Expanding the Genre of Maps with the Creation of Cultural Maps

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Introduction

- Rebecca Solnit’s *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas*
- *Laramie: A Gem City Atlas*
Introduction

- What are “cultural maps”?  
  - Maps which display information about the people of a community.
    - Traditions
    - Lifestyle
    - Language
    - The typically un-mapped
Argument

• Cultural maps expand the genre of map creation by portraying more accurately the multiple ideologies grounded in a place and the values in a particular community
  • Cultural maps do this by flaunting the arbitrary nature of maps to affirm or resist the dominant narrative of a community, often highlighting the intimate (“the everyday”) interests of the map’s author. These narratives are created by non-authority figures and represent the multiple and sometimes conflicting ideologies in a community. This, inevitably changes the maps function from being a tool to a narrative about a community.
  • Cultural maps offer an interdisciplinary study of genre, narrative, communication, and visual rhetoric
Maps: Perception vs. Reality

- Maps simplify the world
  - Traditional maps reduce communities into an optimistic portrayal of our cultural accomplishments (Barton & Barton, 1993)
  - Portray the world as we want it to be (Wood, 2010)
Maps: Perception vs. Reality

- Because people create maps they are inherently arbitrary
  - Cartographers decide what to include and exclude, what to emphasize and ignore.
Maps: Perception vs. Reality

- Because people create maps they are inherently arbitrary
  - Map making standards are culturally constructed
Perception vs. Reality

- Our interpretation of maps is subjective
  - Maps used as a persuasive tool.
Perception vs. Reality

• Maps rely on visual rhetoric to be understood
Map Making as a Genre

• “Genre as Social Action” (Miller, 1984)
  • “Typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations”
  • Traditional maps portray the “Grand Narrative”
  • Cultural maps depict the narrative of the ordinary
• “Ideology and the Map: Toward a Postmodern Visual Design” (Barton & Barton, 1993)
  • Maps represent and create the ideologies of a community
  • Cultural maps depict the multiple narratives of a community
Cultural Maps

• Rebecca Solnit’s Maps & their limitations
Cultural Maps

- Denis Wood’s Maps in *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas*. 
“Saloons & Salons” Analysis

- Relies on the stereotypes of Laramie, the way Laramie markets itself
  - Wild West and untouched by man
- Subverts narrative by showing Laramie’s urbanization
- Visual contrast of ideas
  - Shot glasses & nail polish bottles
  - Old western imagery & rhinestones
- Contrast in map making process
  - Map maker
  - Map subject
  - Map usefulness
Significance

- Maps become a narrative specific to a location and the values held by its community.
- Maps become a product of collective ideologies of the community.
Questions?
Figure 1: “Tribes of San Francisco.” (Solnit, 2011)
FIGURE 3: City of Laramie Street Map. (City of Laramie)
FIGURE 4: “Earth from Space Atlantic Centered” by Tom Van Sant. (Wood, 1993)
Figure 5.1: Beatus map portraying the 10th century Christian world. (Wood, 1993)
Figure 5.2: Beatus map, modern translation. (Wood, 1993)
Figure 6: McArthur’s Universal Corrective Map of the World. (Wood, 1993)
MMPA Small Take Authorization Determinations:

1) Will incidental takings occur in a specified geographical area?  
   Yes

FIGURE 7: Navy and Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) map from their presentation.  
   (Propen, 2007)
FIGURE 8: Natural Resource Defense Council map in grey scale. (Propen, 2007)
FIGURE 10.1: London Underground Map, 1926. (Transport for London)
FIGURE 11: British Empire, 1886. (Encyclopædia Britannica)
FIGURE 12: “Ghosts and Cottonwoods” by Tasha LeClair (art and cartography by Shizue Seigel).
FIGURE 13: “Pools of Light” by Denis Wood. (Wood).
FIGURE 14: “Saloons and Salons” by Jacklynn Pham. Digital version.
(cartography by Shizue Seigel)