

Visualising Conflict/Peace: Atlas as a format for critical, reflexive and multiperspective (geo)visualisation practices

Mela Žuljević ^{a,*}, Iaroslav Boretskii ^b

^a Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig/Germany, m_zuljevic@leibniz-iftl.de,

^b Center for East European and International Studies, Berlin, iaroslav.boretskii@zois-berlin.de

* Corresponding author

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Abstract:

This paper will present the recently developed *Visualising Conflict/Peace*: an incomplete digital atlas of conflict and cooperation in Eastern Europe, published in spring 2026 (Fig. 1 and 2). *Visualising Conflict/Peace* explores the format of the atlas not only as an output of a research process, but also as an infrastructure for collecting, discussing and assembling visual knowledge of peace and conflict. In positioning the atlas as a contribution to peace and conflict studies, we reflect on the challenges of visualising the intertwinements and interdependencies of peace and conflict, as well as specific visualisation concerns such as working with sensitive and uncertain data, or the selection of mapping technologies and tools.

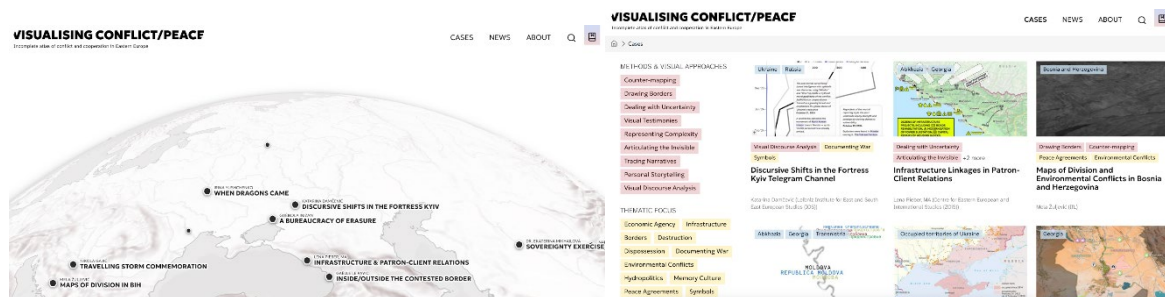


Figure 1. Screenshot of *Visualising Conflict/Peace* homepage. Figure 2. Screenshot of the *Cases* page (visualisingconflictpeace.de)

Conflicts profoundly shape human life, from local disputes between neighbouring communities to global crises driven by political, military, economic, and climate-related pressures. Maps and geovisualisations play important roles in conflict and peace processes as well as in broader political cooperation. Building on this, the network Conflict and Cooperation in Eastern Europe (KonKoop) collaborates with researchers to design maps and visualisations of peace and conflict in the region. The researchers come from disciplines such as political science, history, anthropology, and geography and address topics including post-imperial nation-building, everyday peacemaking, postwar legacies, and environmental conflicts. The project's Multiperspective Visualisation Laboratory (VisLab) supports this work through training, advice, analysis, and visualisation support, with collaborative formats such as design and visual storytelling workshops. The VisLab envisioned *Visualising Conflict/Peace* as a collaborative, interdisciplinary atlas that brings together different perspectives on conflict and cooperation in Eastern Europe through (geo)visualisations. The atlas traces the geography of Eastern Europe across multiple scales, from neighbourhoods and nation-states to river valleys and cross-border landscapes, including cases from the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. The project understands the atlas as a format for geographic storytelling that juxtaposes visual knowledges and connects diverging perspectives on conflict. Rather than presenting maps as objective resolutions or representations of conflicts, it experiments with design approaches that render the complexities of conflict legible. By diving into the atlas cases, we will discuss in detail the three approaches we found crucial to visually articulate peace and conflict processes:

- **Critical (geo)visualisation:** Grounded in critical cartography (Crampton 2010) and critical data visualisation (Hall and Dávila 2022), the atlas questions how maps and visual representations shape our understanding of the world and reproduce power hierarchies. It also prompts critical reflection on the ethics and politics of visual representation—from drawing borders to visualising trauma and uncertainty.

- **Multiperspectivity:** Each atlas case experiments with various ways of bringing together and confronting different perspectives of an issue or an area, e.g. by articulating researchers' positionality, by challenging dominant perspectives, or revealing the details of mapping processes to trace how they are shaped by technical tools. Incorporating multiple perspectives expands the attention to processual aspects and the design space of mapping (Žuljević 2025).
- **Reflexivity:** Each case includes a reflection which allows readers to access the behind-the-scene conversations with insights into the process of making the visualisations, revealing the decisions and assumptions behind them, to support transparency and openness to critique.

With its *Cases* and *Library*, the atlas provides a toolbox for peace and conflict researchers, as well as those working with cartography and visual methods, for critically reading and producing maps and visualisations. It is designed as an incomplete and living infrastructure, allowing for the continuous and iterative co-creation and revision of visualisations.

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