

Annual International Conference 2009 Session and Paper details

Please fill in all the details below and return to AC2009@rgs.org by 22 February 2009.

The recommended number of papers per session is 5 or you may want to have 4 papers and a discussant.



Mapping Stories: Why Do Geographers Make Maps?

**Royal
Geographical
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Advancing geography
and geographical learning

Session Title: Mapping Stories: Why Do Geographers Make Maps?

Research Group
Affiliation: If applicable

Session
Organiser(s): Chris Perkins and Martin Dodge, Geography, School of Environment & Development, University of Manchester chris.perkins@manchester.ac.uk;
m.dodge@manchester.ac.uk;
Jeremy Crampton Department of Geosciences, Georgia State University jcrampton@gsu.edu

Session 1 Chair: Chris Perkins, Geography, School of Environment & Development, University of Manchester chris.perkins@manchester.ac.uk

Session Abstract: These sessions bring together papers about the processes underpinning spatial knowledge claims. They marry local storytelling to a critical and contextual emphasis on how and why geographers make, and have made maps. And equally why some geographers don't make maps anymore.

Special Requirements

No. of 1h 40 min
slots required: 2

Type of session:
e.g. papers, panel Papers

Number of expected
attendees 50

Audio visual
requirements (other
than computer and
projector)

Any other special requests

Session: 1

Paper 1

Title: From Cartography to Neogeography

Author(s): Steve Chilton S.L.Chilton@mdx.ac.uk

Presenter: Steve Chilton S.L.Chilton@mdx.ac.uk

Abstract: This paper will take the form of two parallel narratives. One will reflect on the last 35 years or so of developments and change in cartography, and the other will record the career path of the author over that same time as it encompassed, ignored or responded to these changes. The cartography strand will span training in the use of Rotring pens, the change to scribing, early computer mapping (submitting card stacks – and waiting), through the closing of traditional map publishers, to computer drawing software and GIS mapping packages, and finally DIY cartography. The other strand will detail changing map usage in academia, the demise of cartography training, and the author's reliance on map use and production outside of a working environment for "the fix", through to a resurgence in interest (and activity) through developments such as non-traditional map publishing (Journal of Maps) and a crowd-sourced geodata collection project (OpenStreetMap). Two themes associated with these last two aspects will be expanded on. Firstly that JoM-style publishing of maps has allowed space for the narrative backstory of a map's genesis and production to be possible to be included in the written commentary to the map, detail which was often not recorded or was lost in the "traditional" map production cycle. Secondly, that what is sometimes called community cartography (or volunteered geographic information) has allowed map users to be the map-makers, in a way that GIS – with its higher barriers to uptake – never really did. In conclusion, it will be suggested that this neogeography was been the renaissance of geographic information.

Paper 2

Title: Reconstructing the Map: Post-communist Cartographic Identities in Latvia and Slovenia

Author(s): Alex Kent, Department of Geography, University of Southampton A.J.Kent@soton.ac.uk

Presenter: Alex Kent, Department of Geography, University of Southampton A.J.Kent@soton.ac.uk

Abstract: Do state topographic maps play a role in (re)constructing national identity? With the fall of communism in Europe during the closing decade of the twentieth century, we might expect post-communist countries to seize the opportunity to redefine their national landscape through new state topographic mapping initiatives. If maps serve interests, they capable of using their symbology to

help construct national identities. This paper reflects upon the role of topographic maps as vehicles for defining and expressing the post-communist national landscape by comparing recent mapping initiatives in Latvia and Slovenia, including national atlases. It explains how contrasting levels of censorship within communism has affected the perception and use of maps as vehicles for (re)constructing national identity, suggesting that different cultures of map use have influenced the way in which post-independence landscapes are reconstructed through cartographic language.

Paper 3

Title: Mapping the Everyday

Author(s): Sarah West, Community Scientist- OPAL (Open-Air Laboratories) sm579@york.ac.uk
Stockholm Environment, Institute University of York

Presenter: Sarah West, Community Scientist- OPAL (Open-Air Laboratories) sm579@york.ac.uk
Stockholm Environment, Institute University of York

Abstract: Maps can be created to explore the perceptions, views and values of individuals within a community. Through mapping of the ordinary, even the mundane, individuals can highlight features they feel are important, or places that they feel need improvement. Not only does this empower local people and help create a sense of local community and identity, it can also provide policymakers and academics with unique, community led information about local green spaces that may otherwise remain undiscovered.

This paper presents the results from a community mapping exercise in York, considering the location of green spaces that are important to members of a local community and the features of this space that are attractive to them.

Two outputs of this research are presented: the community greenspace map, and the comments associated with chosen spaces. These represent the knowledge, views and values of the participants. The map demonstrates the ways different stakeholders use greenspace, and it is likely that the rationale for choosing particular greenspace is highly linked to the ways in which the individual uses the space. It is suggested that some individuals used the map for political purposes, for example, to represent features of the city they are unhappy with.

The paper concludes by reflecting upon the methodologies used, considering how researchers can inadvertently influence map creation through factors such as choice of base map and facilitation techniques used. A number of recommendations for future community mapping exercises are made.

Paper 4

Title: Uneasy Cartographies: Practicing Participatory Mapping and Critical Geography within the Academy

Author(s): Sarah Elwood, Department of Geography, University of Washington selwood@u.washington.edu

Presenter: Sarah Elwood, Department of Geography, University of Washington selwood@u.washington.edu

Abstract: Critical geographers increasingly conceive of maps as socially and politically constructed, as representative practice, as situated in and productive of social relations. These ideas respond in part to critiques in the 1980s and 1990s that rejected maps as modernist, imperialist, objectifying, and more. Without denying this critique, conceiving as maps as socially and politically constructed opens the door for maps to do and be more than this, thus allowing some geographers to reclaim them as part of their own research practice. But plenty of geographers still understand maps as unproblematic visual representations that communicate geographic information to an audience; and see maps as inextricably (and appropriately) linked to norms and practices of the discipline of cartography. Such is the complicated conceptual, institutional, and disciplinary landscape in which we conduct our work – making our own maps, studying maps made by research participants and lay cartographers, and publishing these maps. I will show how these diverse conceptualizations of maps and mapping create tensions and contradictions between different notions of what a map is, what roles it can play in research and publication, who cartographers are, and who ‘owns’ the map. Specifically, I examine maps produced by lay cartographers in participatory research, showing how these cartographies are often understood differently by ethics/human subjects review boards, journal editors, academic researchers, and research participants; and reflecting upon the practical and intellectual implications of these different conceptualizations. I develop this discussion with examples drawn from participatory GIS projects conducted over the past ten years.

Paper 5

Title: Database Ethnographies: Using Social Science Methodologies to Enhance Data Analysis and Interpretation

Author(s): Nadine Schuurman, Geography, Simon Fraser University nadine@sfu.ca

Presenter: Nadine Schuurman, Geography, Simon Fraser University nadine@sfu.ca

Abstract: Data are the basis for many decisions ranging from assessing credit applications, determining societal risk of criminals to adjudicating grant applications. Data collection and use constitute social practices, yet once data are ensconced in tables, their social lineage is forgotten. Database ethnographies are a unique means of using insights from science and technology studies and practices from the social sciences to enhance data analysis. These ethnographies are the basis for dimensionalizing the skeletal nature of fields in databases. The goal of this methodology is to elicit information from data stewards about the data that populate multiple-use databases in order to provide an archive that describes the context and meaning of the data at a particular point

in time. Database ethnographies are stored as ontology-based metadata (or contextual data about the data). In combination, these techniques are a means of storing archival information that can be used to ensure more reliable semantic data linkages between multiple datasets. This paper illustrates how database ethnographies contribute to more nuanced metadata and act as the basis for informed decision making about use and robustness of data from multiple sources. They are the basis for more informed data analysis and comparison as well as a means of limiting the potential for uncertainty associated with using heterogeneous data.

Session: 2 Please enter session title

Chair:

Martin Dodge

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Paper 1

Title: Trends and Approaches in Cartographic Textbooks and Teaching

Author(s): David Forrest, Dept of Geographical & Earth Sciences, University of Glasgow

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Abstract: Unlike many academic subjects, cartography has been characterised by a relatively small number of general textbooks over the years. This paper reviews some key textbooks of the last 50 years with the aim of identifying trends in content and approach to the subject. One key basic element of cartographic design investigated is the treatment of the graphic (or visual) variables which, together with an analysis of the range of types of maps and mapping covered, forms the core of the review. Map making technology has changed dramatically over the time period studied and the influences of this cannot be ignored as a contextual environment for cartographic design & production, but is not a major feature of the review.

In addition to overall trends in content and approach the review also compares the focus of UK and European (English language) texts with those by North American authors. Preliminary investigation indicates a different emphasis, with those from North America concentrating much more on statistical mapping than those from the UK, which tend to take a broader view of mapping types. The author's experience as both student and teacher of cartography in UK and Canadian geography departments provides first hand and anecdotal evidence of such different approaches to the teaching of the subject.

Paper 2

Title: Mapping as Tools in Critical Thinking and Engagement with Principles of Social Justice: Stories from Montserrat and Singapore

Author(s): Tracey Skelton, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore geost@nus.edu.sg

Presenter: Tracey Skelton, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore geost@nus.edu.sg

Abstract: This paper reflects on why mapping projects have been used with undergraduate students at the Universities of Loughborough and Singapore to develop and enhance their critical thinking skills but also encourage reflection on issues of social justice. Both mapping projects draw loosely on the Freirian principle of education as “the ‘practice of freedom’, the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (1999, 5). The projects are designed to allow students to develop their own interpretations of cultural and social geographies within two very different contexts. The Loughborough students developed cultural maps of villages on the Caribbean island of Montserrat (during on-going volcanic eruptions) and Singapore students produced social geography maps of Singapore.

The projects were designed to facilitate students, as groups, to collectively illustrate and represent their critical thinking in relation to lectures, reading of academic texts and their own experiences in their particular geographies. Such critical thinking and engagements with representation were contextualised through a lecture and readings from critical cartography. At the same time as thinking through notions of power in relation to representation students also engaged with social justice issues at play within the spatialities they were mapping.

The paper will contextualise the pedagogical aims of the mapping project assignments through an engagement with Freire and critical cartographies debates. It will then give a brief overview of the ‘how’ of the two mapping processes with illustrative examples. Finally it will reflect upon the effectiveness of using maps to allow student knowledge, critical thinking and engagement with social justice issues to emerge.

Paper 3

Title: Elements of Ludic Cartography: Videogame Design Laid Bare

Author(s): Ifan D H Shepherd, Middlesex University, London, UK
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Presenter: Ifan D H Shepherd, Middlesex University, London, UK Email

Abstract: When Werner Kuhn posed the question in 1991: 'Are displays maps or views?', he sparked a terminological and conceptual debate that has been largely resolved with the recent spread of 3D virtual worlds. One particular kind of virtual world, the videogame with identifiable geographical content, may be considered as both a map and a view. The aim of this paper is to examine the design principles of these worlds, and to set out some of the key principles of what we refer to as ludic cartography.

Videogame designers create virtual worlds which are meant primarily to deliver experiences rather than to encapsulate geographical knowledge in a faithful manner. Their ultimate goal is to serve a hedonistic rather than an informational or analytic purpose. In seeking to achieve this goal, the design of ludic worlds involves four intertwined elements which contribute in a major way to their geography, and consequently how this is experienced by the user (i.e. the game player). The first is the world content, which involves everything from terrain and land cover to street furniture, people and traffic. Major elements of videogame environments are routinely constructed with a view to facilitating entertaining experiences. Thus, although many ludic worlds appear highly realistic, and may even appear to simulate or even replicate parts of the real world, their content, both locally and globally, is usually constructed with player interaction rather than representational verisimilitude in mind.

The second element of ludic worlds is narrative, which is strongly linked to content design. Narrative is the often pervasive storyline which drives the gameplay forward, leading the player through certain activities and events, and through sequences of places, and thus guiding the player's goal-seeking behaviour. Narrative is built into both the content of the ludic world and into the kinds of interaction the player may undertake with that content. This brings us to the third element, which consists of the game's mechanics. These are the detailed activities, procedures or operations that the player engages in at certain moments of the game: jumping from one building rooftop to another; throwing a powerful grenade at the ground surface to provide cover from enemy attackers; or leaping over obstacles. Some mechanics make use of the affordances already provided by the game's designed environment, others modify the environment and thereby change the affordances available.

The final design element consists of the game's viewpoint, which refers to the visual frame of reference provided for the player. Many videogames adopt a single, fixed viewpoint, others permit players to switch between viewpoints as the game progresses. Viewpoints help to create mood for the player, but because they often embody constraints, they may also contribute to limited situational awareness and to constrained forms of behaviour.

In the conference paper, each of these elements will be explored using three major sources of evidence. The first is the literature of game design, in which designers explain how they construct their virtual worlds. The second is the deconstruction of existing videogames, informed by expert player experience. The third

consists of interviews with members of the design teams of two major recent videogames: Half Life 2 and Left for Dead. This combined evidence will be used to reveal not only why videogame worlds often take the appearance of real worlds, but why this appearance can be extremely deceptive.

Paper 4

Title: Maps, Minds, and Mysteries

Author(s): Stanley D. Brunn, Department of Geography, University of Kentucky Stan.Brunn@uky.edu

Presenter: Stanley D. Brunn, Department of Geography, University of Kentucky Stan.Brunn@uky.edu

Abstract: The presentation addresses embedded in the title: (a) humankind's longing for spatial meaning and belonging, (b) persistent time-honored questions about mapping times and places, and (c) some eternal geography mysteries about life and living. I draw on the "worlds" beyond contemporary geography to explore scale and mapping developments in the sciences and humanities. Far from experiencing "the demise of the map," I see a renaissance of maps and mapping at the frontiers of sciences and arts. Geographers have much to contribute to these exploratory discourses.

Paper 5

Title: Panel Discussion

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