

# TERRAIN. STUDIES ON TOPOGRAPHIC VISUAL MEDIA EDITORIAL

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This volume launches the book series *Terrain*, published by the Netzwerk topografische Bildmedien / Network Topographic Visual Media (NtB). Since its founding in 2020, the network has regularly organised digital workshops on visual representations of topographic spaces in their various forms and contexts. It serves as a platform for cross-national, cross-epochal and cross-genre exchange between researchers from different disciplines, including visual, media and cultural studies, art history and the history of cartography. In line with this transdisciplinary approach, contributions on topographic images from different disciplinary perspectives will be published in the *Terrain* book series and brought into dialogue with one another. The series will thus feature a wide range of topics, but with a common focus on the study of material culture. The open access format will ensure that the contributions are freely available and accessible to all researchers and interested members of the public.<sup>1</sup>

Topographic visual media have been and continue to be produced, disseminated and used in a wide variety of fields, such as the sciences, art, the military, administrative contexts, jurisprudence and tourism. The field of research is correspondingly diverse, encompassing topographic sketches, drawings and prints, views, landscape paintings, land maps and sea charts, diagrams and plans, maps of planets and oceans as well as the virtual spaces of computer graphics.

1 The *Terrain* series is hosted on the platform of the specialised information service *arthistoricum.net*, a fact which underscores the network's origin in the

cooperation of four art historians with a research agenda grounded in the study of visual and material culture.

These different forms of topographic representation and their contexts have been the object of increasing interest from researchers working in various disciplines in recent years.<sup>2</sup> In transcultural historical studies, for example, the map has become an important source, opening up new, independent horizons of interpretation.<sup>3</sup> In media studies, too, topographic image media (again primarily maps, but also, for example, virtual environments of contemporary gaming) have been reconsidered in their relation to the conceptualisation and perception of space.<sup>4</sup>

These developments follow on from the emergence of space as a much-discussed category in history and cultural studies, referred to as the “Spatial Turn”.<sup>5</sup> In these debates, space was examined in relation to practices of domination, control and surveillance. However, space has also become the starting point for describing counter-discourses and identifying practices of using and occupying space beyond institutionalised control, in “in-between spaces” and “third spaces”, which in turn elude conventionalised intersections of territorial space and cultural identity.<sup>6</sup>

2 *History of Cartography Series*, Chicago 1987–2019, Gyula Pápay, “Die Beziehung von Kartographie, allgemeiner Bildwissenschaft und Semiotik”, in *Bildwissenschaft zwischen Reflexion und Anwendung*, ed. Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Rostock 2005, pp. 86–100; *Raumtheorie. Grundlagentexte aus Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Jörg Dünne and Stephan Günzel, Frankfurt 2006.

3 Irina Saladin, *Karten und Mission. Die jesuitische Konstruktion des Amazonasraums im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Historische Wissenschaft 12), Tübingen 2020; Mario Cams, *Companions in Geography. East-West Collaboration in the Mapping of Qing China* (c. 1685–1735), Leiden/Boston 2017; Diana Lange, *An Atlas of the Himalayas by a 19th Century Tibetan Lama. A Journey of Discovery*, Leiden/Boston 2020.

4 Stephan Günzel, *Ludotopia. Spaces, Places and Territories in Computer Games*, Bielefeld 2019; Stephan Günzel, *Raum. Eine kulturwissenschaftliche Einführung*, Bielefeld 2020 (2016); *Texte zur Theorie*

*des Raums*, ed. Stephan Günzel, Ditzingen 2013; *KartenWissen. Territoriale Räume zwischen Bild und Diagramm*, ed. Stephan Günzel and Lars Nowak, Wiesbaden 2012; *Raumwissenschaften*, ed. Stephan Günzel, Frankfurt 2010 (2009); *Raum. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, ed. Stephan Günzel, Stuttgart 2010; *Topologie. Zur Raumbeschreibung in den Kultur- und Medienwissenschaften, Kultur- und Medientheorie*, ed. Stephan Günzel, Bielefeld 2007.

5 Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma. Geography's Visual Culture*, London et al. 2000; Sigrid Weigel, “Zum ‘topographical turn’. Kartographie, Topographie und Raumkonzepte in den Kulturwissenschaften”, *KulturPoetik* 2, 2 (2002), pp. 151–165; Stephan Günzel, 2010 (note 4); Susanne Rau, *Räume. Konzepte, Wahrnehmungen, Nutzungen*, Frankfurt 2013.

6 The most prominent titles that have shaped this field are: Michel de Certeau, *Kunst des Handelns*. Translated by Ronald Voullié, Berlin 1980; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London 2004.

Visual representations of space in maps and images, i.e. topographic visual media, are very closely linked to these debates. Since the 1980s, British researchers in the field of critical cartography, for example, have questioned the supposedly objective image offered by topographic maps on various levels.<sup>7</sup> Their aim was to uncover the political and power-driven agendas of cartographic operations and topographic representations. They analysed maps in terms of how they construct realities, and deconstructed their alleged objectivity through a focus on the purposes and modalities of their production.<sup>8</sup>

Since then, the field of research has diversified. Increasingly, scholars are drawing attention to media practices of the generation, visualisation and circulation of spatial knowledge. In German-language art history, this has led to new interfaces with the history of cartography, which was previously considered a fundamentally different field of knowledge. Examples of this are the research contributions of Ulrike Gehring, Tanja Michalsky and Nils Büttner on Dutch art of the early modern period.<sup>9</sup> In 2019, the pioneering exhibition *Quand les artistes dessinaient les cartes* in Paris adopted a similar approach to maps and mapping in 15th and 16th-century France.<sup>10</sup> The disciplines of human geography and mobility studies have also challenged previous understandings of space as a given entity, approaching

7 J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps. Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton, Baltimore 2001; *Mappings*, ed. Denis E. Cosgrove, London 1999; Jeremy W. Crampton, “Die Bedeutung von Geosurveillance und Sicherheit für eine Politik der Angst”, in *Medien-geographie. Handbuch für Wissenschaft und Praxis*, ed. Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann, Baden-Baden 2019, pp. 455–479; Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire. The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843*, Chicago 1997; Matthew H. Edney, *Cartography. The Ideal and Its History*, Chicago 2019.

8 See Weigel 2002 (note 5), p. 153.

9 Nils Büttner, *Die Erfindung der Landschaft. Kosmographie und Landschaftskunst im Zeitalter Bruegels*, Göttingen 2000; Tanja Michalsky, *Projektion und Imagination. Die niederländische*

*Landschaft der Frühen Neuzeit im Diskurs von Geographie und Malerei*, München et al. 2011; *Die Entdeckung der Ferne. Natur und Wissenschaft in der niederländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Ulrike Gehring, Paderborn 2014.

10 Juliette Dumasy-Rabineau, Nadine Gastaldi and Camille Serchuk, *Quand les artistes dessinaient les cartes. Vues et figures de l'espace français. Moyen Âge et Renaissance* (exhib. cat. Paris, Musée des Archives Nationales), Paris/New York 2019.

it instead as a relational quantity constituted by social practices.<sup>11</sup> The role of images and visual culture in the perception, coding and imagining of geographical spaces is of central importance for this research.<sup>12</sup> Particularly influential in this regard was the scholarly exchange between human geography and art history, which continues to be based primarily in the Anglo-American context: publications such as *The Iconography of Landscape. Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, edited by the geographers Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, or *Landscape and Power*, edited by the art historian W. J. T. Mitchell, have been widely read.<sup>13</sup>

The developments outlined above form the starting point for the approach to topographic visual media that distinguishes the book series *Terrain*. This approach includes investigations into media conventions and the material, technical, social and political conditions of their making, for example the interaction of various actors in the production process. It also raises questions about the functions of topographic visual media in social practices, such as their use in the contexts of pedagogy, urban and spatial planning, the military and other fields. As exemplified by the 2014 exhibition *Mapping Spaces* in Karlsruhe, such a broad approach, which insistently positions itself at the interfaces of social and media practices, and the technical and artistic understandings of images, yields fresh insights.<sup>14</sup> Finally, the historical material, the topographic visual media themselves, should be addressed. To this day, classifications of topographic image

- 11 Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, Paris 2000 (1974); John Urry, *Mobilities*, London 2007; Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman, *Geographies of Mobilities. Practices, Spaces, Subjects*, Farnham 2011; Rachel Woodward, *Military Geographies*, Oxford 2004; Harriet Hawkins, "History, Geography and GeoHumanities", in *The Sage Handbook of Historical Geography*, ed. Mona Domosh, Michael Heffernan and Charles W. J. Withers, London et al. 2020, pp. 1019–1041.
- 12 See for example the chapter on the "senses" with a focus on the visual in John Urry, *Sociology beyond Societies. Mobilities for the twenty-first Century*, New York et al. 2000, pp. 77–104; Denis Cosgrove, "Landscape and the European

Sense of Sight – Eyeing Nature", in *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, ed. Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift, London 2003, pp. 249–268.

- 13 *The Iconography of Landscape. Essays in the Symbolic Representation, Design, and Use of Past Environments*, ed. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, Cambridge/New York 1988; *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell, Chicago/London 1994.
- 14 *Mapping Spaces. Networks of Knowledge in 17th Century Landscape Painting*, ed. Ulrike Gehring and Peter Weibel, Munich 2014.

materials along disciplinary and institutional lines make it difficult to even perceive the relations between images from different areas. This can be seen, for example, in the categorisation of panoramic views from the 18th and 19th centuries. While panoramic maps are often filed in map collections and thus categorised as material from the history of cartography, the related landscape views are usually stored in graphic collections and are thereby classified as artistic objects, although both originate from the same production context.<sup>15</sup> This is just one example that reveals the multiple overlappings of supposedly different bodies of knowledge when we pay attention to the material objects and the historical contexts of visual media. Such overlaps range from identical techniques and types of spatial representation to common areas of function and use, mutual aims and modes of reception and coinciding conventions of representation, iconographies or conceptualisations of space. Identifying and taking into account such connections not only opens up our view of the broad field of topographic visual media, but also enables a more precise and nuanced contouring of the individual genres that fall under it. In order to be able to address this field of investigation in its complexity, the different perspectives, specialisations and national research traditions on topographic images need to acknowledge one another and enter into dialogue. To fuel such exchanges is precisely the aim of *Terrain*.

15 An example of an oeuvre that was divided up among different collections in this way is that of Matthäus Merian the Elder whose topographic views are often found in graphic collections, while the maps are filed in map collections, and bound volumes of both in libraries. A similar separation between artistic and topographic/cartographic drawings is applied in source editions. One example is the volumes compiling the visual material from the three voyages undertaken under the command of James Cook between 1768 and 1780. First, the artistic drawings and prints were published in three volumes: *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, 3 vols., ed. Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, New Haven/London 1985–1988. The cartographic drawings and prints, among them several landscapes and coastal views, were published

in another set of three volumes: *The Charts & Coastal Views of Captain Cook's Voyages*, 3 vols., ed. Andrew David, assistant eds. Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, London 1988–1997. Some of the coastal views are included in both publications, making the overlaps between the volumes obvious. See for example a watercolour by William Hodges showing the *Table Mountain & Capetown*, in David 1988–1997, vol. 2, cat. 2.37, in Joppien and Smith (ed.) 1985–1988, vol. 2, cat. 2.3; and a drawing in pencil and watercolour by William Ellis, *View of the Fluted Cape, Van Diemen's Land, New Holland*, in David 1988–1997, vol. 3, cat. 3.28, in Joppien and Smith 1985–1988, cat. 3.7.