interactionnelles, institutionnelles et des circonstances politiques qui affectent la production de cartes et expliquent pourquoi les cartes peuvent converger ou diverger avec des positions politiques à des lieux et des moments donnés. En même temps, le choix de certaines cartes et niveaux de cartes en termes de focalisation, de contenu, de design et de détail, implique une sélection qui peut être politiquement significative. De plus, les types et sources des reportages et des cartes qui les accompagnent sont aussi codéterminés par la politique du pouvoir et les inégalités structurelles entre l'État d'Israël et l'État palestinien en formation, et leur respective facilité d'accès aux infrastructures de relations publiques qui permettent d'atteindre le grand public.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Maps, journalism, online newspapers, Palestine, politics, visual rhetoric, Israël, situated practice

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Christine Leuenberger is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Science & Technology Studies at Cornell University. She received her PhD in Sociology/Social Sciences in 1995 from the University of Konstanz (Germany) and an MA in Sociology of Contemporary Culture from the University of York (England). She was a Fulbright Scholar in Israel and the Palestinian Territories in 2008 and a Fulbright Specialist at Tel Aviv University in 2011-12. She is a current recipient of an National Science Foundation Scholar's award to investigate the history and sociology of mapping practices in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. She is also working on the social impact of the West Bank Barrier and on the social history of psychology in the Middle East.