

The Power of Mapping the Israel/Palestine conflict: Mapping; creates nation-states, justifies camps, and is resistance.

The Israel/Palestine area has been mapped, remapped and counter-mapped thus providing us with a unique opportunity to examine the 'naturalness' of the nation-state. Agamben provides a useful lens through which to examine and challenge the modern nation-state with its citizen/non-citizen divide. The essay focuses on the often overlooked importance of mapping in the conflict, considering how ideas of mapping, constitutions, citizenship and statehood are interrelated in the production and opposition of the modern nation-state. It is divided into three sections: The first looks at the importance of mapping in developing and naturalising the modern nation-state, focusing on how the sovereign gained power over citizens and politicised their bodies. The second focuses on the part mapping had in producing the nation-state of Israel. The final section considers the situation in Gaza and the West Bank since the Oslo agreements: Where the Palestinians, reduced to bare life, reside, and (through counter-mapping) resist.

The manifestation of the modern nation-state

The modern nation-state first appeared in places, with centralized and bureaucratic governance systems, between the 14th and 16th centuries (Wood 2010). Mapping played a key part, as it allowed communication of national identity and sense of belonging, through fixing the shape of the nation-state in peoples' minds. Wood argues this is because talk ceases to be a viable option in larger states; 'there are too many people... they are separated by too great distances or too much time' (2010:21). The map provided a new form of communication. The particular power of the map above other mediums for communication is firstly its ability to 'engrave the distinct shape of a particular territory on the imagination' and secondly to naturalise this territorial shape (Biggs 1999:390). This created new hegemonic 'imagined communities' where the myths of shared culture and identity gave a sense of belonging (Anderson 1991). It created a sense of who did and who did not belong and thus who was and was not a citizen. This was of value not only to unite a country in times of war (see for instance Monmonier's (1994) example of King Henry IV of France), but also to give centralised governments control (Barber 1992).

By the time of the *Comite de constitution* (1789) in France, the nation-state was not only being mapped 'for assessing taxes; for establishing the boundaries of administrative units; and for planning communication routes' (Barber 1992:68), but also for maintaining other areas of a citizen's life. Biggs notes '[t]he principle of equality was actually applied more strictly to land than to citizens' in the new French republic (1999:389). However, in attempting to apply it to citizens the government began regulating basics, such as health and water, needed for survival: it regulated the citizens' very bodies, their *bare life* (Agamben 2005). The sovereign, from that time on, was not only involved in *bios*, which indicates the form of living appropriate to an individual or a group, but also *zoē*, simple existence, common to all (Agamben 1998). In the modern nation-state *zoē* had become politicised and linked to citizenship. Through becoming citizens, individual's access to basics needed for survival became embroiled in questions of citizenship; equally if you did not have status as a citizen in a nation-state then you did not have a 'right' to the basics.

Effectively the modern nation-state was formed through maps, which gave a sense of who belonged (the citizen) to a territory but equally who did not. Governance became linked to this fixed boundary and, through the population's sense of belonging, the Sovereign became increasingly powerful. Maps are then not only about belonging but are a 'symbol of political authority' and power (Biggs 1999:390).

The extent of the power of the Sovereign can be seen in the same *Comite de constitution* (1789) at which point *the state of exception* came into being (Agamben 1998, 2004 and 2005). Effectively this meant in a state of 'emergency', (for the good of the citizens) the sovereign could suspend juridical order of the modern nation-state and take control: They become a 'force of law' (Agamben 2005:35). As a result, the sovereign 'stand[s] outside...of the normally valid juridical order and yet belong[s]...to it' (Schmitt 1922 in Agamben 2005:35).

Through mapping, the modern nation-state was born and people became citizens of a territory, their body politicised and the state became the sovereign that ruled over them. Wood explains maps have 'memorable shapes and policeable borders and tell them [the sovereign] where everybody is; everybody, that is, the taxable body, the body that can be turned into a soldier, the worker body, the reproducing body, the body that can be thrown into jail' (2010:242). These increasingly mapped modern nation-states swiftly emerged out of smaller map-free societies and soon enough would 'gobble up' other map-free societies (Wood 2010:31) bringing with them their maps, constitutions and ideas of citizenship and statehood.

The end of colonial Palestine, the beginning of the nation-state of Israel:

Palestine is such a nation. Although it had been colonised by numerous peoples and Empires since the Romans first took control in 63_{BC}, it was not until after World War I, when it became a member of the British Mandate of the League of Nations, that it truly began its journey to modern statehood (Wood 2010).

On the 2nd November 1917 the British signed the Balfour Declaration which favoured;

"... the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine..." (Yapp 1987:290).

While it is made clear here that the Palestinians should remain as citizens and, as such, their rights (and *bare life*) protected, in reality it set the scene for the years of dispute and fighting that followed. In 1929 a second Balfour Declaration was signed that began to give autonomy and equal status as a nation to (then) Palestine (Wood 2010).

Wood notes we see exactly what is expected in the mapping of Palestine; limited mapping prior to 1929 by colonial powers and 'the full flowering of the map' thereafter (Wood 2010:225). In the wake of the 1929 agreement, the British prepared Palestine for the road to modern nation-statehood. As only

military and border control maps existed (Wood 2010), new more detailed mapping that could (potentially) create a single identifiable shape in which bodies could be governed and 'belong' were needed. The British had an obligation to allow Jewish people to reside in Palestine (Boulder 1997) and so, unsurprisingly, focus was on cadastral mapping, with land ownership and private property rights favoured over traditional land ownership (Wood 2010, see Sparke 1998 for similar examples). The land was triangulated, mapped and subsequently, the notion of a modern nation-state became naturalised. In addition, the political boundaries of the Palestinian state set out in the minds of the Zionists, for the first time, clear borders for their future Israel (Pappé 2006); they could "draw a Hebrew map of the land, a renewed title deed" (Benvenisti 2000:29).

There was a steady increase in the number of Jewish people moving to Palestine after the Balfour Declaration, as new regulations allowed them to literally buy up parts of Palestine for their new Israel and displace the Palestinian people from the land (Boulder 1997). However the British mapping the land were not all in favour of creating an autonomous state. As a result not everything was completed in the way the Jewish people would have preferred. For instance, keeping the name as Palestine and using Arabic as opposed to Hebrew for cities was considered by some Zionists an anti-Jewish act (Wood 2010:228).

In response they produced counter-maps, which directly challenged the British colonial authority. By using Biblical Names, for instance, they wiped nearly 2000 years history off the map (Wood 2010). Amongst many examples, the *Atlas of Israel* (1970) stands out as it not only tells a selective story as all atlases do (Wood 1987), but having been published by the then government it gave the names authority and permanence (Harley 1990). It 'transform[s] every *rainfall* map, every map of *soils* into a political screed' (Wood 2010:232) and like colonialists had done before (Sparke 1998), it removed the Palestinians' names, and in some cases the places themselves, off the map. It effectively did not agree with another peoples' 'right to exist' so it 'just left... [them] off the map'(Parker 2010:unpaged). In so doing it said who it considered to be citizens and who it did not (the Palestinian people). This counter-mapping however, was not an act of resistance in the way the later example of Palestinian mapping would be. Rather due to the wording of the two Balfour Declaration's this was simply the new nation-state firstly declaring itself as such, and secondly enacting the colonial ideas (it lent from the British) of '*map it, iconize it, deny its history*' (Wood 2010:229).

While the first counter-maps were made in the 1920s, the Atlas was first published in 1956, less than ten years after the War of Independence in 1948. The war was launched by the Jewish after the neighbouring Arab states rejected the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (UN General Assembly Resolution 18). The war, that destroyed Palestinian villages and saw over 800,000 Palestinians flee their homes (many of whom still live in refugee camps), lay claim to the Palestinian West Bank, and Gaza (Shemesh 2004). Effectively Palestine ceased to be and the nation-state of Israel was born. It was appropriately called the *Nakba* (the Catastrophe) by the Palestinian population (Shemesh 2004) as they were now (to a large extent) stateless and non-citizens. In many ways the Governments' publication of the *Atlas of Israel* was a statement not only setting out their vision but also "*to make it permanent [and]...to give it authority*" (Harley, 1990:4).

The Oslo camp and Palestinian resistance

The Oslo agreements were attempts to spatially reconfigure the land; pulling from the Dayton Peace accord (Bosnia) they divided the land by ethnicity (Campbell, 1999). However, rather than a two-way split into Palestinian and Israeli territories (which could potentially become two nation-states) the Oslo agreements split the land into three categories (see figure 1). This did not result in an idealistic 'postmodern territorial solution' (Newman 2001a:365, also see 2001b) rather Israel remained the only nation-state. They transferred the responsibility for welfare of the Palestinian people to the Palestinian Authority, without transferring other powers such as control over water or security (Gregory 2004). The Israeli government could become 'force of law' in a state of exception (Agamben 2005:35) but unlike other Sovereign states, Israel was not responsible for the welfare of the Palestinian people (Gregory 2004). The Palestinians were not citizens of Israel and Israel did not have to protect their *bios* and *zoē*. In this situation when a *state of exception* occurs the Palestinian Authority does not have the ability of a sovereign state to act to protect its people and the Israeli government has no obligation for the welfare of the Palestinian people.

The 'war on terror' provided a guise for the Israel government to call all acts the Palestinians performed in defence of their own lands acts of terrorism (Gregory 2004), despite the reality that the Israelis were continuing to build illegal settlements (Gorenberg 2007). It also created a situation where a *permanent state of exception* could be called and the juridical order suspended for the good of the Israeli (but not necessarily the Palestinian) people. Palestinians were painted 'as denizens of a barbarian space lying *beyond* the pale of civilization' (Gregory 2004:121 original emphasis) and Israeli actions as acts of protection not only for its people but the 'civilised' world.

Gregory notes, 'within days of the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington... the intensity of Israeli incursions into the West Bank was stepped up' (2004:107). Through linking their *state of exception* with other nation-states' actions (most notably America's in Afghanistan) it became difficult for the rest of the world to interfere or criticise Israel. One Israeli spokesman even said on CNN "we are doing precisely what the US is doing in Afghanistan" (in Gregory 2004:109).

The Palestinian Authority could now not act as they had been incapacitated by the Israeli government and Israeli Defence Force (IDF) (Gregory 2004). The people were now in a situation where their rights and protection were systematically withdrawn as they were both non-citizens and considered a threat to the nation-state; any act against them became permissible (Gregory 2004). We need look no further than the *Imprisonment of Illegal Combatants* Law under which anyone could be imprisoned (see Gregory 2004), or indeed the selective assassinations, where the IDF openly identified and killed 'Palestinian militants and ... innocent bystanders' (David 2003:unpaged) to see evidence. Every Palestinian became a *homo sacer*; they became situated outside the law, they could be 'killed by anyone' without reprisal (Agamben 1998:54)

The Oslo agreements that had mapped out and justified this segregation were again utilized, to justify the positioning and erecting of further defences (including walls, watchtowers, electronic sensors and 50-100m security zones) along Gaza and West Bank in order to 'protect' the state of Israel from 'terrorists' (Gregory 2004). An Israeli minister stated, this is "not a border between political entities or

sovereign territories” but to stop Terrorists (in Gregory 2004:125). This was not a step towards Palestinian statehood but rather the walls (of what Agamben calls) a camp;

‘The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule. In the camp, ... a temporary suspension of the rule of law ... [is] given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order... a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction’ (1998:96-99).

So the Oslo camp was formed. Ophir’s description of the (then contemporary and since worsening) situation shows the shocking similarities to Agamben’s camp and makes clear Israeli actions have created a space of ‘exclusion and inclusion’ (Agamben 1998:88) in which everything is temporary and the law no longer makes sense:

‘This occupier is an unrestrained, almost boundless sovereign, because when everything is temporary almost anything- any crime and form of violence- is acceptable, the temporariness seemingly creates it a licence, the licence of the state of emergency’ (2000:66).

Like elsewhere here in the Oslo camp, where humanity is stripped down to *bare life*, acts of resistance can be found. *Bare life* is often not passive but rather can become a form of resistance in itself (Darling 2009). It raises and then challenges the existence of the citizen/non-citizen divide and makes apparent the politicisation of *zoē* (Darling 2009). Edkins and Pin-Fat summarize this situation; through ‘this strategy the subject at one and the same time both acknowledges its status as nothing but life and demands recognition as such’. It ‘refuses the distinction between bare life and politically qualified life’ (2005:24 in Darling 2009).

In Israel the nation-state itself is contested so Palestinians must look not only to Israeli but also global citizens’ ‘ethical sensibilities’ for a response (Darling2009:11), as it is also outside International legislation that the residence of Gaza and the West Bank find themselves (Gregory 2004). The map is a logical form of resistance, as it was this institution that created, empowered and naturalised the nation-state of Israel and justified the Oslo camp. The value of counter-mapping, as a site of resistance, is its ability to undermine the ‘naturalness’ of nation-states, in so doing drawing attention to, and rejecting, the ‘distinction between bare life and politically qualified life’ (Edkins, Pin-Fat 2005:24). It also provides a way of communicating beyond the nation-state to other countries with their own ‘imagined communities’ as it provides common ground, a language in which both parties can speak and understand (Anderson 1991, Wood 2010).

The many examples of such counter-mapping from map-art to ‘scientific’ maps (see Wood 2010 for examples) suggest that “Palestinian mapmaking has been the reply to Israeli maps” (Benvenisti 2000:43). While the counter-maps come in many styles they all aim to undermine the ‘naturalness’ of the Israeli nation-state; most use Arabic names and call the area Palestine (see Wood 2010). They also tell a story making their situation known to the world.

The *Atlas of Palestine 1948* (Abu-Sitta 2004) is probably the most powerful example as it not only directly and deliberately mimicked the *Atlas of Israel* (1970) in appearance, layout and size (see figure 2), but also subverted the British Royal Air Force's aerial photos and old colonial maps to show the space of Palestine prior to the *Nakba* (Benvenisti 2000, Wood 2010). Its publication by Abu-Sitta (a member of the Palestine National Council) was an act of defiance against the nation-state of Israel. Through its creation and publication it gave authority (Harley 1990) to the story of Palestine told through the pages of the atlas (Wood 1987). It sits alongside other nation-states' atlases (especially the Israeli atlas), in libraries, embassies and national governments offices. Just as other atlases promote, naturalise and produce citizens, this shows the falseness of that situation. By including a brief history that uses 'spoken and remembered' information alongside written texts (Wood 2010:235) it reclaims the old methods of understanding the land before the colonial map. This challenges the idea that land was not own prior to it being mapped and documented (Wood 2010, Sparke 1998). As such, it challenges the very basis on which modern nation-states are established: the idea that there is only one way of owning the land and that this way is absolute and natural. The maps are no less pointed; comprising of '[h]undreds of villages, towns, ruins, and hallowed graves that no longer exist' and classifying Jewish settlements as 'Jewish Colonies' (Benvenisti 2000:43); it is made clear that Palestine is occupied and no longer exists. It is apparent the Palestinian people have no space, they are written off the map; they are stateless bodies outside of international law, non-citizens, and as such bare life.

The 'naturalness' of nation-states, with their citizens, is inevitably called into question through such counter-mapping, challenging the existence of Israel shows the status-quo it to be unnatural and not absolute. It also highlights the Palestinians' position as *bare life*, bringing into focus the citizen/non-citizen divide and causing people to realise that their *zoē* is politicised. However, in many ways counter-mapping the space as the 'nation-state' of Palestine reaffirms the power of the nation-state as a 'natural' (or at least preferable) power block. Therefore it does not go so far as to challenge the very notion of state that Agamben (2000) calls us to question. Consequently the counter-mapping may not go far enough as it is 'not enough to simply question the spaces in which the lines between citizen and bare life are drawn, rather it is imperative to challenge the existence of any such division' (Darling 2009:10). Nonetheless it is undoubtedly a form of resistance against Israel, causing us to rethink the naturalness of the nation-state and their citizens. It has the potential to communicate to 'global' citizens calling them to evaluate the constructs of citizen and nation-states.

Conclusion

The application of Agamben's notions of nation-statehood, alongside an understanding of the importance of cartography within the development and maintenance of the nation-state, gives a unique insight into the true power of mapping: the Sovereign's power is in effect interconnected with mapping. It creates and naturalises their legitimacy over a given space and populous. Through looking at the part mapping has played, and continues to play in the Israel/Palestine conflict it quickly becomes apparent that the nation-state is not 'natural'. The construct of the nation-state can be a site of conflict and persecution, where maps provide the justification. However the persecuted, even when reduced to *bare life*, as they are here, can still resist through counter-mapping. Maps created and naturalised the nation-state of Israel, causing the Palestinians to become stateless non-citizens. The Oslo agreements

used mapping to justify the segregation of Palestinians into a camp. And now mapping is a site of resistance as “Palestinian mapmaking has been the reply to Israeli maps” (Benvenisti 2000:43). It is unlikely that this counter-mapping will result in a rethinking of the ‘nature’ of nation-states; it may succeed in calling people to question the naturalness of the nation-state of Israel or indeed it may fail altogether. Whatever the outcome there is no doubt that mapping has been and will continue to be a powerful player in the Israel/Palestine conflict.

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