

Israel's Eastern border: Ask not 'Where is the Green Line?' Ask 'What is the Green Line?'

Larisa Fleishman, Ilan Salomon *

Department of Geography, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel

Received 22 June 2006; received in revised form 23 October 2007

Abstract

The Green Line constituted the armistice line between Israel and Jordan during the period 1949–1967. This paper discusses the familiarity of Israeli students with the nature and geographical location of the Green Line by restructuring and analyzing their mental maps. The findings of this study show that students who are men, long-term residents, identify themselves on the left end of the political spectrum, and professional geographers, show better knowledge concerning the issue of borders. However, most students revealed a certain vagueness and even ignorance concerning both spatial perception of the Green Line and its essence. The reasons for the revealed phenomenon are also discussed in this paper, as well as the behavioral implications of the familiarity with the Green Line, both in spatial and political contexts.

© 2007 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Keywords: Mental map; Israel; Green Line; Spatial behavior; Political behavior; Students

1. Introduction

The Green Line, which constituted the armistice line between Israel and Jordan during the period 1949–1967, has been the center of political and public controversies concerning the future/permanent borders between Israel and her Eastern neighbors for years. However, both in political and public discourse on this issue, and in the research regarding Israel's affinity to the territories which were 'released/occupied' in 1967, the territorial perspective in its 'simplistic' sense, is rather blurred. Thus, the answers to trivial questions such as: 'Where does the Green Line pass?' or 'How large are the areas it encompasses?' – should not be taken for granted. At the base of the public discourse regarding the past and future borders of Israel, the underlying assumption is that all participants are familiar with the nature and geographical location of the Green Line. This paper intends to examine the validity of this premise, by restructuring and analyzing the mental maps of

Israelis, placing the implications of these mental maps in the context of both political and spatial behavior.

2. Mental maps: definitions and conceptual background

2.1. Factors affecting the formation of mental maps

A mental map is an internalized representation of space and thought; and is the final product of the cognitive mapping process¹ (Golledge and Stimson, 1997). This process is comprised of a series of data modifications which reflect the individual's capability to gather, interpret, arrange, store, recollect and operate the data input concerning his/her spatial environment (Downs and Stea, 1973). Inherently, a mental map is an idiosyncratic model of the world we inhabit. While mental images of this map are not identical to the objective 'real' world, they often resemble the physical reality.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: msilans@huji.ac.il (I. Salomon).

¹ The professional literature uses different terms in order to define the 'final product' of cognitive mapping processes, such as 'mental map', 'cognitive map', 'representational map'.

The formation of a mental map is triggered by several factors, the first of which is the input of environmental data to which the individual is exposed. The first and primary source of data is the direct experience of the individual in his/her surroundings (*primary learning*), such as traveling, walking, and hiking. Personal experience, thus, is the fundamental factor which influences the formation of the mental map (Golledge and Stimson, 1997).

A second source for environmental data is related to messages which originate from formal and informal educational systems, various sources of media, books and cartographical maps, interpersonal communication, etc. (*secondary learning*). These sources supplement experiential data to influence an individual's attitude towards elements in the surroundings. The individual assigns meaning, importance and symbolic characteristics to components of the environment, which he/she is able to perceive. Therefore, the cognitive process of the formation and molding of a mental map includes spatial knowledge and feelings, attitudes, beliefs, assessments and other emotional characteristics (Moore and Golledge, 1976; Spencer and Blades, 1986; Wood and Beck, 1990; Hart and Conn, 1991). As a result, the mental map reflects the positions and perceptions of spatial reality, incorporating aspects of the meaning people attach to space.

Boundaries, constructed and maintained by people's mental maps, signify the site at which, something becomes something else...at which "we" end and "they" begin; regardless of whether the boundaries appear on cartographic maps or not (Migdal, 2004). Therefore, boundaries built and maintained through mental maps may include ideological, cultural, historical, religious, symbolic, political and social ideas and meanings associated with the border divisions of spaces (Newman and Paasi, 1998; Kemp, 2004).

An individual's mental map is also a function of personal social-demographic characteristics. Golledge and Timmermans (1990) suggested that cognitive maps are a series of knowledge structures which develop with age and education. In addition, there is a great amount of literature which discusses the effect of gender differences on spatial perception. Most of the research concludes that, on average, men deal better than women with cognitive mapping assignments. Many reasons are given for these differences, such as a difference in spatial qualifications, social and biological factors, and different strategies to cope with spatial assignments (McGree, 1983; Blough and Slavin, 1987; Kirasic et al., 1992; Self and Golledge, 2000).

2.2. Types of mental maps

There are two principal types of mental maps: image, or sketch maps, and place-preference maps. Many cognitive mapping studies, focusing on the sketch-map method, have attempted to examine people's basic geographic knowledge about their neighborhood, city, region, country or the whole world. Use of the term

"sketch maps" for maps examining people's knowledge of the spatial arrangement of places, dates back to Lynch (1960). Based on sketch maps drawn by residents of Boston, Jersey City and Los Angeles, he created maps of the "distinctive elements" and streets that form the widely held perception of each city. The classic example of sketch maps is the map constructed by Milgram and Jodot (1976) representing the knowledge structure of Paris. Various subsequent applications of cognitive sketch-mapping technique to the study of people's spatial understanding, include students' knowledge of their city or country (Robinson, 1980; Buttenfield, 1986; Comenetz, 2005), the perception of regional and state boundaries (Shorridge, 1985; Lloyd and Steinke, 1986; Lowry and Zonn, 1989; Snaf, 1991), tourists' spatial conceptions of natural environments (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1992; Young, 1999) and students' perception of the size and proportions of continents on the world map (Saarinen, 1988; Saarinen et al., 1996).

The second type of mental map examines people's opinions of, or preferences for, different environments rather than assessing their knowledge of the spatial arrangement of places. Using the term "mental map" for thematic maps traces back to Gould's (1966) study. Gould asked students from different parts of the US to rank the states in order of preference. These were mental maps of perceived desirability of students' own and other regions. Applications of the mental thematic-mapping approach refer to the study of numerous aspects of spatial perceptions, preferences and opinions, such as perception of danger and fear of violence, opinions on environmental problems and possibilities for development, preferences for residence and traveling patterns, and others (Cutter, 1985; Rengert, 1994; Matei et al., 2001; Donaldson, 2002; Polic and Repovs, 2004; Comenetz, 2005).

The acknowledgement of the importance of mental maps as a tool for examining the spatial perception of an individual is based on the behavioral approach in geography and environmental psychology. According to this approach, the definition of human spatial behavior is imbedded in cognitive procedures (Orleans, 1973; Lloyd and Ader, 1980; Lloyd and Steinke, 1986; Garling and Golledge, 2000). Models of spatial behavior are based on the perceived environment, which is a simulation of the objective environment. The mental map has a significant influence on individual's spatial decision-making. These decisions are made daily and include both short term decisions, such as choice of location and timing of leisure activities, choice of modes of transportation, travel and shopping behavior, and long-term decisions, such as where to live, work, or what kind of vehicle to purchase (Gold, 1980; Pacione, 1982; Golledge and Timmermans, 1990; Crewe and Lowe, 1995; Kitchin and Blades, 2002). Behavioral geography makes use of different tools in order to distinguish the factors which influence peoples' spatial decisions. Cognitive maps are an important instrument in this field.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5074798>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5074798>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)