

## 2. Maps of Israeli Settlements

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In the understanding and governing of territories, maps have been principal tools. The history of their making relates to property ownership, political sovereignty and power.

But maps are two-dimensional. Attempting to represent reality on two-dimensional surfaces, they not only mirror it but also shape the thing they represent. As much as describing the world, they create it.



Geo-politics is a flat discourse. It largely ignores the vertical dimension and tends to look across rather than to cut through the landscape. This was the cartographic imagination inherited from the military and political spatialities of the modern state. Since both politics and law understand place only in terms of the map and the plan, territorial claims marked on maps assume that claims are applicable simultaneously above them and below.

From 1967 to the present day, Israeli technocrats, ideologues and generals have been drawing maps of the West Bank. Map-making became a national obsession. Whatever the nature of Palestinian spatiality, it was subordinated to Israeli cartography. Whatever was un-named ceased to exist. Scores of scattered buildings and small villages disappeared from the map, and were never connected to basic services.



A preoccupation with an ever-more-complete unveiling of the terrain was nourished by the expansive ambitions of the mapmakers. Each map was linked to a strategic plan – from Allon's (1967-70), through those of Drobless (1977), Dayan (1978-79), and Sharon (1981), to the different ones produced for Oslo (1993–99), and the one proposed by Barak in Camp David (2000).

In both the Oslo and the Camp David peace proposals, the intertwined patchwork of territories made it impossible to draw a feasible continuous boundary between Israelis and Palestinians without dismantling settlements.



It was only by introducing the vertical dimension, through schemes of over- and under-passes, that linkage could be achieved between settlements and Israel, between Gaza and the West Bank. These solutions did not reject the map as a geopolitical tool. Instead, they superimposed discontinuous maps over each other.

The horizon became a political boundary, separating the air from the ground. At the same time, another boundary – dividing the crust of the ground from the earth under it – has appeared. In the West Bank, the sub-terrain and the air have come to be seen as separated from, rather than continuous and organic to, the surface of the earth.



Traditional international borders are political tools dividing the land on plans and maps; their geometric form, following principles of property laws, could be described as vertical planes extending from the centre of the earth to the height of the sky. The departure from a planar division of a territory to the creation of three-dimensional boundaries across sovereign bulks redefines the relationship between sovereignty and space.

The 'Politics of Verticality' entails the re-visioning of existing cartographic techniques. It requires an Escher-like representation of space, a territorial hologram in which political acts of manipulation and multiplication of the territory transform a two-dimensional surface into a three-dimensional volume.

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