



Mapping: Shifting Ecologies of Time and Place

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EDITORIAL

Mapping Shifting Ecologies of Time and Place

Kaye Shumack

'Beyond Progressive Design'
Part 1 papers (Design
Philosophy Papers 3/2011) can
be accessed here:

**Sean Donahue, Rama
Gheerawo, Anne-Marie
Willis, Editorial: Beyond
Progressive Design 1 Shana
Agid, 'How do we transition
people from a system
that doesn't want to let
them go?' Social design
and its political contexts
Matt Kiem, Designing the
social, and the politics
of social innovation
Kenton Card, Democratic
social architecture or
experimentation on the
poor? Ethnographic
snapshots Karen Freire,
Gustavo Borba,
Luisa Diebold, Participatory
design as an approach**

The papers in this issue came about as a result of a workshop, 'Mapping ecologies of place: local, virtual, digital' at the University of Western Sydney in 2011, convened with the support of the Centre for Cultural Research. The workshop explored an emergent, rapidly evolving field that is influencing many different disciplines and practices, including design. A range of speakers considered the potential of new mapping practices, as well as some of the limitations of the digital as an interface and platform – there was a sense that whilst digital techniques may be transferable and universal, cultural details are often local and non-transferable. There was also a sense that mapping needed to be more critically explored as a set of practices around social enablement and power formations. These concerns foreground potential links and commonalities between critical cartography and design, and highlight some emerging issues for design concerning: what is mapped and why; mapping as a practice of framing and re-framing the spatio-temporal; the power and agency of

**to social innovation
Vera Damazio and
Gabriel Leitão,
Design against
domestic violence**

the map itself as a designed object. The papers published here seek to address some of these issues, offering a range of perspectives that engage with thinking about sustainable design practices, mapping, the map and imagined futures.

Susan C. Stewart's paper, 'Fresh Thoughts on Mapping and GIS: Cleanliness, Temporality and Sustainment' locates the map and mapping practices within 'the spatio-temporal dispositions of modernity'. Her argument unpacks utopian perspectives about the potentials of GIS mapping for sustainable practices, outlining a relationship between the production of maps, and an underlying modernist engagement with 'the fresh'. Stewart describes this modernist resonance as a desire for capture and control, regulation and boundary setting that permeates a drive for the "ever-fresh" across spatial and temporal contexts. Stewart builds a fascinating set of links and relations between geographic mapping and tendencies that 'mobilise and reinforce the assumptions and the aesthetics of the modern' in complex spatial and temporal contexts.

The final part of her argument introduces the role of different forms of narrative as a way to begin to re-frame the potential of mapping for sustainable practices. Her critique unpacks and compares concepts of narrative form per se, positioning the 'news' as the information space that disintegrates time and space compared with the 'novel' as a form of storytelling that creates a space of difference offering richer, more ambivalent reflections. Stewart's critique highlights the ways that maps and mapping as forms of storytelling could be helpful in providing tools towards more coherent and useful sense-making strategies, as imaginative engagements with the world. Her conclusion points to the potential of narrative methods and processes in exploratory and experimental forms of map-making.

Abby Mellick Lopes and Kaye Shumack's paper, 'Please Ask Us – Conversation Mapping as Design Research: Social Learning in a Verge Garden Site' also explores the potential of narrative mapping and map-making for sustainable practices introduced by Stewart. They describe and critique the practice of Conversation Mapping as an exploratory approach to design research, this via a case study on the development of an edible verge garden in an inner city suburban street. A recorded conversation between the residents who created and manage the verge garden and the design researchers is visualised using conversation mapping to reveal insights about the relationships and connections that underpin, and have resulted from the street intervention. This form of narrative mapping offers a design research approach that informs a deeper understanding about the process and value of conversational learning, as concepts and insights emerge through dialogue. What is of value emerges through the map itself – as an object of representation, and also through the process of mapping as a knowledge practice. The conversation map as a

representational design object can reveal and highlight a range of personal, anecdotal, and historical references. In the case described, the practical and strategic creative activities involved in developing a micro system of alternative food production and consumption on a domestic scale are made evident through the conversation mapping process. This process is described as one where layers of experience and information reveal how the topography of the site shifts in relation to a shared process of experimentation and discovery over time. The paper seeks to demonstrate the value of conversation mapping for facilitating a depth of understanding about how local knowledge and decisions are configured within communities developing more sustainable approaches to city living, highlighted throughout the paper as a points of 'emerging theory'. The method of conversation mapping is proposed as a powerful tool for design researchers that can support and reveal the complexities of adaptive cultural change and the development of new ways to think about locality and community.

Clancy Wilmott's paper 'Living the Map: Cartographies of Mobile Media Environments' explores the construction of new urban spatial practices around mobile media as an example of a contemporary urban practice that constructs and subverts notions of space, place and time, leading to new cartographies, communities and localities. Her critique situates the pervasiveness of mobile mapping as a space of situated-ness in relation to the urban environment – 'as a moment of repeated and habitual encounter between multiple forces (users, devices, spaces) and landscapes (physical, Hertzian, virtual)'. She describes her own experiences of mobile mapping in a local context with applications such as FourSquare, Google Latitude and AcrossAir, critically exploring how such interfaces are generating new forms of mapping, mapping communities and localities associated with 'amateurism, temporality, dissemination and collectivism'. Wilmot reflects on the qualities of personal and affective expressions that are formal aspects of mobile mapping practices, describing them as shifts away from the power and authority of the map within established cartography. She sees mobile mapping forms as ad hoc sidetracks in virtual space that can gain momentum through collective engagements and collaborations.

Mobile mapping practices thus construct a fractured and fluid self – embedded and situated within the map-making process as a form of dialogue, where the locative technology talks back to the user across a transient and dynamic hyperspace. The local area becomes a 'circumscribed imagined cartography, a placial space' for the mobile mapper, as part of a much wider imagined community conceived around that local context, where traces of individual mapping are left like graffiti for others to find. Wilmot's critique of the situated-ness of mobile mapping practices as forms of 'living the map' highlights the challenges that mobile technologies and

collaborative forms of geo-tagging pose to conventional mappings of urban landscapes and environments.

Sarah Barns' paper 'Retrieving the Spatial Imaginary of Real-Time Cities' also offers a critique of mobile digital mapping in the context of the mapping of real-time urban environments. Her concerns are with outlining the value of the 'underlying spatial imaginaries at work in advanced digital mapping projects' that 'helps us better understand the rise of real-time cities as being as much to do with the particular speculative imaginations of digital urbanists as it is an enhanced representation of complex urban conditions.' Her paper highlights the significance of practitioner engagements with the potentialities of digital mapping – a perspective that speaks to the importance of design in creatively exploring current and future urban imaginaries.

Barns discusses the opportunities for social interaction in urban contexts that are becoming possible as a result of real-time urban mapping systems. She refers to the work of selected urban practitioners in mapping key infrastructures and activities to capture a detailed level of digital data about urban systems as networks and flows that have the potential to expand our understandings about how cities work. Such an understanding, she argues, would be based on recognition of the inter-related workings of many forms of agency - not simply a reinstatement of a new urban formalism within a world of top-down systems flow management. She provides a reflective account of the historical underpinnings of digital urbanism within the utopianism of speculative urbanism, and concludes that a more critical approach to the project of digital urbanism is needed, that goes beyond the utopian to engage with the complexities of the 'political and institutional implications' of digital urban mapping.

Finally, Peter Hall's afterword, 'On Mapping and Maps' provides a timely and eloquent summary of 'the historical and political baggage of the map and the potentials of mapping as an emerging concept', with a focus on how these aspects have been interpreted 'in contemporary design, art, planning and education, drawing from some of my own experiences using mapping as a pedagogical tool in design education.' Hall's descriptions of a range of design projects using maps and mapping provide fascinating and engaging reading, alongside his thorough and reflective contextualization of key theoretical perspectives from critical cartography and human geography that distinguish the map, and the act of mapping as distinctive and powerful activities that can be used for 'resisting or securitizing'.

As Hall notes, mapping conceived as 'performative, participatory, and political' is never a neutral project. Hall concludes his essay with an anecdote about David Turnbull's account of the topographic map of Dreaming tracks drawn in Australia, and how this map though initially deemed secret knowledge to be hidden from public view, found its way into the negotiations around traditional land

rights. The role of the map was instrumental in gaining ground. Hall's closing comments are worth quoting here:

'The language and the tools of the occupying entities has been, in effect, subverted. Thus the map, for all its historical baggage as an instrument of power, as a crisis of representation and as a reduction of knowledges, wields a power almost despite our well-earned distrust.'