Much has been written on the relationship between the map and what it supposedly represents. In *On Exactitude in Science* Jorge Luis Borges famously wrote about an empire where the art of cartography attained such perfection that the map of a single province occupied the entirety of a city, and the map of the empire occupied the entirety of a province. Over time these maps were no longer satisfactory and the cartographers' guilds created a map of the empire whose size was that of the empire and which coincided point for point with it (Borges 1998: 325). This story questions the relationship of representation and the quest for accuracy of the scientific map. Such questions further raise questions about the relationship between the map and the territory. More than 50 years ago, Alfred C. Korzybski stated that a ‘map is not the territory’ (Korzybski 1948: 58), while half a century later David Turnbull’s *Maps are Territories* (1993) sent the opposite message; and emphasizing the constitutive power of maps, Jacques Revel has suggested that ‘knowledge of the territory is a production of the territory itself’ (1991: 134). Suggesting a temporal diagnosis to this issue of representation, Baudrillard stated that the ‘territory no longer precedes the map [...]’. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory’ (1983: 2). This statement is often used to illustrate characteristics of a supposedly postmodern time in which any substantial reality has been surpassed by representations of representations. In Baudrillard’s account we have entered a time where it is no longer possible to distinguish between the real and the imaginary: simulation threatens the distinction between true and false. What we believe is real is in fact simulation: the hyperreal (Baudrillard 1983: 23–5). Hence, the association between postmodernity and a crisis of representation, to use David Harvey’s term (Harvey 1989: 260–2), characterized by anti-foundationalism where all secure anchorage is dissolved.
These quotes raise two issues concerning the relationship between mapping and territory. The one concerns the role of the map in constructing the object that it supposedly represents; the other is a question of temporal diagnosis regarding the relationship between the map and the territory. If cartographic practice can be understood as a practice that establishes a spatial reality then cartography is not only an issue of representing territories but rather about the spatial conditions for establishing territory in particular, and for the political organization of space, in general. And as geographers have pointed out, different societies produce different conceptions of space and time (Harvey 1996: 443), and almost all societies have produced maps in one form or the other, and in that respect, different modes of map-making are linked to different spatial realities. This means that the map is not only constitutive of territory but of space as a general concept; and in that respect different modes of cartography condition possible ways of organizing territory. This means further that there is no spatial reality outside the map; there is no natural foundation below and besides the cartographic reality of space that we can fall back to.

In sequence, the main argument presented in this chapter, is that the cartographic transition that took off during the European Renaissance provided the spatial conditions for locating sovereignty within a territorial space; that is, defining sovereignty in territorial terms. And this leads to the other issue; concerning historical change. ‘Mapping’ and ‘space’ are frequently used metaphors for knowledge production in general. This is especially so with regard to critical accounts of knowledge production where modern knowledge production is sometimes characterized by a belief in a linear relationship between sign and signifier, between representation and what is being represented. Postmodern writings have emphasized how representations are constitutive of objects but, as will be shown, scientific cartography has preceded and played a performative role for territoriality since the fifteenth century. The key to ‘scientific cartography’ is that it allows ‘the map to precede the territory’ (King 1996), and while this is not always the case, the principles and prescriptions that constitutes scientific cartography allows for the precedence of the map. And this is no postmodern occurrence; on the contrary, it is essential for the constitution of a modern political spatiality. Thus, like accounts of globalization, which pose an epochal break between a modern territorial geography and a postmodern global politics, so this notion of a present rupture ‘where the territory no longer precedes the map’ is problematic. To use a Latourian phrase, the remainder of this book will strive to open ‘the black box’ of cartography; the present chapter