

Making the map: cross-border and intercultural representations from Ancient history to today

Mulhouse – 20, 21, 22 May 2019

Abstract

The conference aims to reflect on and debate the cartography of transboundary and intercultural phenomena. Through an international lens, and drawing from multiple disciplines, it ought to contribute to the conceptualisation of maps independent of political borders by inviting us to think about them across three axes: time (How compatible have intercultural phenomena and cartographic enterprises been throughout history?), space (what are the possible approaches when mapping intercultural or cross-border phenomena depending on the area of study, of creation and of diffusion of maps?), and method (how/why can making maps show such phenomena?).

Call for papers

The work of the Atlas historique d'Alsace have shown that contemporary political borders, especially that which runs along the Rhine between France and Germany, are not always relevant to historical cartography or when mapping cultural, social, economic or environmental phenomena. These phenomena frequently overlap and overflow the administrative logics which prevail when choosing scales and represented spaces. However, whether through a GIS or otherwise, maps can also shed some light on spatial phenomena, structures and organizations that are not directly connected to political territories. Through choices and constraints, whether technical (scales, projections), graphical (symbols, simplification) or intellectual, maps show as well as they hide. To achieve specific purposes, they draw contrasts whereas other choices and other criteria could have shown a continuity, and vice versa.

The conference hopes to contribute to this reflection on cartographic processes and on the modalities of spatial representation of cross-border and intercultural phenomena. The first inevitably refers to the notion of a modern “political border”, an almost-synonym of “limit” which systematically differentiate territories which they divide and unite at the same time. On the contrary, the “intercultural” notion invites us to consider dynamic borders that are at the same time blurry, porous and constantly moving. Their identification with political borders are exceptional at best. Three main interrogations will guide the interventions of the conference.

The first is temporal, and addresses both history of maps or map-making, and historical cartography. Studying ancient maps may show how they could lock some territorial configurations or, on the contrary, how they could ignore spatial realities in the name of an ideological message. Cartographic enterprises in a colonial context seem particularly suitable for such a reflection. In which ways do maps contribute to build national systems of representation? To which extent and why do they evolve or diverge? One could question, for instance, the cartographic consequences of geopolitical contexts throughout history, or the possible uses of maps as a pedagogic tool. The organizers will welcome works that confront territories shown by maps on one hand, territories highlighted through other means on the other.

A second axis will focus on the comparison between different cartographic practices in spaces where intercultural or transboundary phenomena occur. Cross-border cases studies will be encouraged, in order to bring out possible differences between representations of the same space. One could compare the different uses and representations of maps as an information medium or as a working tool by social groups of different cultural, national or language

backgrounds. Furthermore, the current access to information (especially thanks to its dematerialisation leading to its internationalisation) makes it easier to consult and to use maps in cultural contexts that are different from the one in which said maps have been made, leading to new intellectual, social and political stakes in terms of space and territorial representations, and contributing to the circulation of ideas, knowledge and techniques. Do the political and cultural system's interpretations of space resist to these multiplying interactions at macroregional (Europe, for instance) and world scale?

Questions about methods are the third aspect that we would like to address, by inviting participants to think about the ways to map cross-border dynamics and intercultural objects. From the heuristic approach leading to the map, to the constraints and necessities of bigger projects such as atlases and GIS, the steps, methods and solutions to offer coherent graphic representations are numerous and varied. This is especially true when mapping historical phenomena, when current political borders are not relevant at all. Once the map is drawn, what are its uses for the historian, the geographer, the archaeologist or the sociologist who wants to reveal and to study these transboundary or intercultural questions? The conference will provide the opportunity to discuss the ways to promote such cartographic works.

The organisers intend for the conference to involve multiple disciplines and to gather input from both the creators and consumers of maps. Not only from within the academic sphere but from institutional, economic, political and teaching circles. The symposium will also adopt an international stance to put cartographic methods and approaches into perspective. Organized by the *Centre de Recherche sur les Economies, les Sociétés, les Arts et les Techniques* (Université de Haute-Alsace), it will take place in Mulhouse from 20 to 22 May 2019.

Submission

Proposals can be sent in English, German or French (5000 signs max) to benjamin.furst@uha.fr before the 30th of November 2018 with a short introduction from the author(s).

Organizing committee

The conference is part of the research project *Cartographie historique pour un atlas transfrontalier* (CHAT, Historical cartography for a transboundary atlas) led by the CRESAT (B. Furst, R. Boulat) et funded by the center for transboundary skills NovaTris.

- Régis Boulat (Associate professor of modern history, UHA)
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Scientific committee

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