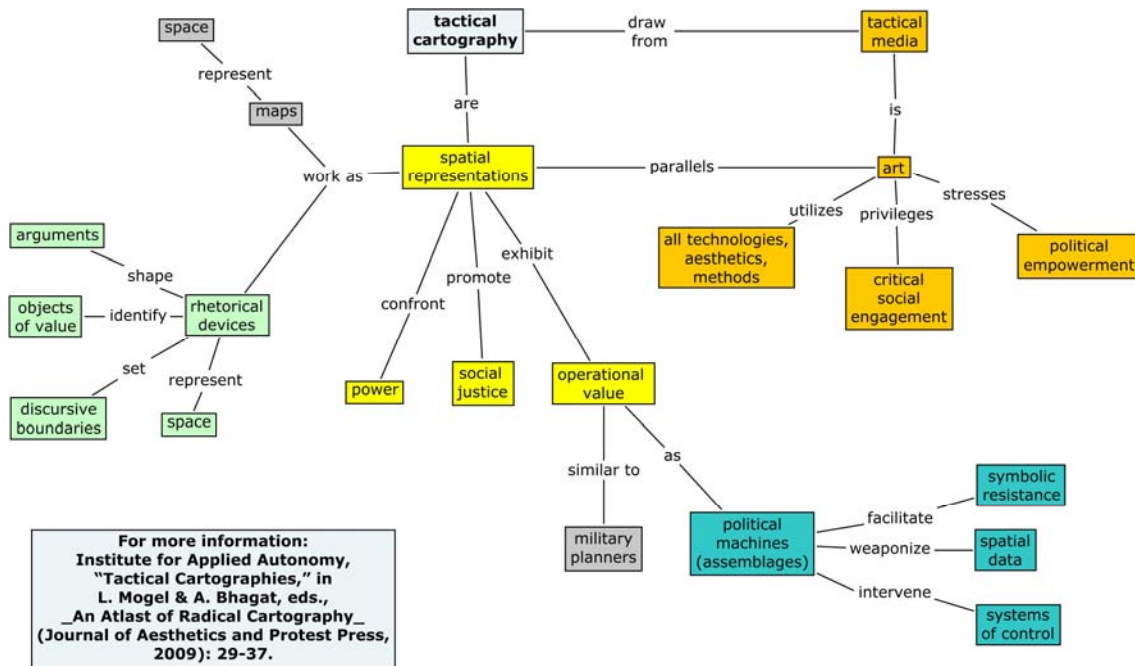TACTICAL CARTOGRAPHY

1.0 Maps as Social Constructions

Like other aspects of knowledge production and research mapping has undergone critical scrutiny in recent years. Cartography, Jeremy Crampton explains, has been affected by questions of representation underscoring that mapmaking must account for new insights about the politics of language, the fragmented subject, and the relationship between the dominant and "the other." Cartography has thus come to be seen as a social construction, something produced by real people in specific contexts reflecting social interests, cultural practices, and political strategies as a result of a relation of power.

Recognizing maps as socially constructed underscores how maps have at times been put into the service of oppressive forces. Maps have from the earliest days of colonialism, for example, played a role in conquest and the subjugation of populations of newly acquired territories. Given that maps are mired in relations of power, cartographers have increasingly been compelled to acknowledge who has been privileged as mapmakers and how maps impact social relations by serving a variety of interests, archiving multiple knowledges, and advancing competing projects.
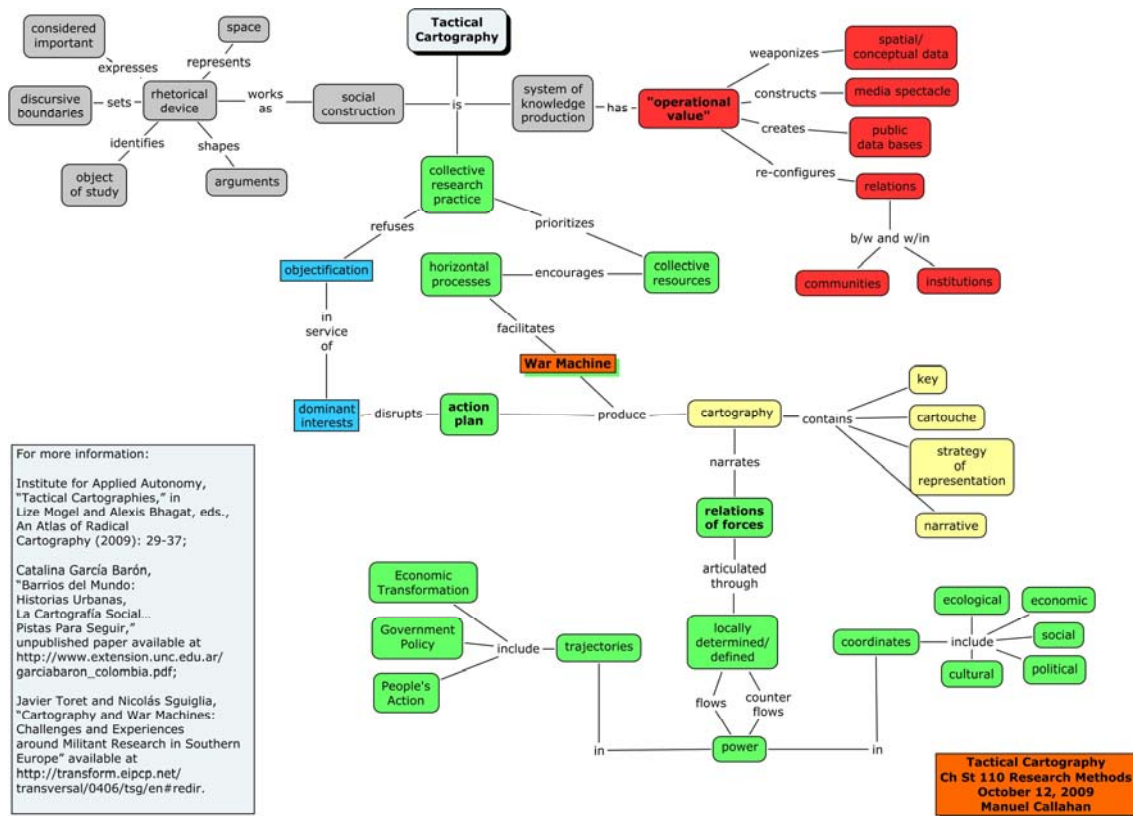
No longer viewed as innocent or static representations of physical spaces, cartographies operate as critical systems of information used for a variety of purposes and situations. There are a number of mapmaking strategies for representing physical spaces and concepts. Maps remain a primary way of representing space and a group's relationship to it. Maps also document the relation people have to each other. A "map" can also reveal a group's relation to a key concept as well as social, economic, and political forces. In either case, the conceptual framework, narrative, and strategy of representation of space, social relation, and concepts reflect a group's epistemological foundations and limitations all of which will find their way onto the map.

2.0 Tactical Cartographies

A tactical cartography, according to the Institute of Applied Autonomy, "refers to the creation, distribution, and use of spatial data to intervene in systems of control affecting spatial meaning and practice. Thus, tactical cartographies necessarily a) confront power, b) promote social justice, and c) have an operational value. These maps should be considered, the IAA inform us, as having operational value much in the same way that military planners make use of maps. Approaching map making as a tactical activity towards more strategic ends underscores how maps are not only socially constructed, but also emphasizes the uses maps are put to by both map makers and map readers for action. It also suggests that maps can be produced by a variety of groups in any number of circumstances. Cartographic projects can serve strategic purposes assisting in achieving logistical goals. "When individuals make their own maps," explains the IAA, "they offer an expression of what they consider important, what they consider to be 'of interest,' and for what they are willing to fight." Tactical cartographies expose how maps "set discursive boundaries and identify objects to be considered" as well as introduce opposing conceptualization. Thus map making and counter map making imply a relation of power.

The tactical cartography concept map:

- **space** — represent — **maps** — work as — **rhetorical devices**
- **tactical cartography** — draw from — **tactical media**
- **tactical cartography** — are — **spatial representations**
- **tactical media** — is — **art**
- **spatial representations** — parallels — **art**
- **art** — utilizes — **all technologies, aesthetics, methods**
- **art** — privileges — **critical social engagement**
- **art** — stresses — **political empowerment**
- **arguments** — shape — **rhetorical devices**
- **objects of value** — identify — **rhetorical devices**
- **rhetorical devices** — set — **discursive boundaries**
- **rhetorical devices** — represent — **space**
- **spatial representations** — confront — **power**
- **spatial representations** — promote — **social justice**
- **spatial representations** — exhibit — **operational value**
- **operational value** — similar to — **military planners**
- **operational value** — as — **political machines (assemblages)**
- **political machines (assemblages)** — facilitate — **symbolic resistance**
- **political machines (assemblages)** — weaponize — **spatial data**
- **political machines (assemblages)** — intervene — **systems of control**

For more information:
Institute for Applied Autonomy,
"Tactical Cartographies," in
L. Mogel & A. Bhagat, eds.,
An Atlas of Radical Cartography
(Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press,
2009): 29-37.

The tactical cartographies proposed here are reflexive and collective projects, open to multiple strategies of construction and numerous readings given that they are sign systems put to a variety of uses by any number of producers and readers. Thus, the symbols, key, scale, cartouche, and narrative of the map should resonate with the map's intended purpose and public. Maps like any other text make an argument. The intervention that maps make is more or less compelling depending on how sophisticated the process has been in gathering, evaluating, synthesizing, and presenting information.

Tactical Cartography

considered important — expresses — rhetorical device
space — represents
discursive boundaries — sets — rhetorical device — works as — social construction — is — system of knowledge production — has — "operational value"
rhetorical device — identifies — object of study
rhetorical device — shapes — arguments

"operational value" — weaponizes — spatial/ conceptual data
"operational value" — constructs — media spectacle
"operational value" — creates — public data bases
"operational value" — re-configures — relations
relations — b/w and w/in — communities / institutions

collective research practice
collective research practice — refuses — objectification
collective research practice — prioritizes — horizontal processes
horizontal processes — encourages — collective resources
objectification — in service of — dominant interests
horizontal processes — facilitates — War Machine

dominant interests — disrupts — action plan
action plan — produce — cartography
cartography — contains — key, cartouche, strategy of representation, narrative
cartography — narrates — relations of forces
relations of forces — articulated through — locally determined/ defined
locally determined/defined — coordinates — include — ecological, economic, social, cultural, political

Economic Transformation
Government Policy
People's Action — include — trajectories
locally determined/ defined — flows / counter flows — power
power — in

For more information:

Institute for Applied Autonomy, "Tactical Cartographies," in Lize Mogel and Alexis Bhagat, eds., An Atlas of Radical Cartography (2009): 29-37;

Catalina García Barón, "Barrios del Mundo: Historias Urbanas, La Cartografía Social... Pistas Para Seguir," unpublished paper available at http://www.extension.unc.edu.ar/ garciabaron_colombia.pdf;

Javier Toret and Nicolás Sguiglia, "Cartography and War Machines: Challenges and Experiences around Militant Research in Southern Europe" available at http://transform.eipcp.net/ transversal/0406/tsg/en#redir.

Tactical Cartography
Ch St 110 Research Methods
October 12, 2009
Manuel Callahan

3.0 Mapping Struggle (workshop)

We want to begin the map making process by determining what we know, what we must do, and what we hope for as it relates to our specific locality and the community we claim.

There is a great deal of information that we ourselves possess as well "data" about our local area that we must gather through investigation.

We propose generating specific information about a locale the group claims, taking note of competing strategies of knowledge production and its impact as part of a broader context of a relation of forces, or the constellation of agents, networks, alliance, projects, and competing strategies. These conflicts situated in a clearly determined space can be analyzed taking into account historical, economic, social, political, cultural, and ecological dimensions.

We suggest generating information organized around four different levels of antagonism, or relations of conflict and cooperation:

     -relation society-nature: ecological
     -relation subject-subject: political
     -relation society-capital-labor: production
     -relation identity: cultural[1]

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[1] These subject areas and the questions that follow have been largely drawn from Catalina García Barón, "Barrios del Mundo: Historias Urbanas, La Cartografía Social…Pistas Para Seguir," unpublished paper.

The activities, engagements, perceptions, and feelings that people claim through and about the "territory" have to be introduced, represented, and analyzed.

The following questions can be a guide for an emergent group to generate information and analysis about a local area that they claim. These questions can initiate a dialogue about the group's relation to a locale. It can also assist the members to get to know each other. A successful process can generate locally situated strategies of investigation.

Carefully note how the relationships to specific spaces and forces within demarcated areas may differ or be shared, complement or confront one another, especially noting how they may be experienced differently by members of the group. It may be useful to represent the territory (campus, neighborhood, area, region,), identify the most important places (buildings, zones, commons), determine the boundaries (or limits), note the accesses (routes, roads, dead ends or blind alleys, parks).

3.1 Symbolic Ecologies and the Cultural

-Which are the most significant places for you? Why?
-Are they places of symbolic relevance? How?
-What do they do?
-Are they related to each other?
-Where do people gather? To do what?
-How do people have fun?
-What are the relations among people?
-Which are the most common problems?
-Which are the problems that have the worse affect?
-How are they manifested?
-Do conflicts get solved? How?
-What is the best of the territory?
-What is the worse of the territory?
-Are there places where you do/don't like to go? If yes, explain why.
-Which are the places where you feel more (un)comfortable and why?
-From where did the people come from? -How do they express their cultural values?
-How do they appropriate the territory?

3.2 Participation and Power: The Political

-Do you participate politically within the territory? How? Where?
-If not, why?
-Which agents/projects/resources are present in the territory?
-What do they do?
-How do they function?
-What is their impact?
-With whom do they work?
-Who are the authorities of the territory?
-What is the level of legitimacy of these agents?
-What role do the authorities have?
-What relation do they have with the community?
-What projects exist in the territory that are not authorized? What do they do?
-What is their power and authority based on?

-How do projects impact the daily life of the territory?
-How do they organize?
-What level of legitimacy do these actions have?
-What problems exist between the persons involved during the processes?
-What potential do they have or claim?
-How do they mobilize?
-What are their claims?
-What happens with the legitimacy of the territory itself?

3.3 The Territory and The Environment: The Ecological

-What are the natural resources of the territory?
-How and where to people engage nature?
-From where does the water consumed come from? Where does it go?
-Where are the ecological reserves?
-Where are the places assigned for disposal, recycling, waste?
-Where are ecologically shared areas?
-Are there areas that are ecologically fragile? In danger?
-Where are the routes that lead to natural areas, water fountains, parks?
-Are there any environmental conflicts?
-Are there areas of contamination or biological hazard?

3.4 Territory and Production: The Economic

-What is the main economic activity?
-What do people do to survive?
-What do people do or claim as work? -Where do they work?
-What kinds of businesses are there?
-Who owns what in the territory?
-What is commercialized, where does it come from?
-What are the commercial zones?
-What stores are in the community?
-Who benefits from them?
-The people who live in the territory, are they owners or tenants?
-What different strategies are there regarding the productive development of the area?
-Are there conflicts between these strategies?
-What explains those conflicts?
-What are the consequences?

4.0 Strategies for Group Participation.

We suggest that a facilitation strategy emerge organically from the group itself. Initially a single facilitator might be necessary as the group first convenes. However, once the group begins to arrive at a general consensus of the tasks at hand, an agreed upon agenda of activities can emerge. Short term and long range goals can be made collectively. The group can rotate different members of the collective into the role of facilitator, for example, once facilitation becomes a shared project.

4.1 Facilitation

A designated facilitator can use techniques and activities generated and tested from within the group in relation to the specific project. An active facilitator should be ready at any time to intervene into the discussion in order to encourage participants to share their opinions, experiences, knowledge, skills, resources, and desires. However, it is important that the facilitator not dominate the dialogue by offering opinions or highlighting information they believe to be more important or of value. Be careful not to be the center of attention. The function of the facilitator is to make it easier for the rest of the group to engage. A successful facilitator intervenes as little as possible -a dialogue has its own dynamic.

During a conversation the intervention of a facilitator can be made in a variety of ways and for a number of different purposes:

- as a task master making sure to assist the group in designating beginning and ending times and to stay on task and on schedule;
- as an initiator posing a question or making a proposal to the rest of participants so they can begin the process of active reflection;
- as a mirror reflecting back to the group its own creative collective genius including its key insights, proposals, and action plans.
- as an activator when a member or a small portion of the group are not participating;
- as a motivator making every effort to encourage the group to engage and to make thoughtful and creative contributions;
- as a manager if there is a side discussion that is not pertinent to the process (re-focusing the conversation);
- as a mediator: if, for example, a member of the group is not being allowed to speak or competing views are dominating the discussion;
- as one more participant of the group, giving his/her opinion or contribution to the task.

Steps in a facilitation:

I. Assess
   a. who is in the room
   b. group/context
   c. level of engagement/comprehension

II. Convene
   a. welcome
   b. introductions
   c. explanation (agenda for the day)

III. Propose & Execute Activities
   a. to assess
   b. to produce knowledge
   c. to generate action plans

IV. Reflect Back
   a. verbally (restate key contributions, proposals, action plans)
   b. visually (on a chalk board or butcher paper)

V. Review & Summarize

4.2 Basic Agreements for Group Process:

- to give each person a chance to say what they want without having it dismissed, attacked, debated, agreed with, or supported;
- to listen to others, accepting only one person talks at a time without interrupting anyone who has the floor;
- to speak for oneself and his or her experiences;
- to respect and allow expression of the feelings of each participant;
- to step up, and step back;
- not to diminish, ridicule, or attack other participants or their contributions;
- not to repeat what someone says in class discussions outside of class without permission from that person or the group;
- not to treat others differently based on what was said or discussed in class;
- to try on the process.

4.3 The Scribe

It is useful to designate a notetaker or someone who will carefully systematize the information generated from group discussions and activities. It is especially important for a scribe to provide summaries of each work session noting key ideas, particular insights, critical debates, and agreed upon action proposals generated from the group.

In addition to documenting the group's process, a scribe should note:
- the decision of the group to represent something in the map;
- the discussion, including agreements and disagreements, that takes place during the activity;
- the problems that the group generates;
- the tasks the group gets done.

In conclusion, we want to restate that "maps" are not innocent strategies of representation. More importantly, we want to reiterate that the tactical cartography approach we propose here observes a number of commitments regarding reflexive, horizontal research strategies. In short, the tactical cartography should be viewed as Javier Toret and Nicolás Sguiglia suggest, war machines, or spaces of collective insurgent knowledge production that map flows and counter flows of relations of forces as part of a strategic process of a community strategically constructing its own open source archive of struggle.

5.0 Suggested Readings:

Jeremy W. Crampton, "Maps as social constructions: power, communication and visualization," Progress in Human Geography 25: 2 (2001): 235-252;

Jeremy W. Crampton, "Cartography: performative, participatory, political," Progress in Human Geography (May 2009): 1-9;

Institute for Applied Autonomy, "Tactical Cartographies," in Lize Mogel and Alexis Bhagat, eds., An Atlas of Radical Cartography (2009): 29-37;

Catalina García Barón, "Barrios del Mundo: Historias Urbanas, La Cartografía Social…Pistas Para Seguir," unpublished paper available at <http://www.extension.unc.edu.ar/garciabaron_colombia.pdf>;

Javier Toret and Nicolás Sguiglia, "Cartography and War Machines: Challenges and Experiences around Militant Research in Southern Europe" available at <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0406/tsg/en#redir>.

6.0 Useful weblinks:

cartografía ciudadana
http://cartografiaciudadana.net/index.php/Portada

hackitectura.net
http://hackitectura.net/blog/

Cartac
https://n-1.cc/pg/groups/2601/cartac/

iconoclasistas
http://iconoclasistas.com.ar/

3cs counter-cartography collective
http://www.countercartographies.org/