

## **Special Issue on Art & Cartography: An introduction**

*“A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing.”* Oscar Wilde

Maps are generator of ideas, gateways to old and new worlds, able to cope with both imaginary and hyperrealistic realms: This might be one reason among others why maps, mapping processes and mapping techniques became such a powerful paradigm in various artistic fields – and on the other hand, why maps themselves often feature highly artful qualities.

Whilst the aesthetic dimension of maps has dominated the artistic discourse in cartography over centuries, the relationships between cartography and art have been totally transformed during the last decade or two. The interface between art and cartography reaches a historically completely new dimension. A leap forward can be seen when both domains are combined to contribute to the ongoing debates about citizenship, nation, territories and, borders, transnational migration, capital and power asymmetries in a global perspective, territorial or public observation and measurement. This transformation is illustrated by several recent exhibitions, publications and conferences<sup>1</sup>. These examples are impressive examples of how artists make use of mapping and mapping techniques to comment on our world in a critical, ironic, utopian or imaginative way. The media they use range from textile creations to drawings/paintings, from photography to media installations. In other words: By adopting the almost unlimited means that contemporary cartography supports, a mapping ‘palette’ has been provided, allowing the design and output of dedicated, politically relevant artistic interpretations. This artistic interest for maps resonates with the increasing level of ubiquity of maps in our societies. Maps are now parts of life’s daily activities, and works of arts involving maps now appear in galleries, public spaces, newspapers, television programmes, web sites, blogs and on bookcovers.

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<sup>1</sup> For example: the exhibitions “Territories” and “B-Zone (Becoming Europe and Beyond)” at Kunst-Werke, Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2003 and 2006; “Geography and the Politics of Mobility”, Vienna Generali Foundation, 2003; exhibition “Uncoordinated: Mapping Cartography in Contemporary Art”, Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art, Cincinnati, 2008; Traveling exhibition of “an atlas of radical cartography”, 2008; Conference “In/Visibility, Access and Urban Zoning”, Paris, 2009, are just a few examples

The boundaries between cartography and art have become less defined, suggesting an increasing amount of hybrid practices that incorporate maps and different forms of arts. What can be called hybridising has been made possible by the convergence of numerous factors, including the widespread interest in critical thinking in cartography since the late 1980s, the technological transformation of cartographic practices, especially with the advent of ‘computer assisted’ cartography, and the greater accessibility to mapping and visualization tools. Whilst computer development in the 1950s, combined with the quantitative revolution in geography, and the quest for a scientific dimension of the discipline have favored the scientific side of cartography, the more recent technological and conceptual developments in cartography have re-kindled interest in the artistic dimension of maps. This artistic interpretation and representation of geography provides a rich, complementary view of the world, allowing the world to be viewed from a different perspective than when ‘just’ scientifically-supported cartographic products are produced. This affords a greater understanding of the complexities of our world.

As emphasised by Denis Cosgrove (2006:4), there is now a “burgeoning critical literature on the convergence of art and cartography”, including papers, books (e.g. Bruno 2002; GNS 2003; Abrams and Hall 2006; Conley 2007; Nold 2009), and special issues (e.g. Wood and Krygier 2006). This convergence has been recently formalised by the recent creation of a Working Group on Art & Cartography (<http://artcarto.wordpress.com>) by the International Cartographic Association ([www.icaci.org](http://www.icaci.org)), the pre-eminent international association for cartography and GI Science. This working group has already organised a conference in Vienna (2008) ([http://cartography.tuwien.ac.at/artandcartography/index.php?Art\\_and\\_Cartography:Statements](http://cartography.tuwien.ac.at/artandcartography/index.php?Art_and_Cartography:Statements)) - "Art and Cartography - Cartography and Art" - published an edited book ‘Art and Cartography’ (Cartwright et al. 2008) and ran a special session at the International Cartographic Association conference, held in Santiago, Chile in November 2009. This special issue is another contribution of this Working Group to better understand the contemporary interactions between cartography and arts.

This special issue has been produced to reflect the extraordinary diversity and abundance of contemporary interactions and the blurred boundaries between art and maps. It had two major goals: to give an overview of the current relationships between art and cartography, and to

stimulate a “dialogue” between cartographers, artists and researchers from the humanities in order to stimulate improved hybrid practices.

The interactions between art and cartography is explored through different artistic disciplines: contemporary art - including visual art and performance art -, architecture, literature, new media art and cinema. This special issue starts with an extensive and critical review of maps in contemporary art by Ruth Watson, providing a state of the art of the relationship between both disciplines. Christina Ljungberg then explores the work of contemporary artist Julie Mehretu, through an analysis of her hybrid and dynamic landscapes. Laurene Vaughan investigates the relationships between performance art and map. She studies more specifically walking as a form of mapping in the work of British artist Richard Long.

Architecture is a discipline in which maps and plans play a key role, but strangely enough little about this topic appears in cartographic literature. In this special issue, Lorenz Hurni and Gerrit Sell fill this gap. Through a comparative review of cartography and architecture, they emphasise commonalities and differences between these two fields. Literature is then explored by Barbara Piatti and Lorenz Hurni through an analysis of the functions of maps in a fascinating literary genre: counterfactual novels. Harriet Edquist also explores literature through a geographical analysis of fictional settings in Australian novels by Christina Sted. Her study emphasises the consistency of the displacement from realistic space to the imaginary personal spaces in Christina Sted’s novels.

New media artists have developed a certain interest for maps and for spatial forms of representation in the last decade, as illustrated by several collaborative papers in this special issue. Teresa Iturrioz, Jorge Cano, and Monica Wachowicz present the software they have developed to enable the retrieval as well as the ‘mapping’ of places appearing in an epistolary relationship. Over a number of years artist Jeremy Wood has explored the relationship between walking, art, and maps with the use of GPS as a form of ‘geodetic pencil’ Tracey Lauriault provides a stimulating overview of his artistic practice. GPS is also at the heart of the artistic project developed by Evamaria Trischak and Ramon Bauer. Their project provides consistent ways to explore and represent the urban environment in an original way. Finally, Sébastien

Caquard and Amelia Bryne discuss ideas around the issue of representing globalization in both mapmaking and filmmaking. They argue for the development of hybrid forms of maps and films via the use of new medias.

This collection of papers illustrate the diversity as well as the current vitality of the relationship between cartography and the arts. The original idea of the special issue was to pair aspects of cartography with a comprehensive list of art forms. Obviously, there are many artistic domains that have not been covered in this special issue. Music, popular art, sculpture, art in public spaces, and theatre would certainly have had their place. Some papers related to these domains are under development and will hopefully appear in later issues of the *Cartographic Journal*.

With regard to the second goal of this special issue – facilitating and stimulating the collaboration between artists, cartographers and researchers from the humanities – this has also been partially achieved. Amongst the ten papers published in this issue, six have been authored by two collaborators (or more) and with contributions from different disciplines. Such an interdisciplinary approach calls for special measures. In some cases a common/shared vocabulary had to be first produced/designed. Although one can do miraculous things by using the growing possibilities of virtual dialogues, some particularly fruitful ‘meetings of disciplines’ were achieved as the development of papers brought-together people with very different backgrounds, who took the time to literally sit down at a table and to develop ideas around concepts of mutual interest. We will endeavour to identify further possibilities to facilitate such direct exchanges of ideas and techniques. However, being able to talk about one topic from two different viewpoints is only the first step. A number of papers worked with scales and schemes to explore how and where forms of artistic expression overlap with cartography – and also where they differ substantially. Hence in the future, there might be a need to reflect further upon basic patterns of comparisons, emphasizing differences as well as similarities that exist (Schriewer 2003).

Putting together this special issue has generated some unusual and interesting collaborations between artists and cartographers. We hope these links that have been established will serve as the foundations for further interdisciplinary research, development and the realization of new interpretations of geography. The preparatory work in developing this special issue was also as

much challenging as it was thought provoking. We would like to thank all the authors for their stimulating contributions, as well the reviewers who provided extensive and meaningful comments, often at short notice, and to the Cartographic Journal for the support of the editorial work and for providing a vehicle for disseminating the results of this process. Much still remains to be done, and exploring the relationships between art and cartography should continue to stimulate new utopian as well as hyperrealistic ways of looking at the world and at its complexity.

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