



Longitudinal Study of the (Un-)Political Representation of Israel in German Textbooks

Längsschnittstudie zur (un-)politischen Repräsentation Israels in deutschen Schulbüchern

Estudio longitudinal de la representación (des)política de Israel en los libros de texto alemanes

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Zusammenfassung Der Beitrag zeigt, dass und wie sich die Darstellung Israels in deutschen Schulbüchern seit den 1970er Jahren verändert hat. Treiber der Veränderungen sind nicht nur sich wandelnde gesellschaftliche Verhältnisse und Wahrnehmungen, sondern auch pädagogische Ansätze, die im Kontext des Implikationszusammenhangs zu einer anderen Bewertung der Inhalte beigetragen haben. Hinzu kommt die Vereinigung Deutschlands 1990, die nahezu gegensätzliche Bewertungen des Konflikts zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern miteinander in Diskussion brachte.

Schlüsselwörter Schulbuch, Darstellung Israels, geographische Konzepte, Aufgaben, Lesekompetenz

Abstract This article shows that and how the representation of Israel in German textbooks has changed since the 1970s. Drivers of change are not only changing social conditions and perceptions, but also pedagogical approaches that contribute to a different evaluation of the content in the context of an implicated coherence. In addition, the establishment of German unity in 1990 brought almost contradictory assessments of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians into discussion with each other.

Keywords textbook, representation of Israel, geographical concepts, tasks, reading competence

Resumen El artículo muestra cómo ha cambiado la representación de Israel en los libros de texto alemanes desde los años setenta. Los motores del cambio no son sólo las cambiantes condiciones y percepciones sociales, sino también los enfoques pedagógicos que contribuyen a una valoración diferente del contenido en el contexto de una implicación. Además, el establecimiento de la unidad alemana en 1990 puso en discusión valoraciones casi contradictorias del conflicto entre israelíes y palestinos.

Palabras clave libro de texto, representación de Israel, conceptos geográficos, tareas, competencia lectora

1. Introduction

The relationship between (West-)Germany and Israel has always been given ample attention by the two countries and crucial scrutiny by many other nation-states and organizations worldwide. One small section of this attention is attributed to the depiction of each of the two countries in the textbooks of the respective other country. Two commissions have thus far evaluated history, geography and later also social sciences textbooks (DEUTSCH-ISRAELISCHE SCHULBUCHKOMMISSION 2015). The first commission presented its result in 1985. Twenty-five years later, in 2010, it was found necessary to set up a new commission. The reasons given were that in the wake of global changes such as the end of the cold war, the reunification of Germany, the peace process in the Middle East and the considerable immigration, both countries had undergone significant developments that were likely to be reflected in modified representations of the countries in textbooks. The results of the second commission's work were published in 2015 and included short analyses of the depiction of Germany in Israeli history, geography and social sciences textbooks and of the depiction of Israel in German history, geography and social sciences textbooks. For the purpose of this article only the results for the depiction of Israel in German geography textbooks are of importance.

The claim here is that contrary to the reasons presented in the introduction to the studies the analysis of German geography textbooks remains largely ahistorical both in relation to the developments in Israel and those in Germany as well. Hence, while the study rightly identifies three main topics in the textbooks (water conflicts, water usage and the political conflict in the Middle East), it fails to recognize the development of the debates concerning these three topics and relating these changes to the way the topics are chosen and represented in textbooks. I will delve into this in the context of the relevant chapters. Also, while the introduction explicitly mentions German reunification as a factor of change, the analysis of geography textbooks does not differentiate between textbooks from western and eastern federal states. To me, such a distinction seems paramount because of the completely different political traditions that the two Germanys developed in relation to Israel.

West-Germany soon took responsibility for crimes of the Nazi-regime against Jewish people. The subject of school geography, which from a historical perspective was most successful in the years between 1933 to 1945 (BARNES 2016), when it was

allocated more lesson time in school than ever before or after (SCHULTZ 1993), undertook major changes, as its proponents felt more and more reluctant to understand or teach geography as a political subject. Instead they concentrated on the seemingly uncontroversial descriptions of countries and landscapes. In the wake of the students' movement, SCHRAMKE (1978) later criticized school geography as being highly political especially when it thought or claimed to be unpolitical. Together with other scientists of his generation, he demanded a more scientific geography, that was able to explain regional phenomena and support regional planning. What SCHRAMKE (1978) and most of his contemporaries did not understand yet, was that spatial planning in Nazi Germany was characterized by what HERF (1984, p. 217) called "reactionary modernism", meaning that reactionary ideas were put into practice using modern technological means, devised and implemented through rational scientific reasoning (BARNES 2016). It was thus only later, that it became clear that some of the *heroes* of post-war geography were also deeply entrenched in the Nazi regime (RÖSSLER 1989). These new revelations coincided with a roll back in West-German school geography supported by the concept of cultural continents (NEWIG 1986) and by German reunification which led to the swift diffusion of the concept by way of the new federal states.

Contrary to the West-German approach, East-Germany took practically no responsibility for the crimes of the Nazi-regime against the Jews. This position was justified by the argument that fascism was the outcome of a capitalist development and their state, East-Germany, was by definition anti-capitalist and therefore also anti-fascist (ULLRICH 2007). The country's relation to Israel was also mainly defined by their ideological perspective (OSTERER 2014). Hence, at least since the early 1950s Israel was seen as an imperialist state that was trying to subdue the Arab countries surrounding it. In this context, the East-German government (like left-wing parties in the West) tended to support the Palestinians against Israeli suppression. Like other movements of freedom fighters, the PLO was understood not so much as a national liberation army, but as a group of revolutionaries fighting for social justice (ULLRICH 2007). This traditional East-German perspective is in stark contrast to the endeavors to represent Israel in a positive light in German geography textbooks.

In this paper I want to explore the development of the depiction of Israel in relation to the domin-

ant political narratives especially in Israel itself. To achieve this, I will first take a look at the two narratives that are mirrored in German geography textbooks: the discourse on war and conflict and the discourse on water. I will then analyze textbooks

from different periods, the oldest being published in 1970, in relation to subject content and pedagogical processes, the latter allowing for an assessment of the potential offered for critical thinking of the students.

2. Political Background

For a German author, who is not following the mainstream view uncritically, describing the political situation of Israel has a high potential of being accused of one-sidedness. To avoid this at least partly, I will mainly use Israeli (PAPPE 2007; YIFTACHEL 2009; SAND 2011) and French sources (ENCEL 2008, 2012) to describe the development of war and conflict. The narrative of the water discourse, that has been analyzed in a German doctoral thesis, runs almost parallel to the developments regarding war and conflict. It can thus be assumed, that there is some validity in it.

2.1 The Discourse on War and Conflict

What we call Israel today is the result of long and often painful political developments that were in large parts influenced by powers outside the region. Still in the middle of the 19th century the biggest Jewish community lived in tsarist Russia (ENCEL 2008). Nationalistic discourses in Russia as well as the ensuing pogroms against Jews led to the development of Zionism. The goal was to establish an independent state in which Jews could live without being subjected to unfounded prosecution. Where this state should be located was not clear from the beginning (VERLEGER 2010), as most habitable places on earth were occupied by other people. It turned out though, that the actual Jewish emigration concentrated on the region of Palestine which then belonged to the Ottoman Empire. From 1923 to 1948 Palestine was administered by the British (CHAGNOLLAUD & SOUIAH 2011), who from today's point of view followed a rather ambiguous policy, which until 1928 considered Palestine as a state in its own right while at the same time having promised it to the Zionists in the Balfour-Declaration of 1917 (PAPPE 2007). This situation led to continuous conflicts between the two groups concerned, which finally made the British think about plans to establish two countries in the territory (ENCEL 2008). With the systematic killing of Jews by the Nazi-regime and the growing reluctance of the USA to take in Jewish refugees, leading powers started to support the foundation of a Jewish state in a region, where none of these states had strategic interests (SAND 2011). Thus, several

proposals were made on how to divide the land between Israelis and Arabs.

The UN-plan, that was finally put into practice, left Israel with a number of challenges. To achieve a truly Jewish state, the Arab population had to be replaced, a replacement that some Israeli scientists now call displacement: 70 percent of the Arabs were made to leave the country (YIFTACHEL 2009), with most of their houses and villages being destroyed to discourage a return (PAPPE 2007). At the same time, the plan of the UN left Israel with a very small strip of land, that was easy to conquer and had little or no access to vital resources (ENCEL 2012). Adding to this, the growing interest of the two world powers in the development of the region in the context of the cold war conflict seemed almost inevitable.

ENCEL (2008, 2012) explicitly distinguishes two categories of war and implies one further category of conflict. The first category is constituted by wars fought to secure the survival of the state of Israel, the second by wars fought to reach regional supremacy. For Encel the first category encompasses all strategic wars, that is the war for independence in 1948/49, the Six-Day-War in 1967 and the Jom-Kippur-War in 1973. Although not all of these were triggered by Israel, their main goal was to instate or protect the national sovereignty of the country. The second category is made up by tactic wars, that is the Suez War in 1956 and the Wars in Lebanon in 1982 and 2006, which did not try to defend the existence of Israel, but to make the country the leading power in the region. The third category is not really a category of war. It encompasses the Gaza Wars in 2008/09, 2012 and 2014 and the first and second Intifada in 1987 and 2000. These are internal conflicts. And though they take place inside the contested borders of Israel, they were also only made possible by Israel's successful warfare during the Six-Day-War, because as a result of this war, the Palestinian Arabs now lived in one country and could more easily communicate among themselves. This and the growing repression by Israel made them develop an identity, that was no longer mainly Arab, but Palestinian. Generally speaking, you can thus identify three phases of war, that partly overlap: wars for statehood, wars

for regional supremacy and internal wars against part of Israel's own population.

2.2 The Discourse on Water

Almost following the developments of warfare in the region, a discourse on water unfolded among the Israelis as well as among the Arab countries and later the Palestinians. FRÖHLICH (2010) identifies three periods of distinct argumentation patterns: The first period lasts from Israeli independence in 1948 to the Six-Day-War in 1967. It was characterized by the wish of both sides to secure water resources for their respective national developments. In Israel the development of agriculture through the installation of kibbutzim had been declared one of the three main Zionist accomplishments (FRÖHLICH 2010, p. 104). To achieve this goal, swamps in the north had to be drained and drier parts of the country had to be taken under cultivation. The latter was achieved by diverting water from the river Jordan, that was then potentially lacking for the development of the Arab countries. The Arab countries thus started to build a dam on river Yarmouk, a tributary to river Jordan to keep the water on their side of the border. This attempt was soon stopped by Israeli military forces and since 1967, when Israel conquered the Golan Heights, water was no longer discussed only in relation to securing national supply regions. Instead the second period of discourse, which lasted from the Six-Day-War in 1967 to approximately the beginning of the first Intifada in 1987 and the declaration of an independent Palestinian state by PLO in 1988, saw a depoliticization of the discourse. For different reasons both sides started a discourse that focussed on the technical aspects of water supply. In the Arab countries this was due to the new situation, which left them with no other choice than manage the few re-

sources that have been left. In Israel a dual discourse developed between the horizontalist and verticalists. The horizontalists still saw a strong connection between the question of water and the question of land. Here the Westbank with its watershed and the control of at least the Western Aquifer were a priority. The verticalists stressed the need to understand the economy of water supplies. They criticized the subsidized water prizes for agricultural use, especially as agriculture was no longer an important source for Israeli GDP. At the same time, they searched for technical solutions to provide the water that was needed by agriculture and the society at large. This led to innovations such as drip irrigation and the development of efficient desalination plants. Accordingly, a predominantly technical understanding of water supply and use dominates the third period of the water discourse on the Israeli side. This period covers roughly the time since the first Intifada until today. It is characterized by a relocation of the discourse from the international to the national level. On this level, Israel rules the water supply of the Palestinians living inside Israeli boundaries. Their water supply has been largely limited for example by making Palestinians in the Westbank pay ten times the price for water that Israelis do. Combined with a strong population growth, a return of emigrant workers from oil producing countries and restrictions to find work in the Israeli main land, which all led to increased demands for agricultural developments, water in the Palestinian discourse is thus mainly a political issue. Israel, now no longer fighting for national water security on the international level, answers Palestinian demands with a purely technical discourse which considers supply, demand and prices rather than the Palestinian wish for political independence. In this situation a discourse between the two is almost condemned to lead to misunderstandings.

3. Depiction of Israel in German Textbooks

In the following section, I will explore, if these political and narrative developments are mirrored in the depiction of Israel in German textbooks. To this end I analyzed eleven textbooks published at different times: four books from the 1970s, that was a period of increased educational debate and innovation, one from the 1980s, that was a period characterized by a standstill partly due to an excess of supply of young teachers, who were unable to find jobs, three from the 1990s, the period of tacit adjustments after reunification and then three from the 2000s, the period of consolidation. This may seem a rather small sample, but my goal was not to offer a comprehensive description of all textbooks - that has been done else-

where (DEUTSCH-ISRAELISCHE SCHULBUCHKOMMISSION 2015) -, but to understand the political dimension in the textbooks. As the content descriptions largely conform with those of the commission, I think, the reduced sample is justifiable.

The analysis carried out considers various aspects of the textbook chapters, which largely correspond to MARSDEN's (1997) dimensions of subject content and pedagogical processes. In relation to the subject content it was investigated whether there was an enquiry question, and if so which one, which key geographical concepts (place, space, scale) could be detected and whether certain key words, that were derived from

the results of the above analysis, were used by the authors. For the examination of the pedagogical processes the research focussed on the tasks in the chapters. They were investigated in relation to the operator words used and the dimensions of literacy they allowed students to acquire or train.

3.1 Subject Content

In contrast to the study of the German-Israeli Commission on Textbooks, I have decided to not just recount the subject content of the textbooks, but to look at it from two different perspectives: the perspective of the enquiry questions asked and the perspective of geographical concepts. The rationale for this choice is first to find out whether the authors emphasize information transmission or intend to develop understanding (see ROBERTS 2003) and second to see which subject specific approaches are dominant: the more traditional descriptions of countries that were used in the 1960s and revived by the approach of cultural continents (NEWIG 1986) or more modern approaches stressing interconnections.

The investigation of enquiry questions showed, that they were hardly ever used. Only one textbook from the 1970s implies an enquiry question in the chapter headline "We explore how people turn deserts into fertile land" (TB4, p. 36). All the other textbooks either do not feature any enquiry question at all or show approaches that fail to understand what an enquiry question intends to achieve. This is especially true for three textbooks, two from

the 1990s and one from the 2000s that all use a question at the end of a paragraph or even a chapter. The questions asked were "Is this the beginning of a new era of peace in Palestine?" (TB7, p. 127) and "How is the new State of Israel connected to the Jewish Religion?" (TB11, p. 32), the first of which can definitely not be answered by students and the second of which can only be answered by providing the appropriate information.

At this point, it should be noted that in the textbook from the 1980s the idea of *enquiry* has taken the form of "moral enquiry" of people's own behavior. Students are thus confronted with the general idea of water being an important and scarce resource that has to be managed. This approach seems to re-surface in newer textbooks, that no longer have chapters on Israel, but on the water crisis in the Middle East in general (see TB12). This finding corresponds to observations from the German-Israeli Commission on Textbooks (DEUTSCH-ISRAELISCHE SCHULBUCHKOMMISSION 2015), but it will have to be seen what it actually means in the context of the rest of the findings.

A quantitative overview of the results concerning the use of key geographical concepts (Fig. 1) shows that space is the concept that practically all textbooks use, while place in the sense of the conceptual meaning is used by only half of the textbooks. Surprisingly, the concept of scale, although the only one of these three concepts, that has been promoted in the context of the development of the national standards in the mid-2000s (DGfG 2007), is only used in one textbook and in that case also

Year	Place	Space	Scale	Year	Place	Space	Scale
1970	(x)	x	-	1995b	-	x	-
1972	(x)	x	-	1996	x	x	-
1974	x	x	-	2006a	x	x	-
1978	-	x	-	2006b	-	(m)	-
1983	x	x	(m)	2007	-	x	-
1995a	x	x	-				

(x) = a variety of information on Israel

(m) = occurs implicitly, without the authors realizing they may be using a concept

Fig. 1. Key geographical concepts used in textbook chapters on Israel (Source: author)

only implicitly. This result is also in stark contrast to the importance that some academic geographers attribute to the concept of scale when trying to understand the political development in the region (LACOSTE 2008).

The use of the concept of place shows some interesting developments in relation to the meaning

that is ascribed to the region. It leads from Israel being seen as the home of the Jews (TB3), to it being understood as a *country of irrigation* (TB5, TB6) to it being visualized as a region of conflict (TB8, TB9).

To explore the use of the concept of space, aspects of interactions between places at different scales have been identified. These were the immig-

ration of Jews to the region, the network of kibbutzim developing in the region, the transport of water from the northern to the southern parts of the country by means of the national water carrier, the conflicts with the Arabs and the Palestinians respectively, imports and exports of the country and the financial support from Jewish associations worldwide. The distribution of the treatment of these aspects in textbooks shows a marked pattern over time (Fig. 2). While the Jewish immigration and the national water carrier seem to be present if not in each and

every chapter, but at least rather continuously through time, other aspects appear and disappear. It is obvious that the 1970s saw textbook approaches that allowed students the most multifaceted views of space in the region, usually featuring four or five aspects. This variety was lost during the 1980s and only returned when the conflict with the Palestinians was added as a topic in the late 1990s. Overall, these results mirror the findings in relation to the concept of place, but also in relation to the few enquiry questions identified.

	1970	1972	1974	1978	1983	1995a	1995b	1996*	2006a	2006b	2007
immigration of Jews	■	■	■	■	■		■	■			■
national water carrier	■	■		■	■	■		■		■	■
conflict with Arabs	■	■	■	■			■				
import/export	■	■	■								
financial support of Jews worldwide		■									
network of kibbutzim			■								
conflict with Palestinians								■	■		■

Fig. 2. The use of the concept of space in textbook chapters on Israel (East-German textbooks are printed in bold) Source: author)

It is thus possible to identify roughly three phases: The first in which Israel is depicted as the home of the Jews, that they had to build, e.g. through kibbutzim, and defend against Arabs and also in relation to the use of water. In the second phase, Israel is mainly seen in terms of the water problem. Its achievements in water saving techniques are meticulously described, but there is also a tendency to put an emphasis on water in general rather than on its use in Israel in particular. From the point of view of the question on the (un-)political representation of Israel in the textbooks, these two periods would make a perfect match with the general development of the school subject. While in the 1970s there was a greater awareness of the political aspects of geography education, this was dropped again when the concept of cultural continents reintroduced a seemingly apolitical approach, which can clearly be seen in the emphasis on the water problem since the 1980s. That this view is really (un-)political becomes clear when it is matched to the political and narrative developments in Israel, where water has become less of a political and more of a technical problem, at least for the Israelis.

The third phase is characterized by a seemingly contradictory development, that only becomes ex-

plicable, when differentiating between textbooks from West-German federal states and those from East-German federal states: Suddenly the conflict with the Palestinians is introduced as a topic. And although one might detect a number of reasons for this looking at the development in the region, introducing this rather Israel-critical topic in textbooks may seem to refute a political correctness otherwise followed. Accordingly, the German-Israeli Commission on Textbooks remarks that some textbooks wrongly use the term "Palestine" not just for the historical region, but also for the recent one (DEUTSCH-ISRAELISCHE SCHULBUCHKOMMISSION 2015, p. 71). And in a rather unfavorable reaction to the commission's report, THÖRNER (2016) even criticizes that textbooks represent Palestinians as victims, while at the same time blaming Israel for boycotting the peace process. But this is only true for East-German textbooks. Here the party *Die Linke*, who is the direct successor of the SED, the ruling party in the GDR, is still or at least was for a long time an important political agent. The East-German support for the Palestinian course, which was interpreted as a fight of the deprived against a bourgeois suppressor (WEISS 2006), is still today an important element of their policy. According to an

opinion poll conducted in 2009, 13 percent of all Germans deny Israel the right of existence, while 28 percent of the supporters of *Die Linke* do (MÜLLER & HARTMANN 2009). The traditionally East-ern German attitude was also actively expressed by some of the party's members of parliament, when in 2010 they took part in the Gaza-flotilla, that was supposed to break through Israeli border controls to bring relief supplies to the Gaza Strip (SALZBORN & VOIGT 2011). Considering this background, it may come of little surprise, that all the textbooks in the sample, that dedicated longer passages of the presentation to the Palestinian perspective, were produced for the federal states of Berlin and Brandenburg (TB8, TB9, TB11), that

is, the federal state that includes the former East-ern-German capital and the federal state that soon after reunification was proud to be considered the *small GDR* (RIECKER 2014).

Comparing two textbooks from the same series and the same year of publication, but conceived for on the one hand an East-German federal state and on the other hand a West-German federal state, shows how even a slight change in just one sentence mirrors the different approaches (Fig. 3). While the Bavarian textbook calls the indigenous population of Palestine Arabs (TB 7), the Berlin Brandenburg version calls them "the indigenous Arabs, the Palestinians" (TB 8, p. 96).

Dies stieß auf Widerspruch der in Palästina beheimateten Araber, der **Palästinenser**.
*This was contradicted by the indigenous Arabs in Palestine, the **Palestinians**.*
 (East-German federal state – Berlin Brandenburg)

Dies stieß auf Widerspruch der in Palästina beheimateten Araber.
This was contradicted by the indigenous Arabs in Palestine.
 (West-German federal state - Bavaria)

Fig. 3. Excerpts showing the same sentence in a textbook from Berlin Brandenburg and a textbook from Bavaria (Source: author)

The occurrence of certain topics in the chapters on Israel may give us a hint at what authors want to convey, and in the case of the investigation, this hint fits quite nicely with the political and narrative developments found in the region. But these findings may not be enough to really know, how (un-)political the subject education on this topic really is. Because what we do not know yet is, whether the authors promote an affirmative view or whether they foster debate on controversial issues. To answer this question an examination of the pedagogical processes seems unavoidable.

3.2 Pedagogical Processes

To understand the pedagogical processes envisaged by the textbook authors, two different aspects have been analyzed: the usage of so-called operator words and the way in which the tasks promote (geographical) literacy. The first aspect is justified by the national standards for geography (DGfG 2007). The dimensions of the second aspect have been developed in the context of an empirical study following the first PISA-results (DÖRKSEN 2004). They can be seen as a kind of grounded theory in relation to the development of literacy, hopefully at least in part mirroring the tacit, subjective theories of textbook authors.

In the German context, the term operator word has a rather long tradition. It was first used in the context of behaviorist educational approaches, where it was restricted to the use in curricula. Op-

erator words were meant to tell the curriculum-maker which operations were asked for to test the students' *behavior*. Soon the operator words were used in the student tests themselves claiming this would make tasks clearer to the students, but ignoring the fact, that the student thus addressed lacks the theoretical background knowledge to understand the meaning of the terms the same way as the trained teachers. This dissociation of theory and practice has led to the continuing use of operator words, with the corresponding theory being almost forgotten.

To understand the resulting German use of operator words it has to be stressed, that it differs fundamentally from proposals in the English-speaking world. For example, Margaret Roberts shows how the operator words describe and explain can be differentiated along the six levels of Blooms taxonomy (ROBERTS 2003), starting with (for example) recognizing a previously learned explanation and leading to the judgement of an explanation against criteria. Contrary to this, the German approach assigns each operator word to a certain level of which there are three: reproduction (containing five operator words, e.g., describe and name), reorganization and transfer (containing eight operator words, e.g., explain and compare) and reflection and problem-solving (containing six operator words, e.g., justify and evaluate) (DGfG 2007). This classification is problematic exactly for what Roberts showed by differentiating one operator word into six levels of thinking: When *explain* is used in a task, it may ask

for a transfer, but it may just as well ask for a mere reproduction. Taking my experience with the formulation of tasks in central examinations as a background, I would guess that today at least 90 per cent of all task are reproductive, even if they use operator words suggesting otherwise. Nonetheless, as it is the predominant classification, it was taken as the basis for the first analysis. To cover all operator words found in the textbooks a fourth category labelled *others* had to added.

The results across the whole sample show, that this last category is by far the largest one with 62 entries. The categories of reproduction (33) and reorganization and transfer (36) have approximately the same size, while the category of reflection and problem-solving is by far the smallest one featuring only 15 entries. As for the use of operator words at different times, which in this case would also mean in relation to certain political statements, no clear development can be discerned (Fig. 4). Relating to the number of tasks offered in each chapter, it spans between no tasks at all in 1970 and over 20 tasks in TB3, which also has the longest chapter on Israel, covering eleven pages instead of the usual four to six (TB 5, TB 8). Concerning the coverage of the level categories by the tasks, if anything, one might detect a slightly more pronounced focus on reorganization and transfer and even reflection and problem solving in the 1980s and 1990s, which interestingly enough seems to have vanished just after the results of the first PISA-study have been published. In the case of this study of the representation of Israel the use of higher-order operator words may though be correlated to the emphasis on the technical debate on water, that was found especially in the textbook of 1983 and the West-German textbook of 1995. This emphasis on higher-order operator words for experimental tasks and reflections on problems of

water supply and use (TB 5, TB 6), thus indirectly verifying the unpolitical treatment of a highly political topic: First because chapters that do consider political events seem to focus mainly on reproductive tasks and second because the levels of transfer and problem solving are used in relation to seemingly natural scientific issues only.

This picture is questioned though when examining the way in which the tasks foster literacy. DÖRKSEN (2004) establishes six dimensions in which tasks can support literacy: transparency of requirements (e.g., by referring to the exact sources students should use to answer the question), offering points of reference (e.g., in the form of scaffolding or presenting choice of different hypothesis for investigation), development of mental models (e.g., students visualize contents of texts in graphs), activating prior knowledge (e.g., relating information to personal experience), settings that enable problem solving (e.g., finding evidence for contrasting interpretations) and self-monitoring (e.g., in relation to time management, strategies used or quality of results). Tasks may feature more than one of these dimensions, but they may also feature none of them.

In the sample under investigation here, the amount of tasks not featuring any of the dimensions of literacy and the number of tasks featuring at least one of them is almost equal: 64 compared to 62, respectively. Nevertheless, they are not equally distributed through all the textbook chapters, with five textbooks offering more tasks featuring dimensions to support literacy than tasks not doing so. These are two textbooks from the 1970s (TB 3, TB 4), two from the 1990s (TB 7, TB 8) and one from the 2000s (TB 10). Taking a look at precisely which dimensions are used (Fig. 5), one sees that by far the most often used dimension is making requirements transparent, e.g., telling students

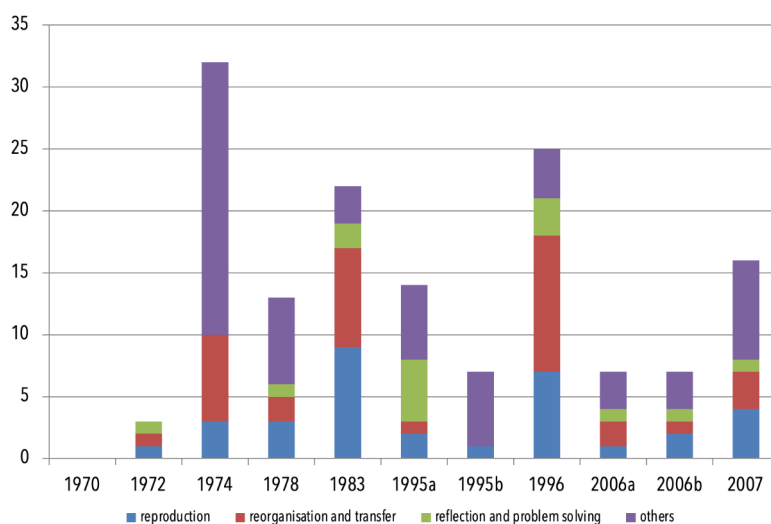


Fig. 4. The use of operator words according to categories (Source: author)

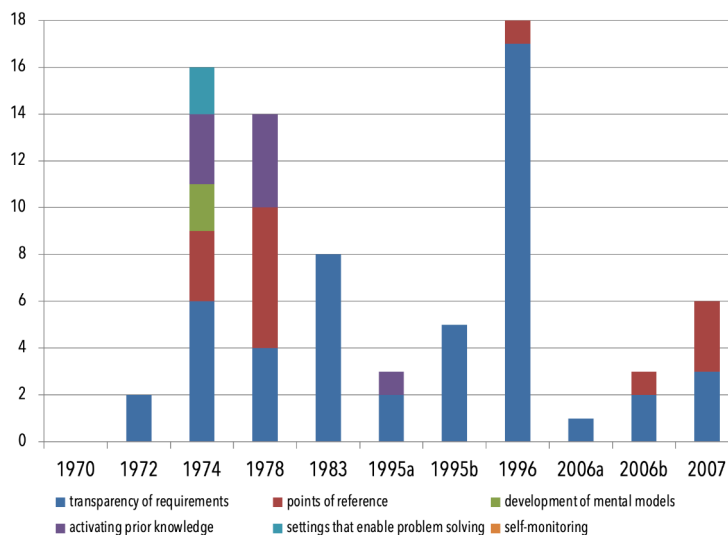


Fig. 5. Dimensions of literacy featured by tasks (Source: author)

exactly where to look for an answer. The only two textbooks, that offer students a wide variety of support in relation to literacy are the two aforementioned textbooks from the 1970s. In the whole sample, the 1974-textbook (TB 3) is the only one that offers tasks supporting the development of mental models and settings that enable problem solving. It is also one of the three textbooks from the 1970s that offers the greatest number of aspects concerning the concept of space. Hence, in this textbook the authors seem to have intended something like a political representation that does not only inform students, but gives them the chance to develop their own point of view concerning the conflicts in question.

Contrary to this textbook from the 1970s, the modern East-German textbook that introduced the conflict with the Palestinians mainly supports literacy by making requirements transparent, some-

times added by some scaffolding. These strategies, if used exclusively, seem to imply that the authors intend the students to learn the situation the way it is described and not analyze it in a way that they might judge it by themselves or at least form an opinion on it, that they can justify in a debate.

Although the two analyses yield different results, they may support each other in the context of the study of the representation of Israel in German textbooks. The operator words for the category of reorganization and transfer and the category of reflection and problem solving seem a good indicator for the turn to an unpolitical representation of the conflict focussing on general problems of water usage. The dimensions of the development of mental models and settings that enable problem solving seem to indicate the contrary: a non-ideological, but still political representation of the developments in Israel and its neighboring countries.

4. Conclusion

The study effectively shows, that one of the geographical key concepts not mentioned in this paper yet, that is perception and representation, does have some validity. The representation of Israel in German geography textbooks is thus influenced by the political and narrative developments in Israel and the perception of these developments by the respective textbook authors. In West-Germany, one may observe a development from a rather political representation of Israel in the 1970s that was characterized by a lively political debate in the society at large and an uprising of geography students at German universities against the traditional geography taught by their professors. This led to textbooks that either because of the

convictions of their authors or because the *zeitgeist* did not allow for anything else represented Israel in a more political way than ever before or after. This time coincided with changes in Israel: the state was mostly secure by now and was hence starting to consolidate. In the 1980s when Israeli discourse was turning to more technical arguments, e.g. in relation to water supplies, this was happily taken up by German textbook authors who felt, that the political debates were abating and one might return to more unpolitical ways of representing political questions in textbooks. In a lot of West-German federal states chapters on Israel had completely vanished from textbooks by the mid-1990s.

It was only for the reunification that Israel as a topic got a second chance, because the East-German federal states embraced the idea of cultural continents, that was widely criticized in the West. But they interpreted the conflicts in Israel on the background of their East-German socialization and highlighted the rights of the Palestinians. Again, this coincided with developments in the region, where the fact that after the Six-Day-War, Arabs, who formerly owned the land, now lived in one state, which allowed them to form a national identity as Palestinians, that is as the Arabs that lived in what was formerly Palestine. Although this political emphasis may seem similar to that of the 1970s in the West, it was not underpinned by the same understanding of educating a politically responsible person, because it was taught as rote knowledge rather than for debate, and it was taught against the per-

ception of a larger part of German politics. Had the perspectives of both parts of Germany been considered in the light of their historical development, textbooks would have achieved the controversial representation of controversially discussed issues, that was requested by the Beutelsbach Consensus already in the mid-1970s. Without this controversiality, an opportunity to discuss the Palestinian course in a reasonable way, which would have found support among a lot of Israeli researchers and among the German public as well, was lost. Also, such discourse would have helped the reunified Germans to better understand the complexities of their own country, which might have given East-Germans the appreciation they are longing for. All these opportunities have been lost. Instead school geography once more showed its utterly unpolitical self-awareness.

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