NORTHERN MAPS: RE-NEGOTIATING SPACE AND PLACE IN THE NORTHERN ISLES AND NORWAY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

SILKE REEPLOEG

Introduction

In a 2010 public lecture, ‘Loss and Gain: The Social History of Knowledge, 1750–2000’, Peter Burke pointed out just some of the significant social processes that have taken place since the mid-eighteenth century in Europe and the world. Reform, quantification, secularisation, professionalisation, democratisation, nationalisation, globalisation and technologisation have all played an important part in the way knowledge has been constructed. This statement relates very well to what happened to maps and mapping in Northern Europe during the eighteenth century. The relationship between representations and descriptions of place changed, influenced by the images and activities of map-making as a cultural and historical practice, and the political and social context of the period, particularly the European Enlightenment. Landscapes were quantified and re-arranged visually, via the map and chart. Nature and landscape, no longer seen solely as God’s creation and subject to his will, became secular spaces and human territory, providing resources and wealth for humanity, and the basis for the creation of individual and communal identities.

This article argues that cartography and topographical description played a significant role in the way in which areas of the Scottish Northern Isles were represented and visualised, as a regional space, after the political union of England and Scotland in 1707, and, alongside that, the development of the concept of a British state and nation. Not only did topographical literature become more professionalised and commercially-oriented during the eighteenth century, but the visual representations of territories created in maps and charts became part of a network of cultural practices that both linked and divided historical regions across the British Isles. On the one hand, map-making re-negotiated national spaces in order to contribute to the formation the United Kingdom or Great Britain (itself
Northern Maps

a complex national entity) and, on the other hand, it provided an opportunity to
re-create a sense of place or Northern regional identity, continuing to be part of
an intercultural Northern European maritime region linked by the North Sea.7
As can be seen in the following case studies from the Shetland Islands and Western
Norway, at ‘image level’,8 the change in perceptions about a region’s identity (or
one’s own, within that region), often follows a long process, ‘since shifts in the
attitudes of mental mapping tend to slowly follow changes in political and social
conditions, mixing with philosophical and aesthetic conventions of the time’.9

Re-negotiating Space and Place

The histories of the Northern European regions, which became absorbed into
national and imperial territories during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,10
and the internal and external colonisation processes that took place during
that time, have their beginnings in previous European aristocratic regimes. By
examining the complex beginnings of national histories, we can see what it meant
to become part of zones and territories on a larger scale, part of a realignment of
Northern European boundaries and geo-political spaces.11

As part of this dynamic, there are many differences, but also important parallels,
that can be found between Norwegian and Scottish national histories. Both
countries, for example, share the experience of becoming part of a larger geo-
political entity in this period, respectively, the Dano-Norwegian Kingdom and the
British Empire.12 Regarding the latter, Scotland became part of the governance
zone of the United Kingdom of Great Britain from 1707, prior to which
three separate kingdoms and parliamentary systems had functioned: in England,
Scotland and Ireland.13 In England, political representation was also expressed in
a number of ‘important local assemblies, in the City of London, in Cornwall, in
Wales, in the Isle of Man, and in the Channel Islands’.14 Norway, equally, had
been an independent kingdom from 900–1030 AD, after which it became, first,
part of the Kalmar Union (1396–1523), then experienced union with Denmark
(1523–1814), and Sweden (1814–1905), emerging as an independent nation-state
only in the twentieth century.15 From a Danish perspective, the integrating state
or heilstat aimed towards the Oldenburg state-model, which meant consolidating
smaller administrative districts or territories into one ‘whole’.16 From a Norwegian
viewpoint, this meant a political programme of centralising power in Denmark,
rather than Norway. Dano-Norwegian integration or homogenisation strategies
also coincided with a global period of mercantilism, which saw economic gain
increasingly ‘professionalised’, as a way to wealth and power (rather than passed
on through aristocratic inheritance).17 Both within and outwith Europe, regions
became primarily a source of economic resources for centralised governments,
with political interests complicit in growing internal and external colonialism.18

In Scotland, this makes for a complex historical and political background, with
its incorporation as the region of ‘North Britain’ in the growing British Empire
between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, and with Scots taking up important positions, both at home and, abroad, as imperial colonisers. The eighteenth century is therefore a period in which perceptions about Northern European territories were transformed from them being viewed as peripheral and under-explored areas to them becoming spaces allowing for commercial and political expansion. This was both a scientific and cultural process that incorporated peripheries into a new, national ‘mental map’ which, in turn, shaped ideas and concepts about both places and the people inhabiting them. Map-making and cartography, then, clearly form part of a series of cultural and political negotiations that organised landscapes and peoples into their respective national and regional territories. However, the history of eighteenth-century mapping begins with two diverging ideas about the role of landscape and place: the pictorial and human. Both had a significant impact on map-making in Britain and the Nordic countries, with different polities created around the concepts of ‘land’ and ‘landscape’.

**The History of the Map and the Landscape Polity**

Human geographer Kenneth Olwig has traced the fundamental differences that developed between continental and British landscape geography, on one hand, and its Nordic equivalent, on the other, in terms of their related ‘landscape polities’. Using the work of two prominent nineteenth-century geographers, Frederik Schouw (1789–1852) and Henrik Steffens (1773–1845), Olwig illustrates the way in which two very different polities ‘perceive and conceptualise landscape’. Whereas Steffens supported the idea that societies or nations were determined by nature (and the continental ‘blood-and-soil’ nationalisms that grew out of this environmental determinism), for Schouw the Nordic landscapes ‘have more in common between them, culturally and socially, than the nation-states that divide them’. Inspired by the German Romantic movement, Steffens brought these ideas back to Denmark, and ‘gave expression to an emerging concept of landscape as pictorial scenery, built up in layers, as on a stage, in which nature is the foundation of culture.’ For Steffens, nature provided the foundation and platform on which human existence was played out, a ‘scenic space’ where ‘nature and culture were bound into a single national unity’.

Two different modes of representations of landscape had developed from the Renaissance onwards, and with it the emerging differentiation between the *Land* (regent plus people) and the *Landschaft* or landscape (represented by the state). As Olwig states: ‘The scenic/pictorial representation of landscape emerged from the need of the state of the monarch/prince to represent its legitimacy in a way that could compete with the representative polity of the “Landschaft”/landscape.’

The pictorial approach was supported by the emerging science of geology, but was also transmitted and reinforced by cultural production such as cartography. Mapping technology, such as the surveying and construction of pictorial
representations of the map, chart and atlas, ‘further contributed to the impression of godlike rule cultivated by Renaissance rulers through the use of such “landscape” representations as the backdrop for theatrical productions’. 27 Pictorial approaches used landscape scenery to ‘represent and legitimate state power’. 28 Olwig sees the development of surveying and mapping techniques as part of the processes that map and regulate the ‘land’ under the regent’s domain into regions. For him, this ‘facilitated a transition in the meaning of land and landscape from designations for a polity, to the designation of a geometric area of territory or property (as in six acres of land) owned by the individual regent or one of his minions’. 29 According to Olwig, the geometric mapping of territory set the scene for a monolithic nation-state, while Steffens’ reconfiguration of the conception of landscape is itself an imagined pictorial unity of citizens and nation, which was also used ‘to visualise Britain as a physical geographical body, equivalent to the body politic of the regent, under him as its head of state’. 30 As noted by Olwig, this particular conceptualisation of landscape as a national territory gained further influence, particularly in the English-speaking world, through Carl Sauer. Subsequent writers such as George Perkins Marsh, Yi-Fu Tuan and David Lowenthal, on the other hand, argued for an emphasis on human agency, rather than environmental determinism. 31

Following Schouw, the Nordic conceptualisation resisted such a drive for a monolithic landscape or national territory, arguing instead for a unity of natural landscapes across national borders. The ‘Nordic’ approach to geography, which Olwig identifies with Schouw, ‘is characterised by a concern with history, custom/law, and language and culture as they work together in forming a landscape polity and its geographic place’. 32 This means that there is no foundational environment that determines national territories or societies. Instead, landscapes and cultural spaces are created and continuously re-negotiated by human activities and (social and economic) policies. The ‘Nordic’ historical approach to landscape is concerned with settlement patterns, administrative divisions and legal traditions, which can cross national state boundaries, and consciously engage with the ideological constructions of landscapes over time. Embedded within this perspective of landscape is the view that ‘the history of Norden precedes that of the modern Nordic states, and transcends the boundaries of those states’. 33

It is important to keep these two models of constructing and perceiving landscape in mind when comparing examples of national and regional maps in Northern Europe during the eighteenth century. Both an impetus towards presenting a unitary nation-state through pictorial landscape mapping and the counter-hegemonic practice of detailed topographical description are evident. As types of knowledge, maps are then examples of what Peter Burke calls systems of ‘countervailing trends—the coexistence and interaction of trends in opposite directions’, which often occur during periods of social and political change. 34 The re-negotiation of space and place is thus not merely geographical, but also
has a political and ideological function. Jouni Häkli refers to this process as the production of ‘discursive structures of territoriality’ which function as features of modern state government, where ‘territoriality has become the privileged form of organisation, and geographical imagination’. This process can be evidenced using historical maps and charts which, over time, have constructed, altered and re-contextualised territories, in order to accommodate social, political and cultural changes.

**Northern Maps in Nordic History: A Case Study**

An interesting example of how historical maps shape our ideas about cultural and historical territories is the *Carta Marina* by Olaus Magnus published in Rome in 1539. It is one of the earliest maps of the Nordic region, and shows the Scottish Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland (*Vesterhavsoyene*) as part of a Nordic geography (implying continuing historical and political links). It is a geographical statement, then, a piece of the world reduced to a flat depiction, but it is also a work of the imagination. The map records the ‘marvels of the North’ (including folklore, ethnographic information and history) as a piece of geographical art, designed to hang on the wall for display of ownership and control of space. However, as a visual (and perhaps also patriotic) record of the North, it also provides a particular discursive perspective on Nordic territory and boundaries, with parts of mainland Northern Scotland only just making it on to the map’s bottom left-hand corner. As an example of a particular geographical imagination, the *Carta Marina* contains a mixture of fact and fiction, with topographical and territorial features neatly combined with a variety of religious, political

---

**Figure 1.** The 1539 Carta Marina by Olaus Magnus. James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota (available at: http://bell.lib.umn.edu/map/OLAUS/indexo.html).
Northern Maps

and cultural information. Trading links and sites are shown via the presence of Hanseatic vessels navigating the Baltic, North Sea and North Atlantic oceans, while mythological and folkloric creatures are also added to enhance a visual seascape and landscape that are both real and imaginary.38

As an ‘imagined evocation of space’, the Carta Marina provides a visual narrative of Northern places, merging history, art and geography.39 This multi-layered approach informs the (southern) audience about Northern spaces that are not empty wastelands, but full of people and unique regional cultures.40 As an example of a macro-regional map, the Carta Marina depicts the Orkney and Shetland Islands as large island groups, perhaps of greater importance than the Scottish mainland, which is hidden behind a descriptive panel. And, although not containing any great topographical detail, the archipelagos’ main harbours and some ecclesiastical buildings are shown. The islands are clearly still part of a Nordic cultural space, as imagined by Magnus, expressing a mental map that has not yet adjusted to a change in the geo-political situation, with both Shetland and Orkney becoming part of Scotland in the late fifteenth century.

Indeed, affinities and links with Nordic places have continued since, particularly during and since revivals of Scandinavian cultural identity in the islands during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.41 However, many historians have argued that, for example, Shetland’s cultural links with Norway, together with its Nordic identity, rapidly diminished after the islands’ transfer from the Norwegian to the Scottish kingdom or, in line with an increased acculturation or ‘Scottification’, even before then.42 This view corresponds to Steffen’s conception of landscape and geography as an imagined, pictorial unity, which visualises nation states as physical, geographical bodies, with determined cultural and political boundaries.

With the rise of nation-state government administration during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and national interests polarising research into neat, state-set borders, it became an accepted practice to isolate cultural and historical studies within static national or regional borders. Subsequent social, political and cultural historians have generally respected established political or linguistic boundaries, with cultural identity often hinged upon ‘belonging’ to one or the other homogenous nation-state, ethnic group or language area. This means a corresponding strengthening or weakening of perceived cultural connections to and from a homogenous centre or ‘mother country’ over time. In terms of belonging to a British national territory, and as noted by Hance Smith in a 1984 book, Shetland Life and Trade 1550–1914, this approach has ‘led some authors to believe that Shetland—and indeed Scotland—did not emerge from the Middle Ages until [the Act of Union] 1707!’43 A national-historical perspective on the Northern Isles is, of course, by no means restricted to Britain. Norwegian history books mention Orkney and Shetland in a medieval context, or during ‘the migration of the Northmen’, but then cease to refer to non-Scandinavian links at all due to what is referred to as post-medieval ‘territorial consolidation’.44
Both regions and islands are thereby subsumed under separate national polities (and historiographies) – and with them an intercultural history that connects both landscapes and people. However, by comparing eighteenth century topographical and cartographic vocabularies on both sides of the North Sea, it is possible to trace how, through co-existing, countervailing trends of geography and chorography, Scotland and Norway become two very different places.

**Countervailing Trends: The Role of Chorography**

Chorography, or the writing about place (from the Greek *khoros* = place, *graphein* = writing), is the geographical description of regions. The geographer, Ptolemy, for example, could be considered a chorographer. Chorographical practice and vision were revived during the fifteenth century, referring both to the descriptions of particular regions and visual representations of place through mapping. Chorography, as a description of place, therefore remained separate to chronology, which is the description of time. In the English-speaking world, chorography came to be associated with antiquarian descriptions and reports, but also county or provincial maps. Maps and illustrations of landscapes often accompanied antiquarian and topographical descriptions as visual representations of place. Embedded in a descriptive practice, rather than documents by themselves, maps often accompanied a more detailed report or description of a particular place. They added a visual narrative to the topographical text, even if many maps were also separated from the description and appeared in published map collections such as atlases. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term chorography was slowly superseded by terms such as topography or cartography, although its ‘characteristic approach remained current and relevant’. So, for example, Samuel Johnson’s 1755 dictionary already makes a distinction between geography, chorography and topography, defining chorography as ‘the art or practice of describing particular regions, or laying down the limits or boundaries of particular provinces’ stating that it ‘is less in its object than geography, and greater than topography’. Darrel Rohl argues that ‘chorographic thinking’ continued. Although the term eventually disappeared, chorographic practices and ideas were retained, especially in the activities of eighteenth-century naturalists and antiquarians, who produced maps as part of a series of chorographical activities, such as the publications of travel accounts and journals of tours. Rohl argues that:

As the definition adopted here states, chorography is at its most basic level about the representation of space/place. This fundamental focus on ‘representation’ suggests and leads to an inherently multi-media approach, including written description, multiple modes of visualization, and performance.

The history of different modes of mapping is worth returning to when comparing Dano-Norwegian and Scottish examples of what look like, but are
not always defined as, chorographical motivations and practices. So, for example, when chorographic ideas are applied to coastal regions such as the Northern Isles, it becomes apparent that there are two types of coastal landscapes: the land-based topographical description or Beskrivelse of the landscape, and the coastal report or Beretning of the seascape or ‘sailscape’ of the ocean. Both arrange spatial information in different ways, but are similar in their objectives, which is to provide detailed descriptions of place. During the eighteenth century this, increasingly, became carried out as part of a professionalised system of state governance, and in line with the consolidation of national territories. In addition, advances in printing technology meant that maps previously only accessible to a few people such as monarchs became increasingly visible to larger, professional groups of people (both administrative and military) tasked with the establishment and defence of territories. The development of both land-based maps and nautical charts therefore relates to the development of a standardised, scientific practice, but is also motivated by political interests.

Arranging the Sea: The Nautical Chart

Mapping is not restricted to land-based territories, of course. By definition, maritime maps or charts play a significant role in the re-negotiation of coastal spaces and places too. Nautical charts, during the eighteenth century, were often accompanied by a narrative or description, usually sailing directions, which contain information on water depth and places to anchor. In terms of arranging and re-negotiating space and landscape, from the eighteenth century regional charts, like maps, feature an interesting mixture of cultural, topographical and antiquarian information. The eighteenth century navigational chart (Figure 2) is already the result of semi-professional, usually state-sponsored, scientific investigations and measurements. Significantly, sea-charts are very much seen as international documents, which are constantly subject to corrections from a variety of international sources. So, for example, this official chart gives an overview of the North Sea and the Kattegat, the sea channel between Denmark’s Jutland peninsula and Sweden’s coastal provinces of Västergötland, Scania, Halland and Bohuslän.

The chart draws on information from a French chart published in 1777, and in London in 1796, showing the area from the Straits of Dover to the Shetland Islands and North Bergen in Norway, and east through the Kattegat to Copenhagen. It is in a modern Portolan style, also known as a harbour-finding chart, compass chart, or rhumb chart, meaning a navigational chart characterized by rhumb lines, or lines that radiate from the centre in the direction of wind or compass points. These were used by pilots to lay courses from one harbour to another, which means that instead of an empty sea, the ocean contained descriptions of the sea base, some fishing grounds and, of course, coastal placenames including harbours. Following an international approach, the chart shown includes an example of
multiple placenames for the same landscape feature, with the landmass projecting out from Mandal in the south-western corner of Norway named ‘Lindesness’ being ‘called by the Dutch and French THE NAZE’ (Figure 2). It also contains extensive tables and annotations, and shows soundings, banks, shoals, towns, islands, harbours, bays and other sailing details. So, what, to a land-based map maker, would be a boundary to the land, to the North Sea navigator is arranged into defined spaces and places, that are named with all the information currently
available to seafarers. Just as with regional maps, regional coastal charts arrange the
sea around the land, providing a visual seascape, as well as practical instructions
and visual clues such as sailing directions and coastal profiles. These accompany
the chart separately, or are incorporated into a multi-layered visual statement such
as the example below of a detailed regional chart of the Shetland Islands.

The marine chart of the Shetland Islands shown in Figure 3 combines several
views and types of charts and maps, offering more information about the sea and
navigation, but also about landscape features and areas of interest for fishing. It
was produced by Captain Thomas Preston, a professional navigator and surveyor,
as *A New Hydrographical Survey of the Islands of Shetland* (1781). In contrast to
our Dano-Norwegian example (Figure 4), it was sponsored by private chart
publishers Robert Sayer and John Bennett, rather than the state or crown. The
rich content of the chart includes an interesting feature no longer displayed on
charts: the coastal profile. Added to the sides of the chart, coastal profiles show
prominent landscape features as seen when approaching by sea, which were also
added to our next example, the *Beretning om et Forbedret Kaart over de Hetlandske
Öer, tilligemed trende blade med landtoninger og et speciel kaart over Våley-Sund paa
Hetland* published by the Royal Naval Charts Archive or Kongelige Sjø-kaarte
Archiv in Copenhagen in 1787 (Figure 4).

*Landtoninger: Coastal Profiles*

Coastal profiles on charts were often copied from one chart to another. So, for
example, the coastal profiles of the islands of Shetland seen on Preston’s map
(Figure 3) were transferred (as separate pages) to the Danish chart and coastal
description, the *Beretning om et Forbedret Kaart over de Hetlandske Öer* (Figure 4).
This *Beretning* or report was compiled by Captain-Lieutenant Poul de Löwenörn
(1751–1826) for the Danish king in 1787, checking and correcting what he
refers to as an *Engelske Kaart* (English Chart), presumably Preston’s chart, and
demonstrating the transnational and professionalised nature of maritime map-
making during the eighteenth century.

Paul de Löwenörn joined the Danish Navy as a cadet in 1765 and became
a lieutenant in 1770. He was promoted to Captain Lieutenant in 1781, later
becoming the head of the first Royal Danish Sea Chart Office. As was the case
with his British counterpart, Preston, Löwenörn was employed as a Naval Captain
(in the British and Danish Navy respectively), and was an experienced navigator,
who was able to access information from a variety of international sources.
Löwenörn used notes by a French hydrographer, Bellin, the *Essai Géographique
sur les Isles Britanniques* published in 1757, and his coastal views and landmarks
of the region are taken both from previous English (that is Greenville Collins’
*Great Britains Coasting Pilot*) and French sources, as well as from new drawings
made by the Danish surveyors that accompanied him. The printed description is
Figure 4. Forbedret Kaart over de Hetlandske Øer, in Beretning om et Forbedret Kaart over de Hetlandske Øer, tilligemed trende blade med landtoninger og et speciel kaart over Våley-Sund paa Hetland (Copenhagen, 1787).
accompanied by the sea chart shown in Figure 4, which was issued as an appendix to the report.

A short inscription to the Danish version of the account states the intention of providing ‘Nordic seafarers’ (*nordiske Søemænd*) with an accurate chart of the islands. Interestingly, as with Preston’s chart, it then gives detailed sailing directions and a special regional chart to the island of Váila. This small island on the western coast of the Shetland archipelago had been owned by a Norwegian family from near Ålesund until 1576. Its presence (and prominence) within the report highlights the conservative nature of map- and chart-making, as seen in the previous example of the *Carta Marina* (Figure 1). Chorographical detail is included by noting an important landscape feature near the harbour entrance, the ‘Pictish Castle’, as well as explaining the local names for coastal features such as cliffs, stacks and bays (Figure 5) to Danish readers:

To explain some names that you will find on the chart, I add the following. *Voe* means entrance, or incoming bay from the sea. *Holm* is a little island. *Skerry* is a cliff. *Stack* is a high, peak or sharp cliff, which stands out of the sea. *Muckle* or *Stour* means big.

Finally, Löwenörn adds a decorative drawing which shows the catching of seabirds on Nosshead from Pennant’s *Artic Zoology* (1784), to the bottom left-hand corner of the chart, pointing out regional customs: ‘I have finally added a small vignette underneath the chart, which shows the catching of birds on Nosshead, taken from Pennant’s *Artic Zoology.*’

**Coastal Mapping of Intercultural Spaces: Shetland**

As was seen from Olaus Magnus’ *Carta Marina* (Figure 1), the Scottish Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland were very well known to Dano-Norwegian, and also Dutch and German traders and fishermen, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, up until the introduction of a regular steamship service from the Scottish mainland in the mid-nineteenth century, the Shetland Islands, in particular, were almost unknown to Scottish and English visitors, including cartographers. One of the first Scottish descriptions and a map (Figure 6) of the islands was provided by Thomas Gifford, a landowner and merchant from Busta, Shetland. He compiled a *Historical Description of the Zetland Islands in the Year 1733*, published in 1789, which was accompanied by a map showing the divisions of local parishes and some coastal placenames.

Although the map lacks topographical detail, particularly when compared with other regional maps of Scotland of the period, it provides an interesting perspective on a Scottish landowner’s relation to space and place during the eighteenth century. Gifford is clearly interested in administrative matters, including local governance and taxation. Rather than cataloguing placenames or landscape features, his focus is therefore on parish divisions and
Figure 5. Sailing directions and map of Våley Sound (Indsættelsen til Våley-Sund, Kaart over Våley Sund), in Beretning om et Forbedret Kaart over de Hetlandske Öer, tilligemed trende blade med landtoninger og et speciel kaart over Våley-Sund paa Hetland (Copenhagen, 1787).
territorial boundaries, demonstrating the crown-representative and landowning perspective. To find chorographical detail, we need to look to other sources.

Gifford’s historical description of the Shetland Islands was accompanied by a range of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel descriptions written by visitors to the islands, such as that by the Scottish cleric and naturalist, the Rev. George Low. Low was born in Edzell, Angus, in 1747 and educated at Marischal College, Aberdeen, and at St Andrews University. After moving to Stromness, Orkney, as a tutor in 1768 (in 1771 becoming licensed Minister of the Presbytery of Cairston), Low took up the study of the natural history of the Northern Isles. He catalogued birds, flora and fauna, and marine life, as well as constructing his own microscope. Crucially for his career, in 1772, after a visit to Iceland, the explorer and naturalist Sir Joseph Banks visited Orkney in the company of the Swedish botanist Dr Daniel Solander, and physician Dr James Lind. Through them Low was able to widen his scientific network and correspondence and, in 1774, he began a tour of the south islands of Orkney and the whole of the Shetland Islands resulting in a tour through the islands of Orkney and Schetland containing hints relative to their ancient modern and natural history collected in 1774. Low’s account was not published until 1813, although some content was used in Pennant’s 1784 publication of Arctic Zoology, which had a wider distribution.

As with other naturalist-antiquarians of the period, Low provides a humanist approach that combines regional descriptions with scientific and spiritual enquiry.
As such, he is clearly motivated by the eighteenth-century intellectual milieu of political and economic progress through exploration and discovery, an approach which finds parallels in other authors from Shetland such as Arthur Edmonston who saw his chorographical description as part of a:

> wish to rouse, by candid enquiry, those who possess influence in this country, to a just sense of their relative situation, and to the study of their true interests, by embracing more enlarged and liberal views of political economy than have yet existed generally among them.

As is the case in the examples of map- and chart-making discussed previously, the emphasis on ‘improving’ the national and local political economy by providing information is clearly aimed at a free market and at increased production within a defined political landscape-entity, the British nation-state. This perspective conceives of regional landscape and people primarily as an economic unit, with the regional and cultural aspects documented by Low and Hibbert seemingly occupying a separate sphere. As part of this re-negotiation of space and place, two different landscape polities therefore constitute the maps of Northern Scotland: the natural and cultural landscape, and the economic and physical resource. These separate perspectives are very much intertwined in the Nordic regional landscape, which is constructed according to a polity closer to Schouw’s conceptions of the human, cultural landscape.

**The Nordic Coastal Region: Søndmør**

A good example of Nordic chorographical practice is Hans Strøm’s *Fysisk og Oeconomisk Beskrivelse over Fogderiet Søndmør I-II* (‘Description of the district of Søndmør’) in Western Norway. Strøm supplies an extensive descriptive text of more than 780 pages, collected in two volumes published in 1762 and 1766. Volume One consists of a catalogue, of both the people and natural environment of the region, and includes a detailed regional map (Figure 7). He describes physical characteristics such as topography, plants and animals, as well as regional aspects of material culture, commercial activities (especially what type of fisheries or farming activities are prevalent, what kind of boats people use, even what kind of wind to expect in the fjords). Strøm gathers statistical information, region-specific names and details, as well as topographical descriptions and cartographic information. Volume One of the *Beskrivelse*, for example, begins with the detailed regional map, which features coastal landscape enriched with cultural information, such as placenames; the division between land and sea (*Vesterhavet*, the Western Sea, visible as empty space northwest of the land); placenames of islands and fjords reaching into the sea; distances, and *Alfar Vey* or public pathways in the area; location of churches, larger farms and commercial centres.

In his introduction to a new edition of Strøm’s works published in 2001, Stein Ugelvik Larsen comments that Strøm divides his work between nature (including
Figure 7. Hans Strøm, Kort over Sundmør, 1762. Courtesy of the National Library of Norway.
topography and a map) (Volume I) and the besønderlige (what is culturally unique to this region), which is the focus of Volume II. So, Strøm can be said to move from mapping and observations of natural phenomena towards people and cultural aspects, integrating the culturally unique into a natural order. At the top right hand corner of the map (Figure 7) we find a pictorial representation of the economic activities of fishing and farming in the region, with a vignette depicting two sheep, two barrels, a fishing net and two fish.

Hans Strøm is one of four significant historical figures in the Sunnmøre region on the Norwegian west coast, who were all active in collecting, preserving and transmitting antiquarian, linguistic and cultural information during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Strøm was born in 1726 in Borgund Sunnmøre, taking a degree in theology in 1745. He lived at home in Borgund from 1745 to 1750, teaching pietistic and philosophical literature from his father's library. This was followed by a period as chaplain at Meldahl, elsewhere in Borgund, for fourteen years (1750 to 1764), and then vicar in Volda (1764–1779).

In 1750, Strøm discovered Erik Pontoppidan’s natural history and Linnaeus’s botanical work. Pontoppidan was a Danish author, historian and antiquary, who wrote on the natural history of Denmark and Norway, whereas the Swedish physician Carl Linnaeus became well known for his scientific classification of the natural world. Both travelled widely, and their work inspired Strøm to start a series of his own travels and investigations of the nature and environment around the Sunnmøre area. The results were published in his Physisk og Oeconomisk Beskrivelse over Fogderiet Søndmør I-II, a work that established him as a scientific authority in the field of natural history. Typically for the period, Strøm’s work spans several disciplines (natural sciences, theology, social sciences) and includes another description, the Physisk-oeconomisk Beskrivelse over Eger-Præstegiæld i Aggershuus Stift (1784) and a large volume of sermons for Aggershuus Stift (1792).

The most remarkable element of Strøm’s map is the regional detail, particularly in terms of placenames. These are arranged in a visual catalogue that documents and transmits the places in the coastal landscape, as well as the topographical landscape features of islands, mountains and fjords. Through this chorographic practice, Strøm demonstrates the interplay between nature and human activities, as well as giving his readers a visual representation of a regional, unitary area, where the interaction between nature, industry and culture was in a particularly dense interplay.

As a geographical description of a region between two major trading centres, Bergen and Trondheim, the motivation behind both the description and the map is easy to see: to show a region with political and economic potential, supported by Strøm’s detailed lists of natural and human resources. However, the method of listing and cataloguing regionally unique landscapes and natural phenomena also shows an intention for it to be used both as a reference or lexicon, and as a guide to the area. Similar to the examples from Scotland mentioned above, it is significant that Strøm’s intended readership is not only both the king and
representatives of the Dano-Norwegian state, but also a professional, international, scientific readership independent from the state, which he addresses in a separate introduction. The act of map-making thus becomes part of a whole range of cultural and political practices that are not merely documentary, but part of a new ‘graphic language’. This re-negotiates space and place according to changing political and economic contexts, producing both a physical and mental map of the North.

Mental Maps: Regionalisation and Regionalism Reimagined

This article has discussed two types of mapping that illustrate different processes of re-negotiating space and place through either: regionalisation (the process by which smaller spaces are joined together to form larger territories), or regionalism (a way in which very specific places are described and represented in detail through chorographic practice). As has been shown in the examples discussed, these two activities are sometimes complementary, but can also exist in tension with each other, in systems of ‘countervailing trends’, as defined by Burke.

Map- and chart-making in Northern Europe provided both source material and context for regional Scottish and Norwegian charts and maps during the eighteenth century. Cartography, as an established profession, continued to be a politically motivated activity in connection with the creation and re-organisation of national and international territories and spaces. However, map makers also engaged in detailed descriptions of place and region, and continued the practice of ‘chorographical thinking’ in their production of micro-regional maps and charts. In this, Northern map makers participated in three important changes that took place during the European Enlightenment, concerning the production, distribution and use of maps and charts.

Firstly, there was a clear integration of the work of newly created, state-sponsored scientific and scholarly institutions such as the Royal Society (est. 1660), the Académie royale des sciences (Paris, 1666), the Royal Society of Edinburgh (est. 1783), and the Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab (Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters, est. 1760). This organised knowledge creation took place on a transnational level, with chart makers such as Thomas Preston or Paul de Löwenørn routinely sharing, reinterpreting and finessing existing navigational charts within their professional maritime networks. However, mapping also became increasingly a national, and patriotic, effort, and an integral part of the work done within individual national scientific societies, such as is seen in Preston’s letters to Joseph Ames, a Fellow of the Royal Society, where he offers to survey the ‘Islands of Zetland’ for the society.

Secondly, intersections between maps and scientific inquiry played an increasingly important role in terms of the integration of the work of new scientific foundations, such as the royal societies, within governmental and administrative institutions. This meant that national institutions were now able
to commission and undertake surveys in order to provide civil and military authorities at home and in colonial settings with geo-political and topographical information. Until 1800, and in contrast to the Dano-Norwegian chart by Löwenörn, which was commissioned by the Danish Navy, this remained very much an ad hoc process within Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, with many surveys being sponsored privately as in the case of London chart publishers Robert Sayer and John Bennett.

Finally, the influence of increasing economic and political stability and growth after 1650 within Northern Europe cannot be underestimated. With increased literacy and opportunity to access and participate in the construction of new knowledge, the eighteenth century saw a rising interest in map consumption—both as a scientific and cultural phenomenon. Changes in printing technology resulted in both maps and charts becoming available, if not to the general population, at least to a widening social group. This meant that cartographic imagery was added to the developing national and regional cultural vocabularies and discourses which defined landscape, place and space.

Maps and map-making thus acted as ‘representations of belief and ideology—rooted in particular cultures and institutions—as well as ‘factual’ images of scientific knowledge.’ Significantly, in terms of the element of knowledge construction embedded in Northern maps, chorographical practices can be seen to continue, although more research is required to investigate the impact, motivations and complex patterns of use of regional maps and charts, both from the perspectives of the user, as well as that of the producer, and to assess their impact in terms of establishing regional identities within historical and cultural regions during this period and beyond.

In conclusion, the practice of mapping demonstrates the re-negotiation of complex sets of perceptions of space and place. When comparing the examples of maps from the Northern Isles and Norway’s coastal regions, the close link between chorography and historiography becomes apparent, with different landscape polities constructed and applied. This article has demonstrated that map making, as a cultural practice, is historically located, and, just as with other narratives, be they visual or literary, maps tell a story from a particular point of view, and are complicit in the development of specific landscape polities. Northern maps and charts ultimately create a series of cartographic statements that utilise a vocabulary of images and discourses in order to communicate both the social and political changes and countervailing trends of a given historical period. Using the aesthetic conventions of the time, the transnational, national and regional map and chart can thus be defined as a visual narrative produced via selective cultural and historical processes. The eighteenth century Northern map thus not only re-negotiated space and place within a specific historical period, but helps us understand the complex, multi-layered nature of our regional, national and international geographical imagination today.
Silke Reeploeg

Notes

1. Research for this article was made possible through mobility funding from the Norwegian Research Council (Norges Forskningsråd). I wish to thank the participants of ‘Negotiating Space, Arranging Land: A Workshop on Mapping in the Nordic Countries, 1720 until today’ (Oslo, 7–9 December 2012) for their comments and suggestions, and am grateful to two anonymous reviewers who made valuable further recommendations.


9. Ibid., 25.


17. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 219.
23. Ibid., 220.
24. Ibid., 220.
25. Ibid., 220.
28. Ibid., 224.
29. Ibid., 223.
30. Ibid., 224.
33. Ibid. 227. The local term ‘Norden’ literally means ‘Northern Countries’. It is used in Northern Germanic languages such as Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, with ‘Norden’ generally referring to a transnational region in Northern Europe and the North Atlantic that consists of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, including their associated territories (Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and the Åland Islands) according to the Nordic Council. The region’s five nation-states and three autonomous regions share much common history as well as common traits in their respective societies, such as political systems and what is referred to as the ‘Nordic model’ of society.
36. Ibid., 9.
37. The full title is *Carta marina et Descriptio septemtrionalium terrarum ac minibilium rerum in vis contentarum, diligentissime elaborata Anno Domini 1539 Veneciis liberalitate Reverendissimi Domini Hieronymi Quirini*. (it translates as ‘A marine map and description of the Northern Lands and of their marvels, most carefully drawn up at Venice in the year 1539 through the generous assistance of the most honourable lord and patriarch Hieronymo Quirin’).


44. R. Danielsen et al. (eds), *Norway: A History from the Vikings to Our Own Times* (Oslo, 1998), 21.

45. Burke, ‘Loss and Gain’.

46. In his text of the *Geographia* from the second century, Ptolemy defines geography as the study of the entire world, meaning both its quantitative and qualitative features. Chorography is the study of its smaller parts, that is, provinces, regions, cities, or ports, using the same method. See D.J. Rohl, ‘The chorographic tradition and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Scottish antiquaries’, *The Journal of Art Historiography*, 5 (2011), 15–18.


49. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which the Words Are Deduced from Their Originals, and Illustrated in Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers: To Which Are Prefixed, a History of the Language, and an English Grammar* (London, 1785), 379.


51. Ibid.


55. With longitude only recently available as a measurement (the publication of the Nautical Almanac starting in 1767), we can see on the lower left hand side that its determination is still a work in progress.

56. Vaila island—originally owned by Gorvel Fadersdatter of Giske (an island near Alesund) who had inherited the estate in 1490—was granted to Robert Cheyne in 1576 by James VI, eventually passing to James Mitchell of Girlsta, a Scalloway merchant, who built the ‘Old Haa’ in 1696. See John Ballantyne and Brian Smith (eds), *Shetland Documents* 1195–1579 (Lerwick, 1999), 170–1. Passing by descent to the Scotts of Melby, Vaila was sold in 1893 to Yorkshire mill owner Herbert Anderton, who had been brought to Shetland through wool-buying. With his brother, Anderton developed Vaila as a farm and a place
to shoot and fish during summer visits. See: http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/sc-45305-vaila-cloudin-farmhouse-including-outbuild (accessed on 23 December 2013).

57. Ballantyne and Smith (eds), Shetland Documents, 170–1.


62. Gifford was a local steward and justiciar-depute.


64. George Low, Orkney and Shetland 1771 (Inverness, 1978).


66. Ibid., i, ix.

67. Michael Jones and Kenneth R. Olwig, Nordic Landscapes: Region and Belonging on the Northern Edge of Europe (Minneapolis MN, 2008).

68. Hans Strøm, Physisk Og Oeconomisk Beskrivelse over Fogderiet Søndmør, beliggende i Bergens Stift, i Norge (Copenhagen, 1762).

69. Allfarvei is a general term for a road available for general use by the public. The word is a combination of the old-Danish word adel-farvei og alfaren (vei) or public path, or algaden the name for a main street in Danish: http://snl.no/allfarvei (accessed 23 December 2013). My translation.


72. The others are Ivar Aasen, Peder Fylling and Olaus Johannes Fjørtoft.


78. Burke, ‘Loss and Gain’.
85. Joep Leerssen, National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History (Amsterdam, 2006).