

Lize Mogel and Alexis Bhagat, *An Atlas of Radical Cartography*. Los Angeles: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-9791377-2-3 (paperback) <http://www.an-atlas.com/>

Mapping is increasingly being utilized as a tool of subversion and as a technique to create alternative spatial authorities. Court battles like the Awas Tingni indigenous land title in Nicaragua (2001) speak to the force of collective action and mapping testimony. Efforts of radical activists around the globe invoke Situationists' methods (eg *détournement*) to reconceptualize space from a neoliberal grid into a realm of satire, empowerment or simply, possibility. The editors of *An Atlas of Radical Cartography* contribute to this milieu with their book of essays and full-color maps. The two-volume set spans topics from trash collection mafias in New York City to radical city planners in Calcutta to "geophilosophy" for wanderers.

Each map and short essay pair is disparate in theory and cartographic approach from the others, contributing to a notion of alternative and specific geographies. Yet, there is a thematic link in *An Atlas*. As Jai Sen from the Calcutta group Unnayan notes in his essay: "Maps are portraits of the world in the manner in which those preparing them would like the world to be understood . . . Mapping . . . is an act of power" (13).

In their introduction essay, editors Lize Mogel and Alexis Bhagat define radical cartography as a practice, which "subverts conventional notions in order to actively promote social change" (6). The entire corpus of these maps and essays continually points to two things: radical mapping is a departure point and not a static conception of space; and it is one component in a dynamic process of social change.

The 10 essay/map pairs defy conventional book organization, but generally appeal to maps as both direct action and observation, lived experiences and theoretical musings. From years of working as an activist-architect in impoverished areas of Calcutta, Jai Sen writes about "Other worlds, other maps: Mapping the unintended city". The essay and blueprint style map *Chetla Lock Gate, Marginal Land Settlement in Calcutta (now Kolkata)*, 1984 by the Unnayan present an "unintended city" which are the homes and everyday spaces of Calcutta's working poor, areas considered "vacant" and invisible by official planners.

Direct resistance is a route charted by several of these essays and maps. Navigating an undetected path through surveillance cameras in Manhattan is possible using the *Routes of Least Surveillance*, 2001/2007 and "Tactical

cartographies” by the Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA). Citywide camera locations are denoted and via cartographic profiles, five individuals are followed under the camera’s voyeuristic eye, for example, Skye, an anti-globalization activist and Zahid, a Brooklyn-born Muslim. Another map of resistance action is *CIA Rendition Flights 2001–2006*, 2006 by Trevor Paglen and John Emerson, accompanied with the interview “Mapping ghosts” by the Visible Collective. Mappers and writers deconstruct the geographical doublespeak between the “darkest” spaces of the “War on Terror” and seemingly innocuous US domestic areas, and make legible the allegedly non-existent torture victims through the banality of air flights.

Two essay/maps deal with changing geographies through immigration experiences. “Drawing Escape Tunnels through Borders” by Maribel Casas-Cortes and Sebastian Cobarrubias and the map *Geography of the Fürth Departure Center*, 2004 by An Architektur with a42.org, examine refugee asylums or “departure centers” in the European Union. Examining these “nodes of the border regime”, the writers consider the notion of “internalized borders” which stratifies European populations based on race and geographic origin. Immigration flows up and down the Western hemisphere are reconfigured in “Latino/a America: A geophilosophy for wanderers” by Alejandro de Acosta and “Latino/a América; Selecciones” by Pedro Lasch, and Lasch’s map *Vicenio Marquez-Guías de Ruta/Route Guides (#1 New York)*, 2003/2006. De Acosta draws from Nietzsche’s wanderer to whom a final destination does not exist and seeks to disrupt preconceptions of Latinidad identity and national boundaries. Lasch’s map is a lovely and borderless rendering of the western hemisphere in scarlet chalk.

Environmental concerns are the impetus for many of the writers and cartographers. San Francisco Bay is reoriented from a bird’s eye view to promote a discussion on how landforms are commodified. Engaging David Harvey’s “spatial fix”, “Our land is changing—soon yours will, too” by Sarah Lewison and the map *From North to South*, 2006 by Lize Mogel look at connections between resource and market sites, accumulation and environmental exploitation. Focusing on wastewater flows and access in southern California is the group conversation “Drawing (on) water in Los Angeles”, among Jenny Price, Jane Tsong, Ellen Sollod, Lize Mogel, D.J. Waldie and Paul S. Kibel, and is paired with Tsong’s hand-drawn map, *The Los Angeles Water Cycle: The Way It Is, Not the Way It Should Be and One Day Will Be . . .*, 2006/2007. The whimsical, almost childlike map belies the gravity of a declining water supply and human resource abuses.

Immediate havoc caused by consumption and trash cartels is humorously relayed in *New York Garbage Machine*, 2002 by the Center for Urban Pedagogy, Justyna Judycka and Damon Rich, and “The power of garbage” by Heather Rogers. How garbage moves within New York City is overlaid with photos of the myriad of individuals connected to waste removal, city council members or people like Francisco Simon, “Without garbage, I wouldn’t have a job” and Leo Paulino, “Me gusta mucho la basura! Me encanta el olor”. And Kolya Abramsky deconstructs the notion of a sustainable and hierarchical “oil system” in “Struggles over transition: Emancipating energy?”, alongside Brooke Singer’s map *The U.S. Oil Fix*, 2006/2007.

Finally, the collection concludes with the theoretical posits: “A world map” by Avery F. Gordon, “A world map: In which we see . . .” by Ashley Hunt

and Hunt's map *A World Map: In Which We See . . .*, 2005. The complex, full color cartographic chart examines "crises in capitalism" and how they are fixed by ideological constructs in order to facilitate gruesome results. For example, "emptying all social infrastructure" can lead to the node "social death" set off by radial arrows of "community cut off", "refugee", "prisoner" and "stateless." The concepts overlap, interconnect and create an effective visual of multiple theories (eg Arendt, Soja, Pliny the Elder, Agamben, etc). This final essay/map combination essentially connects all the previous discussions in linking phenomena like immigration or environmental disaster to space—both actual sites on the planet and virtual dimensions of theory.

Critically, *An Atlas* is best approached as a canapé tray of radical cartography methods and philosophies in different sites. *An Atlas* promotes discussions on how maps are utilized, visualized and debated—as well as by/for/with whom and within what trajectories. The tactile phenomenon of the fold out maps allows the reader to travel through the concepts in a way that merely reprinting the maps in the book would limit. *An Atlas* doesn't seek to be comprehensive, but rather operates as a smart and accessible stimulant, opening conversations about practice and theory, and most importantly introducing new movements and efforts.

An Atlas is relevant for scholars and activists, geographers and cartographers who are interested in alternative spatial theories, collective action and/or simply want to play with mapping forms.

JEN McCORMACK

Geography and Regional Development

University of Arizona

Tucson, AZ

USA

jenmack@email.arizona.edu