Cartographic Imaginaries (Paris, 11 Jun 25)

Paris, Île-de-France, FRA, EHESS, Salle 50, Campus Condorcet, 2 Cours des Humanités, Aubervilliers, Jun 11, 2025

Elif Karakaya, University of Rochester

Cartographic Imaginaries: Spaces and Images of Central and Eastern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

In the 20th century, the collapse of empires (Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, Russian/Soviet) and multiethnic states (Yugoslavia) reshaped the territories of Central and Eastern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The (re)delimitation of these spaces led to the displacement of communities, the restriction of mobility, and the reconfiguration of regions along with their communication networks. Throughout history, cartography has not only recorded imperialist and colonial ambitions but has also played a crucial role in nation-building as these regions redefined themselves. While maps suggest a visual regime based on abstraction, the lived experiences and embodied practices of individuals and communities affected by the transformation of these regions have reframed space in ways that differ from its official representations: migratory routes establishing networks between previously unconnected places; refugees' memory sketches of their lost homelands expressing cartographic imaginaries; artistic interventions in space echoing Situationist drift, offering an experiential approach to space that reveals hidden connections and narratives within the urban and social fabric. These embodied and phenomenological approaches constitute a form of "situated" spatial knowledge, as introduced by Donna Haraway in her seminal essay Situated Knowledges (1988), which had a significant impact on the discipline of geography. The concept of "situated knowledge" has influenced methodologies of spatial studies by highlighting how geographical knowledge often reflects colonial, nationalist, patriarchal, or capitalist frameworks. Similarly, the rise of a "spatial turn" in studies focused on Central and Eastern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Caucasus, and Central Asia has paved the way for a critical re-reading of territorial and identitarian narratives while promoting multi-situated and decentralized approaches.

This graduate conference invites participants to explore the various meanings that the concept of 'map' can assume—not only as a material and functional tool but also as a vessel for the imagination. In a sense, inventing a new cartography corresponds to developing new scientific methodologies. In the era of globalization, global and transnational perspectives in the humanities and social sciences also encourage questioning the cartographies and historiographies developed in the 20th century, particularly in the field of art history. In this context, Piotr Piotrowski, in his essay "On the Spatial Turn or a Horizontal History of Art" (in Art in the Age of Globalization, 2022), advocates for "pluralist art-historical narratives" and calls for the emergence of a polyphonic, multi-situated, and multidimensional (art) history. Following his lead, many scholars challenge the vertical and universalizing conception of art history, and the standards established and imposed by West-

ern powers.

Beyond its methodological implications, cartography also refers to a visual regime, inviting us to reflect on how images—artistic or otherwise—alter our perception of space. It can be viewed as a visual atlas, a collage of images establishing various spatial connections, reminiscent of The Mnemosyne Atlas by art historian Aby Warburg. Maps also serve as an artistic medium and material through which dominant spatial narratives are reconsidered or contested.

How, then, can we approach visual practices and objects that offer subversive cartographies, reimagining and remapping the territories of Central and Eastern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Caucasus, and Central Asia? How do images—artistic or otherwise—challenge the geographical and cartographic knowledge produced within (post-)imperialist, colonial, or nationalist frameworks? What do artists from these regions teach us about the malleability, plasticity, and fluidity of their geographies? Against the claims of objectivity and positivism put forth by imperial, colonial, and nationalist cartographies, how can we weave memories, affects, and dreams—echoing Bachelard's insights—into the register of space and geography?

This graduate conference aims to foster critical reflection on these spatial reconfigurations and their resonances in both historical and contemporary contexts. We invite interdisciplinary contributions that re-examine the past and present of this vast region through various disciplines and fields of study, including migration studies, urban and cultural studies, sociology, history, art history, visual anthropology, political science, and critical geography. Contributions focusing on visual objects and practices are particularly encouraged. By adopting a multi-situated approach, we seek to open new perspectives on how visual and material culture challenges spatial and geographical knowledge.

PROGRAM
9h30-10h : Accueil café / Welcome Coffee

10h-10h30 : Mot de bienvenue de Marc AYMES, directeur du CETOBaC / Opening remarks by Marc Aymes, director of CETOBaC

10h30- 10h45 : Introduction, Alessandro GALLICCHIO (Académie de France à Rome - Villa Médicis)

10h45-11h45. Visions urbaines et architecturales dans l'espace (post-)soviétique / Urban and Architectural Visions in the (Post-)Soviet Space

WOLKENSTEIN Paul, CREE, INALCO « De la conception à la réception : représenter l'architecture brejnévienne en Asie centrale »
PACHEO – VASCONCELLOS Rachel, CERCEC- EHESS/ CNRS, Université de Sao-Paulo, Labur-USP, « Pour une critique de l'urbanisme prospectif : propositions théoriques et méthodologiques pour l'analyse de projets de "villes du futur" en Russie »

11h45-12h : Pause-café / Coffee break

12h-13h. Fabriques spatiales du pouvoir et mémoire en Turquie contemporaine / Spatial Constructs of Power and Memory in Contemporary Turkey

YAKARLAR Tuğberk, University of Ottawa, « Mapping Civilization: Turkey's Cartographic Imaginary and Intra-Civilizational Tensions »
KİLAVUZ PİNAR Elsa, EHESS - CETOBAC / CESOR, "Cartographier la mémoire : visibilité et sécurisation du Musée juif d'Istanbul dans l'espace urbain

13h-14h30 : Pause déjeuner / Lunch break

14h30 -15h30. Cartes en tension : récits militaires et reconfigurations de l'espace / Maps in Tension: Military Narratives and Reconfigurations of Space

RAZAVI Roxanne, CESPRA, EHESS, « Cartographies terrestres et célestes en Iran : temporalités religieuses et reconfiguration des espaces pendant la « Défense sacrée » (1980-1988) »
PHELIPPOT Geoffrey, EHESS - CAK, Le Danube fortifié : cartographie et vues urbaines de l'Europe centrale et orientale au XVIIe siècle
15h30-16h : Pause-café / Coffee break

16h-17h30. Espaces contestés : contre-cartographies et gestes artistiques contemporains / Contested Spaces: Counter-Cartographies and Contemporary Artistic Gestures

REHERMAN Judith, Karlsruher Institut für Technologie – KIT, « Present Tense, Absent Homeland: Mona Hatoum and the Politics of Mapping »
KARADAĞ Althea, CERMOM-INALCO, « Traverser, performer, transgresser: contre-cartographies des artistes femmes contemporaines de Turquie »
DE MARTINO Anna, Centre Georg Simmel – EHESS/ Université de Catane, « Performer la frontière, enquêter le geste cartographique »

17h30-17h45 : Conclusion de la journée / Closing remarks

18h-19h : I'm glad you're still here. Performance artistique par Saša Tatić suivie d'une discussion / Artistic performance by Saša Tatić followed by a conversation

19h-21h : Cocktail dinatoire (Faculty Club, campus Condorcet) / Dinner reception

Reference:
CONF: Cartographic Imaginaries (Paris, 11 Jun 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 6, 2025 (accessed Nov 9, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/49426>.