



Counter-Mapping: Map Making as Counter-Hegemonic Practice

Gainesville Free University – February 5th, 2009
Civic Media Center - 1021 West University Avenue

Counter-Mapping: Map Making as Counter-Hegemonic Practice


Three main issues for tonight:

- Hegemony, Counter-Hegemony, Emergent Ideology
 - definitions and meanings for map making
- What is a map?
 - subjectivity of maps
 - maps as propaganda
 - geographic information systems (GIS)
 - participatory GIS (PGIS/PPGIS)
 - map making for advocacy/activism = Counter-Mapping
 - examples of counter-maps and cartograms (?)
- Counter-Mapping resources (expensive and free)
 - ESRI ArcGIS (expensive)
 - Quantum GIS (completely free!)
 - data sources (<http://gis.little-yeti.com/c-m/>)

Counter-Mapping: Map Making as Counter-Hegemonic Practice

Hegemony
The process by which the IDEOLOGY of dominant classes exerts control through social, political, and cultural institutions. *Ideological hegemony* is a form of non-coercive social control achieved through consensus than through direct and material coercion (e.g., military and police force). That this *hegemony* is achieved without force does not mean that it is thus benign. *Counter-hegemony* refers to attempts to critique or dismantle hegemonic power.

Ideology
In Marxist theory, a set of beliefs, laws, statutes, principles, practices, and traditions proclaimed by a dominant class in order to rule other classes. It is an "unscientific" point of view, a form of "false consciousness" because it obscures the reality of historical processes (typically highlighting elite concerns as more important than any other segment of society). Also, *ideology* can refer to any set of beliefs, laws, statutes, and the like; thus, we can speak of "working-class ideology" or "socialist ideology." Some theorists hold that *ideology* is precisely the process of representing ideas and beliefs in signifying systems, or making meaning in a social context.




The above definitions are modified from Castle's *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory* (2007).

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Counter-Hegemony
The need for the development of an organic intellectual tradition in the working classes led Gramsci to a radical reconception of "intellectual activity": "Each man, finally, outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a philosopher, an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought"



Antonio Gramsci


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Raymond Williams

Dominant Ideology – the present ideology supporting the hegemony of elites

Residual Ideology – remnants of earlier ideologies (e.g., monarchy)

Emergent Ideology – new, marginal ideologies allowing for counter-hegemonies

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What is a Map? – subjectivity of a map

Maps are very powerful objects, they shape the way nations think about themselves, they influence how individuals experience their local environments.

The common experience of maps rests on their perceived objectivity. When information is portrayed graphically it takes on an aura of truth that often goes unquestioned. They can *naturalize* artificial, man-made constructions such as state boundaries. Ultimately, every map represents the very human interplay between "what to leave out" and "what to portray"

Recently, one of the main concerns of map makers, cartographers, community advocates, activists, geographers and so on is how to incorporate multiple viewpoints and perspectives into static things like maps.

This is the intersection between participatory democracy and cartography.

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What is a map? – traditional elements of a basic map

Title
Legend
North Arrow
Scale Bar
Spatial Context



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What is a map? – maps as propaganda



Map from 1930s Germany to create fear of Czech bombing

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What is a map? – recent information technologies

Components of a Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

1. Computer System
 - software to do the job
 - processor requirements
 - enough storage for large amounts of data
2. Spatially referenced data (geo-referenced)
 - thematic layers
 - two types, raster and vector
3. Data management procedures
 - allows for storage, manipulation and retrieval of data
 - should provide access to multiple users and allow efficient updating
4. People
 - the most important aspect – and most neglected!

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What is a map? – participatory GIS (PGIS)

Represents a recent movement in GIS, geography, and cartography. The basic underlying principle is that people who live in an area should have input into what goes into the maps of their area.

It began as a movement in the natural resources and conservation sectors, and typically involved working with indigenous groups as a way to incorporate their knowledge(s) into scientific practices (e.g., ethnobotany, ethnoscience)

However, there are some major problems with traditional, western maps and indigenous mapping knowledge.



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What is a map? – problems with western, static maps

The 'Western Gaze' ...

- skims the surface
- surveys the land from an ego-centric viewpoint (God View)
- invokes a dichotomy of subjective and objective
- viewer (subjective/male) and object (land/female)

Role of language in cartography

The western gaze is a discourse of power and hegemony, it permeates the totality of social practice

Maps are embedded with social relations (who draws and who is included)

Western map making forgets that practical mastery and mental mapping are parts of the same totality (all people can use maps and spatial reasoning to locate themselves within a spatial context)

While a certain understanding demonstrates maps authority on the landscape, a number of academics and citizens use maps to create alternative, revolutionary, resistive versions of space that interact with official maps

Based on Bender (1999) 'Subverting the Western Gaze: Mapping Alternative Worlds'

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What is a map? – problems with western, static maps

Responding to the western map in contact situations

- kinscapes that tell stories as opposed to political maps
- underground maps that link spots as criticism
- bureaucrats and peasants draw maps to tell different stories
- 3D sculpture maps and the subversion of colonial maps
- indigenous land claim maps using western maps

Indigenous Maps

- they exist
- they are extensive and exhaustive
- they often recognize flux and change
- and therefore often combine lived experience and abstraction

One of the main differences is that western maps often eradicate signs of the local, of the contingent; western maps represent a static history privileging colonial/European power and values


Based on Bender (1999) 'Subverting the Western Gaze: Mapping Alternative Worlds'

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Counter-Mapping – let's subvert some elite gazes! (aka – examples)

A Narrative Atlas of Boylan Heights



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Counter-Mapping – let's subvert some elite gazes! (aka – examples)

Tactical Cartographies




Saye is an anti-globalization activist organizing an April 29th, 2007 anti-war protest march. Knowing that the New York Police Department increasingly relies on surveillance footage to bolster activist prosecutions, she is planning a route that avoids as many cameras as possible.

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Telling counter-hegemonic stories – rendition flights




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Community Mapping



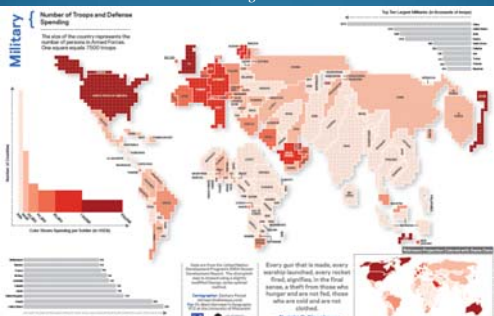
This is a community map of East Somerville, located just northwest of Boston. Click on each icon to learn about the neighborhood. Where are the community gardens? Do the bus stops have benches or shelters? What intersections have more foot traffic at different times in the day? Take a look at East Somerville through the eyes and ears of people who live here.

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Cartograms




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Democratizing Access to Experience – Counter-Mapping 2007 Anti-War Protests



http://www.little-yeti.com/c_map/index.shtml

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Counter-Mapping Resources for your Computer

ESRI ArcGIS – expensive

The cost of ESRI's ArcGIS suite of software begins at the \$1500 range and quickly increases as modules and new plug-ins are purchased. While this company and its associated software command approximately 80% of the market share of GIS, the start-up cost of the software remains prohibitive. Of course, the online help menus and virtual courses associated with the program make it one of the most powerful programs for cartography ever created. For more info: <http://www.esri.com>

Quantum GIS (QGIS) – FREE!

Quantum GIS (QGIS) is a user friendly Open Source Geographic Information System (GIS). Quantum GIS provides a continuously growing number of capabilities provided by core functions and plugins. You can visualize, manage, edit, analyse data, and compose printable maps. Quantum GIS is a volunteer driven project. They welcome contributions in the form of code contributions, bug fixes, bug reports, contributed documentation, advocacy and supporting other users on our mailing lists and the QGIS Forum. For more info: <http://www.qgis.org/>

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'Homework'

Go to the course website © <http://cmac.little-yeti.com/>
have another look at this PowerPoint
download the referenced readings (if you like)
find links to free GIS and Geography sites

Imagine an Idea – Create a Map!
it can be anything and as simple as you want

Next Week

a walk-through of using the free QGIS program discussed this evening
can't wait? See the website at <http://cmac.little-yeti.com>
we'll get together and compare maps/ideas
hopefully, we'll see the start of a Counter-Mapping movement in GNV!

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