



AMPS Proceedings Series 32

Representing Pasts

Visioning Futures

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# AMPS PROCEEDINGS SERIES 32

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## Representing Pasts – Visioning Futures



EDITOR:

Dr Gul Kacmaz Erk

EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION EDITOR:

Amany Marey

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# INTRODUCTION

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## Representing Pasts – Visioning Futures

One century ago the City Symphony was at the cutting edge of visual representation. It was the site of some of the most challenging concepts and ideas the art world had ever seen. Its ruptures in spatiotemporal representation were seen as natural extensions of the avant-garde: cubist painting in the mode of Braque, the architectural visions of Vladimir Tatlin, the spatio-sculptural works of Aleksandr Rodchenko, the photography of Moholy-Nagy and later Florence Henri, to name but a few.

The intervening 100 years have seen periodic reengagements with spatial reframing in these media. They have also witnessed the emergence of new modes of representation in the worlds of art, design, heritage, cultural studies and the social sciences more broadly. Today, artists, architects, painters, sculptors and designers from various fields can work seamlessly across a plethora of fields: video, digital photography, 3D printing, parametric architecture, algorithmic animation, projection mapping, photogrammetry, virtual reality, and more.

If we look specifically at spatial design, virtual reality is increasingly seen as ‘everyday’ for architects and urban designers. For artists, ‘the digital’ is now a typical mode of operation. If we consider film, algorithmic video editing, motion capture and image digitization are now all ‘run of the mill’ technologies. In museology, the experiential interactive installation accompanies static exhibitions. Indeed, the moving image, both analogue and digital, is now a standard area of historical study in itself – the city symphony included.

Taking the City Symphony, and its historic moment in time as a starting point, this conference seeks to explore of the past, present and future of how we visualise people, places, cities and life. It welcomes insights into the history of painting from a spatiotemporal standpoint; the influence and evolution of the photographic representation of place; the role of sculpture in exploring and integrating space. It invites filmmakers exploring city representation, architects, urban planners and designers engaged in the visualisation of buildings, cities.... and more

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Chapter 1</b>	
THE DIGITAL AGENCY, PROTEST MOVEMENTS, AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	1
Asma Mehan	
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
THE FUTURE OF DWELLING: THE KITCHEN	8
Camilo Cerro	
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
EXAMINING THE BEST PRACTICES OF CURATING IN A NONTRADITIONAL BOTANICAL GARDEN SETTING: A CASE STUDY AS MARIE SELBY BOTANICAL GARDENS	15
Anneliese Hardman	
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
THE SPACE OF VISTAVISION	31
Marshall Deutelbaum	
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
THE REALITIES OF FRAGMENTS	37
Wonseok Chae	
<b>Chapter 6</b>	
INTERPRETATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE: THE CASE STUDY OF THE FALUN HALL, IN THE YONGHE TEMPLE, BEIJING.	48
Siqi Li, Alba Soler Estrela, Joaquin Angel Martinez Moya	
<b>Chapter 7</b>	
MAPPING ENTROPY: HISTORICAL SETTLEMENTS DESTRUCTION DOCUMENTATION IN WENZHOU, CHINA	59
Vincent Peu Duvallon, Tieru Huang, Kun Bao	
<b>Chapter 8</b>	
THE IMAGE OF THE TERRITORY: LANDSCAPE PERCEPTION AND INFRASTRUCTURAL PALIMPSEST IN WENZHOU, CHINA	68
Vincent Peu Duvallon, Xinyi Ye, Yue Bi	
<b>Chapter 9</b>	
FROM PAINTING TO INSTALLATION: PAINTERS' EXPERIMENTS IN THE MID-1980s AT THE SAGACHO EXHIBIT SPACE, TOKYO	76
Toyoko Ito	
<b>Chapter 10</b>	
RENDERING AS PROTO-PHOTOGRAPH: SITUATING CONTEMPORARY IMAGE-MAKING	87
Johan Voordouw	
<b>Chapter 11</b>	
DISRUPTIVE CONSERVATION IN THE MATERIAL TRANSMISSION OF PAST TO FUTURE	100
Eleanor Sweetnam, Jane Henderson	

<b>Chapter 12</b>		
VISUALISING STORYTELLING THROUGH A LOCALLY BASED DIGITAL WAYFINDING EXPERIENCE		112
Sarah Jane Jones		
<b>Chapter 13</b>		
CITY AS DATA: URBAN ANALYTICS AS CONTEMPORARY FORM OF RHYTHMANALYSIS		124
Katja Knecht, Olaf Mumm, Vanessa Miriam Carlow		
<b>Chapter 14</b>		
DIGITAL STORYTELLING FOR PUBLIC ATTRACTIONS: THE EFFECT OF VIRTUAL REALITY ON MUSEUM EXPERIENCES		137
Eric Mcnamara, Séamus Ó Ciardhuáin, Denise Mcevoy		
<b>Chapter 15</b>		
MAPS OF IMAGINATION: A CITY METAPHOR.		149
Irene De Natale, Ayla Schiappacasse		
<b>Chapter 16</b>		
UNITING SPACE AND TIME IN THE DOCUMENTATION OF URBAN SETTING THROUGH CINEMA		157
Caecilia Wijayaputri, Amyra Salsabila, Yeira Sadak, Tadisa Margayu		
<b>Chapter 17</b>		
THE UNREPRESENTED CHICAGO OF 1893		167
Hamza Aziz		
<b>Chapter 18</b>		
THE SCREEN, INTIMACY AND THE ATTENTION ECONOMY: ARE WE EVER TOGETHER		175
Lingxiang Wu, Erica Cristobal, Kristi Poole-Adler		
<b>Chapter 19</b>		
THE INCOMPLETE RESULTS OF AN ACT OF MAPPING		185
Marta Labastida, Eulàlia Gómez-Escoda, Maarten Gheysen, Miguel Hernández-Quintanilla		
<b>Chapter 20</b>		
PARK HILL SHEFFIELD: UNDERSTANDING REPRESENTED PLACE THROUGH VISUAL ARTS PRACTICE		196
Tim Machin		
<b>Chapter 21</b>		
RETHINKING THE SITES OF THE DITCHLEY PORTRAIT THROUGH NOTIONS OF POLYVOCALITY: DRAWING UPON NARRATIVES OF PLACE, TIME AND MEDIUM		207
Constance Lau		
<b>Chapter 22</b>		
ANALOGICAL DISTRACTION IN LIVED SPACE OR UNCANNY ANALOGIES ACROSS FILMIC AND PRO-FILMIC SPACE.		220
Eleanor Suess		

<b>Chapter 23</b>		
EXPERIENCING LAYERED CONTEXTS BETWEEN VIRTUAL AND PHYSICAL SPACES		231
Matthew Lewis		
<b>Chapter 24</b>		
THE ROLE OF SCREEN SPACE IN ARCHITECTURE AND FILM AS MULTIMEDIUM		242
Radosław Achramowicz, Maja Piechowiak		
<b>Chapter 25</b>		
MOBILE PERSPECTIVE: A POST-PRESCRIPTIVE JOURNEY THROUGH TIME AND SPACE		251
Louise Martin		
<b>Chapter 26</b>		
VISIONARY RUMOURS: LOST IN SPACE – BETWEEN RATIONALE AND REASON, ITS TIME TO REALIGN OUR CREATIVE PERSPECTIVES		265
Fabrizio Cocchiarella		
<b>Chapter 27</b>		
THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MUSÉE VISIONNAIRE IN ZÜRICH - OUTSIDER ART, SPACE & COMMUNITY (VIDEO, 12 MINUTES, DIR. NINA ZIMNIK, 2023)		274
Nina Zimnik		
<b>Chapter 28</b>		
(UN)MONUMENTS OF THE EVERYDAY. MARKING THE JOURNEY FROM HOME TO WORK THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF VENETIAN WEAVING FACTORY'S WORKERS		283
Elena Cologni		
<b>Chapter 29</b>		
EITHER YOU STAY OR GO: PACIFUNCTION BY ALBERT SERRA AS A PERFECT LOOP		296
Alexandra Semenova		
<b>Chapter 30</b>		
VISUALIZATION AND PARAMETRIC DESIGN OF SUSTAINABLE DOMES, INSPIRED BY HISTORICAL PERSIANATE GEOMETRY		304
Atefeh Amraei, Soroush Saffari, Sepideh Saffari		
<b>Chapter 31</b>		
'ZOOM-WALKS' AND CYANOTYPES: MATERIALIZING SCREEN ONTOFONIES		317
Alyssa Grossman		
<b>Chapter 32</b>		
DRAWING FOR INCLUSION: ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATION THROUGH COMICS AS ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY DESIGN PRACTICE		327
Inge Roecker, Andrea Hoff		
<b>Chapter 33</b>		
FROM FILLING TO FEELING: RE-READING THE ANTILLEAN CITY		336
Doris Duhennois		



<b>Chapter 34</b>		346
PHYGITAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES: THE SITUATED AND INVISIBLE DIMENSION OF TECHNOLOGY AS A SENSITIVE ACTIVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE		
Alessandra Miano		
<b>Chapter 35</b>		355
IMAGES ON 1975.		
Adria Guardiola-Rius		
<b>Chapter 36</b>		366
SOCIO-TEMPORAL PARADOXES BETWEEN SCREENS AND SPANS: AVERAGE DURATION OF MOVING VISUAL WORKS, TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS, AND SOCIAL DEMANDS FROM THEATRE TO TIKTOK.		
Vassilis Galanos		
<b>Chapter 37</b>		374
TECHNOLOGIES EVOLVE: VISUALIZING MIXED REALITY OVERTIME IN CINEMA PRODUCTION		
Samah Nassar		
<b>Chapter 38</b>		381
A DISCOURSE BETWEEN THE FORMER AND THE PROSPECT		
Saman Malik, Aiman Rahman		
<b>Chapter 39</b>		393
BILINGUALISM IN SPATIAL DESIGN; RESTRUCTURING THE ARCHIVE FOR THE ELUSIVE OBJECT		
Ifigenia Mari, George Parmenidis		
<b>Chapter 40</b>		405
ENCODING MATERIAL EMPATHY: A REVIEW OF PHYSICAL MATERIALS AND DIGITAL GEOMETRIES		
Tay Yu Jie		
<b>Chapter 41</b>		416
DEBRIS AND DATA; USING PHOTOGRAMMETRY FOR MAPPING REMNANTS IN HONG KONG		
Nikolas Ettel		
<b>Chapter 42</b>		426
ALGARVE- MEMORY AND IDENTITY REPRESENTATIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE		
Ana Pereira Neto		
<b>Chapter 43</b>		436
EDGELANDS TWISTS: PERFORMING LIMINAL FISSURES IN EDGELANDS REPRESENTATIONS		
Joanna Leah		
<b>Chapter 44</b>		447
GODZILLA: THE BIG JAPANESE MONSTER, THE MONSTROUS BODY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY		
Kuo-Wei Lan		

<b>Chapter 45</b>		
DESIGNING A DYNAMIC SCOOTER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM FOR EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRANSPORTATION: THE DYMO SYSTEM	458	
Carlos De Aguiar, Zezhi Guo, Yuhe Cui		
<b>Chapter 46</b>		
AFFORDANCES OF VISUALISED FUTURE ENVIRONMENTS DO WE NEED OR WANT SUCH PLACES?	470	
Damian Rogers, Linus Tan, Anita Kocsis		
<b>Chapter 47</b>		
UNDOCUMENTED HISTORY: ACCESSING THE INTANGIBLE PAST THROUGH LOCATIVE MEDIA	477	
Diane Derr, Sadia Mir		
<b>Chapter 48</b>		
NOTES ON PUBLIC PLACES IN MADIBA'S MEMORY: USING ARCHIVAL RESOURCES FOR GRAPHIC HERITAGE INTERVENTIONS IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT	485	
Robert Harland, Yolandi Burger, Everardt Burger		
<b>Chapter 49</b>		
FUTURE HISTORIES: (RE)CONSTRUCTING THE INFRASTRUCTURES OF RITUAL IN AUSTRALIA'S NEW WORLD CITY	496	
Shane Sugrue		
<b>Chapter 50</b>		
TEMPOROSPATIAL MEDIATOR: SITE-SPECIFIC THEATER WITHIN CULTURAL HERITAGE	511	
Ching-Pin Tseng		
<b>Chapter 51</b>		
A MOTHER'S PLACE: EXPLORING SPATIAL EXPERIENCES OF EARLY MOTHERHOOD	519	
Maretha Dreyer		
<b>Chapter 52</b>		
A SPLICE OF LIFE (HOME, LAPTOP, WI-FI)	527	
Shellie Holden		
<b>Chapter 53</b>		
HOW HAS THE EMERGENCE OF NFT TECHNOLOGY IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY AFFECTED HOW A GENERATION Z AUDIENCE CONSUMES A MUSICAL ARTISTS WORK?	535	
Mark Ashmore		
<b>Chapter 54</b>		
ALTERNATIVE FUTURES – ENVISIONING BOLZANO, ITALY	542	
Mustapha El Moussaoui, Kris Krois		

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## THE INCOMPLETE RESULTS OF AN ACT OF MAPPING

Authors:

**MARTA LABASTIDA<sup>1</sup>, EULÀLIA GÓMEZ-ESCODA<sup>2</sup>, MAARTEN GHEYSEN<sup>3</sup>, MIGUEL HERNÁNDEZ-QUINTANILLA<sup>4</sup>**

Affiliation:

<sup>1</sup>LAB2PT – UNIVERSIDADE DO MINHO, PORTUGAL; <sup>2</sup>BARCELONA LABORATORY OF URBANISM - UPC BARCELONA TECH, SPAIN; <sup>3</sup>DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE, KU LEUVEN, BELGIUM; <sup>4</sup>OSLO CENTRE FOR URBAN AND LANDSCAPE RESEARCH OCULS, NORWAY

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### INTRODUCTION

The disciplines of architecture and urban design have representation as their main communication tool. However, in recent years, the possibilities of access to information – digital archives, open cartographic sources – and the emergence of geographic information systems have shaken the way of representing and explaining issues that were until recently linked to the physical condition of places.

How do we map space and experiences? How do we map global – climate change, monetary flows – vs. local processes? How do we map concepts such as boundaries, regularity or porosity? How do we map tangibles and intangibles? How do we map sensations produced by noises, flavours or smells? How do we map paths and movement? How do we represent dynamics in a static drawing? What is the (ir)relevance of geographical precision?

This paper describes the process based on an expanded dialogue to use domestic digital tools – hand drawings, pictures, video, google maps, cad and GIS cartographies, big data, open-source data, sound recordings – to produce incomplete understandings of the territory instead of achieving a finished product.

### METHODS

The starting point of this paper is an academic experience, “One territory, four questions, one atlas”,<sup>1</sup> an intensive summer research program between four institutions: AHO Oslo; KULeuven; Universidade do Minho; ETSABarcelona-UPC. The programme was aimed to generate new synergies and a common theoretical-practical body to trigger a joint discussion on how to represent and visualise cities and life, spatial design and spatial reframing, ruptures and permanence, people and time by the act of mapping.

The twelve participants of the summer school worked together grouped in three teams during one week in which four questions were progressively launched to which the teams responded by drawing speed maps in 8 hours. In turn these maps served as an entry for a common discussion and unlocked hidden hypothesis.

## THE SITE

The work was developed under the premise that mapping is linked to a specific geographic location, or at least that this facilitates it. Therefore, the exercises explored a nearby location, the surroundings of the Colonia Güell, a small settlement in Santa Coloma de Cervelló, in the metropolitan region of Barcelona.

The Colonia Güell was founded as a town for workers together with the adjacent textile factory by the industrialist patron Eusebi Güell in 1890. The settlement was built between the Llobregat agricultural valley floor and the dry slopes that frame it. A seasonal creek traverses the Colonia from east to west, where the local train tracks and a road physically divide it from the agricultural park. The plan of the new town, allegedly designed by the architect Antoni Gaudí<sup>2</sup> is organized through two main perpendicular axes traced within the invisible triangle drawn by the towers of the factory, the church and the school. The church is considered a masterpiece also designed by the Catalan architect but never finished. The main housing types are two-floor family units, most of them built in brick or masonry by local architects, some of them of high architectural interest.

The town was designed so that the workers were at the same time provided work and education by the industrial patron within the physical limits of the Colònia.<sup>3</sup> The factory was collectivized into a self-organized industrial community during the 1930s. Today the industrial production has moved out of the factory and its buildings house new activities such as communication agencies and start-up businesses. On the other hand, most of the houses are still inhabited by descendants of the first industrial workers of the Colònia. The multiplicity of entanglements on site – local and global, water and soil, patches, corridors, flows – provided exceptionally rich grounds for the acts of mapping.

## AN EXCURSION

Walking, watching, drawing, and recording was the way for participant in the programme to collect first impressions. Due to its heritage value, the site is visited by a relatively high number of tourists that take a detour from the main *gaudiesque* attractions of the metropolis. The tour started following the instructions of the local museum's audio guide,<sup>4</sup> wandering and stopping by the main buildings and public spaces of the industrial town. Gradually, the attention drifted from the framed route towards the unexpected findings of the place: views towards golden wheat fields at the edge of a modernist high rise concrete neighbourhood, spontaneous appropriation of outdoor spaces to dry clothes or do yoga, banners against the new taxes to improve train services. These lived absorptions provided clues that would be later result in mappings.



*Figure 1. Site visit and field work for data collection. Source: Authors' elaboration.*

After visiting the urban settlement, a jump outside the formal built defined border facilitated the immersion in the landscape of the agrarian park. Surrounded by the large infrastructure of roads and train rails, large agricultural plots fed by intricate systems of water channels. The journey before heading back, ended as fig trees and artichoke fields gave way to the apparent wilderness of the riverbed, plagued with impressive clusters of giant invasive reeds. The territory around the Colònia Güell appeared to the eye as an “assembly of events, of pieces and fragments, conflicting, complementing and hence condensing the urban context”.<sup>5</sup> Under this light the idea of exploring these assemblages through fast, incomplete cartographic acts seemed even more relevant.

#### **FOUR QUESTIONS**

After the trip the group faced four days, eight hours per day to answer to four different questions to explore potential maps of a territory. Each one of the questions presented as subchapters in this text was answered with three maps made by the different teams. One map per question is described in the following paragraphs as example of the reflections triggered by the simultaneous acts of mapping. The resulting cartographies are considered deliberately incomplete products but are nevertheless useful for the understanding of the site, making a finished map unnecessary.

#### **Ground condition**

The first question asks how ground characteristics are related to the urban development of the Llobregat valley. Old national roads, historical urban settlements and plot structure have been usually developed following the characteristics of the ground. Yet the past hundred years of radical technological and economical transformations have clearly blurred this relationship and resulted in questionable decisions.<sup>6</sup> The upper crust of the earth continues to be deeply transformed today as “the processes of demolition and construction for which humans are collectively responsible appear to transcend the human scale. These processes influence faster – at a fraction of the speed – and have a greater impact on the transformation of the troposphere than all natural processes combined”.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the graphic production should answer what is the state and characteristics of the current

ground; what are the hidden resources and problems that can be revealed beneath its surface; how is it possible to unveil the geomorphological qualities and processes of the landscape; and, especially, how can the terrain be represented with only first-hand information about the ground.

The two-dimensional resulting map, entitled *Blow-ups and megapixels*,<sup>8</sup> is proposed as a meta-explanation of the composition of the different layers of the ground from the reading of its external appearance. On the one hand, the geological map of Almera and Brossa<sup>9</sup> gives clues about the limits between alluvial and calcareous lands, as well as the consequent character of vegetation, watercourses, agricultural plot structure and position of infrastructures. On the other hand, images taken during the field visit show apparent contrasts fruit of that hidden dimension. The representation fits in with this starting point, enlarging photographs taken on site to the maximum, to leave visible only the fertile, the humid, the dry, the barren, the natural and the altered. Through blowing up the images, the literalness of what they represent loses meaning, but the chromatic or textural condition for which the fragments of photography were chosen remains. In this way, a new territorial mosaic is composed from the obtained megapixel tiles that translate the character of the ground.

“The photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), a bridge between the pictorialist and documentary practices of the 20th century, considered that the function of photography is not to offer aesthetic pleasure but to provide visual truths about the world.”<sup>10</sup> And being literal with his words, the composed map uses reframed images to explain the reality of the ground. The exercise also ends with questions on what would be the correct pixel size; on whether all tesserae have to be the same size; on how much ground would have to be covered with the mosaic; or on how to represent the organic boundaries of reality within the new orthogonal geometries.

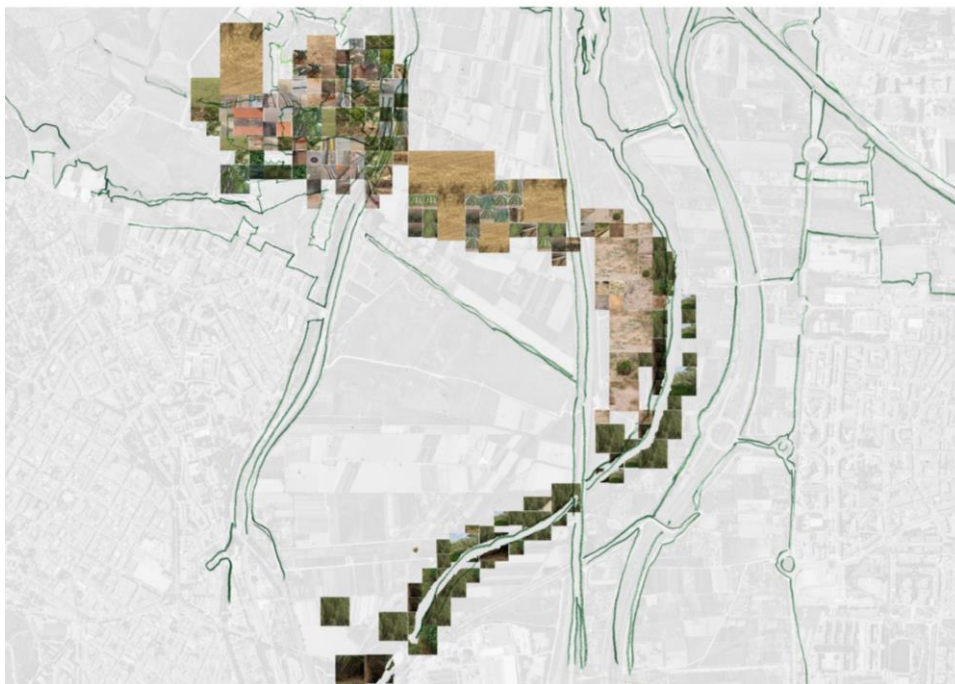


Figure 2. *Blow-ups and megapixels*. Source: Fredrik van der Horst, Rute Carlos, Sophie Leemans and Eulàlia Gómez-Escoda

### Informal realities

The second question and its consequent eight-hours map were about understanding informal realities through mapping. The question was approached from a broad stance by proposing three diverging perspectives on this tension triggering at the same time other perspectives to be explored.

The first perspective challenged the fact that within the discipline of architecture, conventional architectural drawings – plans, sections, elevations, axonometries and perspective drawings – generally focus on built and materialized aspects of space. The presence of human bodies is often missing and the distinct contrast existing between planned and lived space seems to undermine the possibilities of “architectures as complex ecosystems”.<sup>11</sup> Perspective number two reflected on the notion of *Third Landscape*,<sup>12</sup> coined by the French landscape architect Gilles Clément. This concept explains how in dispersed territories, where low-density built fabric prevents the formation of large-scale nature preservation, a number of informal or unplanned spaces appear to be highly biologically valuable. Passively maintained corridors of verges along rivers, canals, highways and railways become attractive spaces for specific animal and plant species. Clément puts these informal spaces forward as “the sum of the space left over by man to landscape evolution – to nature alone. [...] This can be considered as the genetic reservoir of the planet, the space of the future.”<sup>13</sup> The third notion introduced was the concept of “perception of space”. Mediation of formal and informal space in Barcelona is immersed in digital cultures, represented by a dense visual and spatial data structure. It allows a broad audience to be engaged in exploring the city, shaping their notion and perception of space. Content of public sphere like social media platforms is oriented on a city as a cultural heritage, purified imaginary vision of public space, areal views of a bounded and compressed urban grid, and a stage for football culture. A dynamism of activities in the public sphere is continuously updated, increasingly fragmented, and reconstructed in a formal city. Oppositely the notion of informal city can be understood as the one that is not exposed to oversaturation and fragmentation in the online sphere. The two meanings of the city are entangled in the meaning, experience, and representation. These informalities and formalities guide the exploration of the notion of city. Mapping might help unfold and discuss the two faces and investigate the boundaries and mediation between them.

When looking at Colònia Güell on an orthographic map or an aerial view, one can immediately see the distribution and development of plots. What is not visible on such top-down perspective representations is how this environment is used, experienced, and occupied by informal and non-designated day-to-day and temporary aspects of space such as sounds. The map *Appropriated sounds*<sup>14</sup> is a conceptual idea that aims to represent a time-space experience, focusing mainly on auditory aspects of this experience. During a walk, we recorded short sound fragments at different locations. On the top of the map the walked trajectory is shown as a line on an aerial view of the area. The different places on this path where sound recordings were made are marked with a circular symbol with a cross. The different sound recordings were assembled and visualized as a sound wave. This conventional way of representing sound makes it possible to understand where sound peaks occur. In addition, what caused this sound peak was annotated. Alongside the sound reproduction, a representation of the views of façades and landscapes was equally projected in linear form, allowing the sound to be linked to spatial conditions. Finally, an extraction is made of temporary spatial aspects such as vegetation and inconstant environmental conditions, which might also be related to the perceived sound.

In short, the map is a representation of a temporary and fluid moment in time, where formal – the mapping format, ambient sound – and informal – unexpected noise jumps, the spatial-temporary extractions – interact, questioning how a particular walked trajectory is perceived.

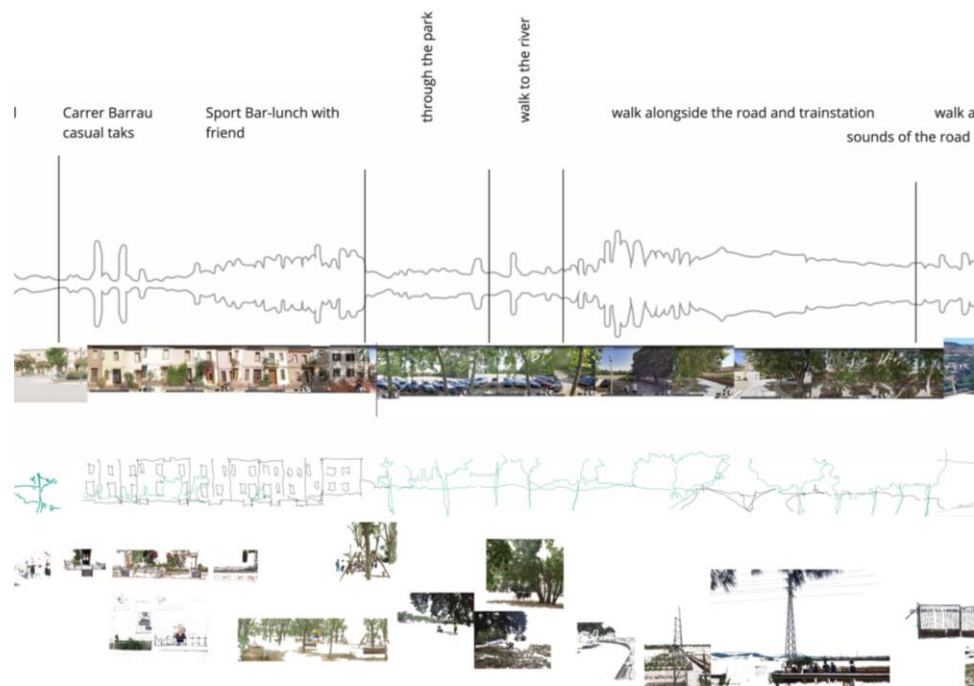


Figure 3. Appropriated sounds (fragment). Source: Rute Carlos, Catherine Papst, Karl Inge Rosén and Liselotte Vroman

## Time

Time makes visible the multiplicities inscribed in a place by incorporating distinct and elastic diachronic scales, advocated both in short and long-time spans. Time can also represent the lived experience articulated with the various socio-spatial, political, environmental and economic dynamics of the place. So can it portray the experience of the self-being as its inhabitant, through the way one interacts with public space and sometimes appropriates it. Time reveals itself through the place. The place reveals itself through time. From this dialectic, the third question proposes to elaborate cartographies that cross the multiple scales of spatial, social, and personal relationships that define the temporal thickness of the territory. The last question asks how time can be a tool to map places through their history, processes, dynamics and rhythms and simultaneously use different time scales.

*5-minute experiences*<sup>15</sup> is one of the resulting answers that challenges the notion of landscape as simply spatial extent, and acknowledges the importance of subjective experience in understanding our surroundings. Here, the city is not made by its objects and materials only, but by how we travel through and interact with it, and the extent to which we have access to its content. To understand experience, we need to start with time. Subjective experience is situated in time as a sequence of moments, and configured by the way we move through our surroundings. Here, infrastructure becomes especially important. The investigation into time takes its vantage point in infrastructure and seeks to reveal hidden figures or qualities not visible in most conventional geospatial data. The basis for our investigations was a composite map showing three different isochrones for Colònia Güell based on a 5-minute threshold – by foot, by bicycle and by car/train. The contents of the isochrones were then articulated with various media and techniques interrogating how the three different infrastructures in play give rise to three completely different experiences of the landscape. The isochrones for pedestrians and cyclists depict the close, immersive, and sensory qualities of moving freely and unsheltered through the landscape. The isochrones for car and train highlight a fixed and



controlled mode of travel, where landscape is experienced through a window and the passenger orients mainly with the use of signs and symbols.

Through multiple media, the mapping addresses the temporalities that traverse a territory and their effect on architectures, landscapes, and our own personal experience. It also points towards an important question, as it portrays infrastructure as protagonist of the map in the unfolding of old, current, and future temporalities.



Figure 4. 5-minutes experiences (fragment). Source: Maarten Gheysen, Eulàlia Gómez-Escoda, Fredrik van der Horst and Karl Inge Rosén

## Flows

The last question interrogated the representation of flows through the territory: those related to domesticity and daily life; those related to the energy consumed in daily commuting; those of the networks that are activated by communications; or the more invisible ones, which trace the origin of food or the destination of daily waste. Daily movements have tangible and intangible implications that go beyond our area of proximity. This question aimed to trigger cartographies capable of synthesizing the double local-global scale of ordinary actions and the objects that surround us.

The fourth map, *Domestic Ficus*,<sup>16</sup> aims to explore and visualize the social aspects, industrial processes and infrastructure related to domestic vegetation and household plants. The stem of this mapping revolved around revisiting the site of Colònia Güell using google maps to outline the spatial significance domestic plants hold to everyday life. How does acquisition and maintenance of these plants connects to different processes throughout the local-global scale? Using google maps we were able to discover the five-year long evolution of a domestic Ficus tree in one of the household plots. The map assembles several collages that present the findings of how the Ficus tree may have interacted with the house creating marks on the facade, and how occupants cultivated and finally removed the plant. *Ficus elastica* is a plant species originally from southeast Asia, in a deeper time perspective, the plan also acts as a bridge that connects us to the long story before it became an ornamental plant common on domestic spaces all around the Mediterranean basin. The map also introduced a diagrammatic scheme of implications on a global scale of the driving forces linked to production of planting soil, fertilizer, as well as distribution flows. This was done through an

abstraction of the infrastructure network connected to Colònia Güell and the locations of plant nurseries, plant soil businesses and alternative travel routes in a 5-km radius.

Like the photographic gun of Etienne J. Marey capturing in frames the flight of a seagull,<sup>17</sup> the speculative mapping acts as a synthesis of the movement of flows that played a role in the Ficus lifespan, bringing to the fore the accumulation of simultaneous flows that make up a territory.



*Figure 5. Domestic Ficus (fragment). Source: Cruz Armando Criollo Aliendres, Weronika Gajda and Fredrik van der Horst.*

## CONCLUSION

The combination of the twelve acts of mapping results in an atlas of unfinished drawings. A series of conclusions built through the academic experience can be extracted.

First, that the unfinished map is a deliberate state and works as an open cartography. There is no aim in finishing the maps as the end result would not reveal new insights, just a better-looking map. Secondly, that domestic digital tools are effective at exploring and presenting territories. Unlike sophisticated GIS driven maps, the format of the unfinished cartography obliges to use daily and accessible tools. At the same time these tools have a great potential in their combinations. Unlike global GIS cartographies, the digital domestic tools bring to fore the local condition and its particularities, as an in-situ mapping.

Third, the development of these cartographies allows synthesising, organising, ordering, and recording ideas, thoughts, and uncertainties. The mapping process opens new questions, speculations and, occasionally, some conclusions. A fourth relevant aspect is that these are collective maps that reflect a dialogue prior to or during their preparation. They result from an agreement and/or consensus between different ways of looking, understanding and communicating. They lie in the liminal space between the subjectivity that allows you to freely invent a narrative and the agreed objectivity that must respond to the question placed. Each of the unfinished maps became an open conversation that shows a co-construction of knowledge. A final extraction from the experience would be that unfinished maps do not fully reflect reality; they show a collectively constructed position in front of a real place and a specific question. There is a prior and conditioned selection from which there are multiple options for positioning. Each of the maps is original and they rarely repeat scales, elements, or perspectives between them. Each map seeks an original position to explore the same reality and multiply the ways of seeing or explaining it.

The combination of these conclusions makes up for an exciting approach to place analysis, representation and projection that can be explored further as complementary to other mapping techniques but potentially as a solid tool on its own. Indeed, if according to Corner “the unfolding

agency of mapping is most effective when its capacity for description also sets the conditions for new eidetic and physical worlds to emerge”<sup>18</sup>, these twelve incomplete acts of mapping proved to be effective in their results and extremely efficient in terms of the means needed to do so.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Summer school at Barcelona School of Architecture (ETSAB-UPC), 7th-13th June 2022
- <sup>2</sup> Salvador Tarragó, “Colònia Güell. A ruralised and Christian textile factory village”, *Quaderns d’arquitectura i urbanisme* 97 (2006): 96-105.
- <sup>3</sup> Tarragó, 104.
- <sup>4</sup> Gaudi’s crypt and the colònia Güell, managed by Advance Leisure Services, 2022.  
<https://gaudicoloniaguell.org/en/>
- <sup>5</sup> Oswald M. Ungers “Architecture of the Collective Memory: The Infinite Catalogue of Urban Forms”, *Lotus International* 24 (1979): 127.
- <sup>6</sup> André Corboz, “The Land as Palimpsest”, *Diogenes* 31(121) (1983): 12–34.
- <sup>7</sup> Gunther Vogt, “We are geomorphic agents!,” in *Distance and Engagement, walking, thinking and making landscape*, ed. Gunther Vogt and Alice Foxley (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2010).
- <sup>8</sup> Made by Fredrik van der Horst, Rute Carlos, Sophie Leemans and Eulàlia Gómez-Escoda
- <sup>9</sup> Known as “Mapa geològic y topogràfic de la provincia de Barcelona: región primera ó de contornos de la capital” [Geological and topographical map of the province of Barcelona: first region or the outskirts of the capital city] drawn by Jaume Almera and Eduard Brossa in 1888, available at Institut Cartogràfic i Geològic de Catalunya [Cartographic and Geological Institute of Catalonia], accessed January 24, 2023,  
<https://cartotecadigital.icgc.cat/digital/collection/catalunya/id/2174/>
- <sup>10</sup> Joan Fontcuberta, *El beso de Judas. Fotografía y verdad* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1997).
- <sup>11</sup> Carolina A. Miranda, “Andrés Jaque Finds the Urbanism in L.A. Sprawl”, *Architect Magazine*, February 2, 2022.  
[https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/exhibits-books-etc/andres-jaque-finds-the-urbanism-in-l-a-sprawl\\_o](https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/exhibits-books-etc/andres-jaque-finds-the-urbanism-in-l-a-sprawl_o)
- <sup>12</sup> Gilles Clément, *Manifeste du Tiers Paysage* (Paris : Sens & Tonka, 2014).
- <sup>13</sup> Clément, 14.
- <sup>14</sup> Made by Rute Carlos, Catherine Papst, Karl Inge Rosén and Liselotte Vroman.
- <sup>15</sup> Made by Maarten Gheysen, Eulàlia Gómez-Escoda, Fredrik van der Horst and Karl Inge Rosén
- <sup>16</sup> Made by Cruz Armando Criollo Aliendres, Weronika Gajda and Fredrik van der Horst
- <sup>17</sup> Bruno Latour and Albena Yaneva, “Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An ANT’s View of Architecture,” in *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research*, ed. Reto Geyser (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2008), 80-89.
- <sup>18</sup> James Corner, “The Agency of Mapping”, in *Mappings*, ed. Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 214.

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