

Blank Space in the Perception and Epistemology of Maps (Munich, 19–20 Mar 26)

Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect, Munich, Mar 19–20, 2026

Deadline: Nov 10, 2025

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“Blank space in the perception and epistemology of maps: Silences and absences that articulate the world”.

Co-Conveners:

Toby Yuen-Gen Liang, Academia Sinica, Taiwan; Camille Serchuk, Southern Connecticut State University; Filipe dos Reis, University of Groningen.

Blank space in visual and textual media and associated concepts such as silence and absence have long been overlooked or perceived as negative space, lack of information, or mere nothingness. Instead, ideas, practices, and habits of ontology, epistemology, academic disciplines, and quotidian observations have focused on “positive” articulations in these media as the shaping mechanisms of perception, knowledge, and reality. Yet increasing awareness among a growing number of scholars – in the history of cartography, philosophy, architectural history and theory, literature, Black and Indigenous studies, international relations, art history, musicology, and other fields – acknowledges the agency of blank space, silence, and absence and the integral roles they play in constructing perception and knowledge of the world. The historian of cartography J. B. Harley’s seminal 1988 article “Silences and Secrecy: The Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe” draws on philosophical and psychological considerations of silence to identify how blank spaces and displaced knowledge have historically been integral to the development of modern cartography. In the 2007 introduction to *From Models to Drawings: Imagination and Representation in Architecture*, the historian-theorist of architecture Marco Frascari advances the fundamental realization that the substance of structures represented in two-dimensional architectural plans is the blank space in-between the lines that merely trace the outer edges of construction, substance that our eyes have been conditioned to disregard.

Harley’s works have alerted scholars to the erasure that accompanies processes of representation and the political claims behind them. In his 2023 book *Blancs des cartes et boîtes noires algorithmiques*, Matthieu Noucher further asserts that “Les blancs de la carte, coulis ou subis, regretés ou revendiqués, savamment construits ou naïvement oubliés, sont le symptôme constitutif de toute opération cartographique.” Likewise, scholars in fields such as Black and Indigenous studies have strived to recover the hidden experiences and epistemologies covered over by blank space. With such approaches in mind, this international workshop sets out to examine how blank

space, silence, and absences were themselves articulations/renderings that played an active role in the shaping and forming of epistemology. We ask: how do blank space and the knowledge latent in or conveyed through them both inform and disinform to create perceptions of the world?

Revisiting Harley's still-powerful thesis, the core of this workshop focuses on presentations addressing the history and study of maps. It also welcomes research in other disciplines/fields, including visual and performance art, that connects to or furthers the study of blank space, silence, and absence in maps or elucidates new perspectives and understandings of these phenomena. The workshop embraces any geo-historical context and, particularly, traditionally under-represented areas of study. We encourage a variety of innovative or experimental presentation formats.

Submission:

If you are interested in contributing a presentation, please send your proposal (including your name; institutional affiliation or place of residence; title of the presentation; abstract no longer than 300 words; preferred presentation format; and a short CV) to the co-conveners at the following address by November 10, 2025: mappingandblanks@gmail.com.

The workshop will take place on March 19-20, 2026 at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect in Munich, which is a BMFTR-funded transdisciplinary institute for advanced studies based at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich. Meals and accommodation will be provided for the duration of the workshop, and we provide support in covering travel costs where required.

Reference:

CFP: Blank Space in the Perception and Epistemology of Maps (Munich, 19-20 Mar 26). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 8, 2025 (accessed Oct 9, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50825>>.