

M Recording Margins a of Conflict

Mapping Along

The Thinking Hand: Mapping as a Medium of Urban Exploration

Curator and author Simon Sheikh in Conversation with the metroZones Curatorial Team

The following conversation was held in advance of the Mapping Along exhibition that will open on April 16, 2021 at the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien. In the discussion, metroZones, the Berlin-based collective for urban research, discusses how their mappings serve as media for artistic research on city and space and as interventions in public space.

Simon Sheikh: Let's start with a question about principles. What do you see as the main difference, or main advantage, in using the word mapping over cartography? How did you, as a collective working in various configurations, develop the research method of mapping? How has the method changed through the practice of doing it and through the different configurations of collaborators – those within the group, and those you've worked with outside the group?

Kathrin Wildner: As an urban anthropologist, I work with mappings a lot. For me it has always been an important tool for researching everyday practices and the situatedness of people – how people inscribe themselves into the urban. Mental maps are a good example, because they're about the subjective perception of environment and one's orientation. During our *Hellersdorf Tapete* project, we did workshops with people from outside of Hellersdorf – we tried to go beyond language, spoken language, in order to capture ideas, perceptions, but also imaginaries of the space through mappings and visualizations. The people who joined the workshop weren't professional mappers, cartographers, or artists, but they tried to sketch down what they saw and listened to. And then we made them look at their drawings and talk about their drawings. This was a very important aspect of how we work with maps.

Anne Huffscheid: Maybe it is useful to remember that the working title of the actual exhibition was "*Wir nennen es Mapping*" (We Call It Mapping). By that we meant to revisit the kind of exploratory and culture-generating urban explorations we used to do, from a mapping perspective, and to interrogate the concept itself departing from our own practice. So we were asking ourselves if what we've been doing as metroZones has possibly, in a way, always been about mapping in one form or another? Because mapping means relating things to each other, and in the process spatial images and visual spaces emerge. For the Hellersdorf workshop, for the first time we consciously employed methods from urban studies, and then came up, in

a constant process of revisiting, with this additional video format, which was very much given impulse by Christian. It was thought to make our mapping more legible, in an audiovisual manner. We even may have invented a new or original mapping format by that.

Diana Lucas-Drogan: Mapping also changes all the time. For the *Stadt als Byte* mapping project at the HAU, we took a different approach from our participatory mappings in Hellersdorf. It depends on the questions we're raising and their specific context. We always ask ourselves what kind of medium we want to use in order to tell different stories and share knowledge. There isn't a strict path for how to formulate mapping. It can be more performative, like our work at the HAU, or more participatory and go beyond questions of authorship.

S: In the Hellersdorf videos, there are three different levels operating simultaneously: there are the drawings, or maps themselves; then there's the language; and then there's the film and the way it's framed. Assuming this is something that happened in Hellersdorf during the project's development, arising from your methodology or vice versa (you've used this approach subsequently), I'm wondering what it produces? What you think that triad accomplishes?

Christian Hanussek: If it works well, it will create a space, a form of attention that might open up a new space. It's not intentional and we can't really plan it, it just happens in a certain moment. This openness is the advantage of video. We've had some extremely wonderful experiences with this method. I remember when we were at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt with Muhammed Jadama, a young filmmaker from Gambia, during our project *Connecting Spaces*. He spoke about the refugee camp at Oranienplatz, and he was supposed to make a drawing on a blank sheet. And all he made was a very tiny, very narrow drawing of a tent in one corner of this big sheet – and this presentation contained an amazing density of emotion. Maybe it even corresponded with the idea of art according to Jacques Rancière: it's something you could never produce intentionally.

S: This relates again to the question of how mapping is different from cartography. I was immediately struck by some of the visual tropes from television. In a very benign way the weather forecast, and in a much less benign way when military experts are talking about invasions and warfare. What would happen if you deliberately removed the narrator and let the narration simply be the voice? This might be where mapping and cartography differ, in terms of – to use a military metaphor – tactics and strategies, which

Stadt als Byte: Mapping a New Urbanism

With its latest research project, metroZones has decided to focus on an area where today's most influential cartographers are operating. Mapping and representing the world in precise detail is one of the central practices of an industry that has been expanding from Silicon Valley into the center of world's major cities since the early 2000s.

This spatial expansion is one aspect of the "tech urbanism," "webtech urbanism," or "platform urbanism" that *Stadt als Byte* (City as Byte) has set out to explore. Other characteristics range from the upheaval in forms of employment caused by digital platforms like Uber or Amazon's Mechanical Turk, to the widespread datamining of urban infrastructures conducted by companies such as Yelp, TripAdvisor, or Airbnb. These portal operators claim to be making maps of the "real" city in order to profit from it and reproduce it in their own image.

Lead among the mapping dataminers is Alphabet subsidiary Google, whose measure of the earth is supposedly available to all searchers free of charge. In fact, it isn't only users who are locating themselves within Google Maps – Google too knows exactly where users are at all times. And each of their destinations is registered and incorporated profitably into the real-time construction of the map. Particularly in cities where Google Maps has replaced the folding map as an orientation guide, streams of consumers and tourists are guided through increasingly dense markings in ways that serve Google's interests.

In November 2016, Google announced it was no longer content to influence Berlin's development solely via maps – it also wanted to establish a Google Campus in the center of Kreuzberg. The corporation has already employed similar institutions to help incubate startups in six different cities across the world. Google was encouraged in its efforts by a Berlin Senate that hoped to breed a "smart city" from the blossoming IT startup milieu in the city's hipster neighborhoods. The idea is to lure young startup founders, as well as established names, to fill the city's tax coffers. In the future, the Senate hopes, Berlin will no longer be "poor but sexy," but simply sexy.

The plans provoked heavy resistance, which itself is part of a new urbanism. The digital exploitation of the urban has proven to be a process full of conflict. Gentrification, the increasing precarity of jobs, the hijacking of important networks for the monopolization of information – these processes continue to catalyze protest actions, of which the San Francisco blockades of buses transporting Google and Facebook employees between 2013 and 2016 were an early example. The Berlin campaign, coordinated by a diverse

Works in the Exhibition

metroZones

We Have Nothing to Lose but our Supply Chains

Mapping, audio, Berlin 2020/2021

The mapping is the outcome of an exploratory tour of the Amazon logistics landscape in and around Berlin, in a multi-sited format: two metroZones-members were out in the field, sending their observations via voice messages to a home based mapper, who translated the spoken fieldnotes into drawings. These were combined with sound files and photographs in a *Mapping Along Amazon* installation. In a further step, the materials are condensed into a video.

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Stadt als Byte

Live-mapping, video-clip, Berlin 2018

Stadt als Byte is the title of an ongoing metroZones research on “webTechUrbanism,” that encompasses the spatial expansion of the tech industry in cities, the reorganization of labor on the part of platforms, the datamining by internet monopolists, local struggles against web-based businesses intruding into urban life, as well as the reappropriation of technologies in order to convert them into digital commons. In a laboratory held in 2018, metroZones realized a *live mapping* of Berlin’s webtech economy, on the basis of narrated working experiences from startup employees to delivery drivers. The exhibited video clip process some of the insights gained from this mapping performance.

From 2020 on the research is funded by Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation in cities such as Poznań, Warsaw, London, Barcelona, and Berlin.

Tytus Szabelski

AMZN: Work in Progress

Photographs, video, road sign, leaflets, Poznań 2020

In his long-term project, the Polish artist Tytus Szabelski explores how digital capitalism shapes the social life and the actual surface of the planet. As a mode of artistic fieldwork, in 2020 he took a job at the Amazon fulfillment center near Poznań. From this experience working under the pressure of noise, conveyor belts, scanners, and motivational slogans, he developed abstract animations and digital images. Also, his visual series situates the logistical center within the surrounding landscape. Finally, the artist includes documentations of the struggle of organized Amazon workers.

Denise Scott Brown

South Street Project: The Philadelphia Crosstown Community

Photography, wallpaper, graphics; Philadelphia 1960s-2021

In 1968, architect Denise Scott Brown was approached by urban activists for support in preventing the highway along South Street. She used strip photography borrowed from artist Ed Ruscha to unify both sides of the street visually. In the spirit of this activist planning, Scott Brown and partner Robert Venturi created the legendary “Learning from Las Vegas” studio. For *Mapping Along*, Jeremy Tenenbaum developed a wall-spanning design based on historical and contemporary photographs, mappings, and other materials.

Im Dissens? | Stefan Endewardt,

Dagmar Pelger, Joerg Franzbecker

Property and everyday life in Oranienstrasse

Mapping, Berlin 2021

The connection between property and the production of space in Oranienstrasse is condensed in three exemplary focal points. The mapping, elaborated on the basis of workshops and published in newspaper format, brought together local knowledge.

Christoph Schäfer

Oranienstrasse, revisited

Wall drawings, Hamburg 2021

In 1984, the Hamburg-based artist and urban activist spent a year in Kreuzberg, living on Oranienstrasse. In his contribution to *Mapping Along*, Schäfer revisits his memories and intertwines them with a graphic recording of the contemporary situation.

Christian Hanussek, Gerda Heck

Xiaobei Wallpaper

Wallpaper, varying dimensions, Guangzhou/Berlin 2017

The art and research project *Chinafrika. under construction* went in search of traces of the cultural relationships between China and Africa. Within this project the *Xiaobei Wallpaper*, based on interviews with African traders in two districts of Guangzhou, depicts and maps the presence and activities of Africans in the Chinese megacity.

Daniel Kötter

Establishing Shots

Videos on 58 mobile phones, tables, paper; 2014-2017

The 58 short videos displayed on mobile phones were shot on several research trips in China, Hong Kong, and eight African countries between 2014 and 2017. They constitute a landscape of narratives on the complex Sino-African relations in five chapters, installed on devices produced in the “factories of the world” in southern China. *Establishing Shots* is part of the project *Chinafrika. under construction*.

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metroZapp: Mapping an Urban Neighborhood into the Digital

digital application, screenshots; Berlin 2016

The metroZapp is a digital application that metroZones developed as an interactive format for narrating urban complexity. This pilot focuses on the transformation of Berlin’s Moritzplatz into a “creative cluster.” It provides a georeferential map of the area, a historical overview, and most importantly audio as well as video clips from conversations with “place-makers” and residents. The format allows users to participate actively in the production of meaning by interacting and selecting.

Katharina Pelosi

How Loud can Silence be: A Listening Score

Sound installation, monitor, headphones; Hamburg 2021

Pelosi explores the acoustic interface between postcolonial debates, the museum, and urban space. She recorded a variety of ethnological museums as spaces of storage and representation, muted archives of colonial appropriation and urban institutions. The sound mapping is composed of field recordings and interview fragments on the issue of silence, and also by the sound of the recording itself: the cracking of the microphone, the squeaking of shoes.

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metroZones-Schule für städtisches Handeln (metroZones-School for Urban Action)

Workshop series, graphic recordings by Christoph Schäfer, Erik Göngrich, Diana Lucas-Drogan amongst others, schoolbook, video, Berlin 2015/2016

Over two years, a wide range of urban actors, activists, and other interested citizens met in Berlin and Hamburg to discuss and try out a variety of conceptual ideas and methodological tools from critical urban studies, in order to expand urban research and interventions beyond academia. In this “School for Urban Action” mapping was an important tool of collaborative knowledge production. In practical exercises participants elaborated maps in order to explore spatial structures as well as sensitive perceptions of the experienced space.

Larissa Fassler and metroZones

Gare du Nord

Video, Berlin 2020

The video is a collaboration between mapping artist Larissa Fassler and metroZones. It is composed of three videos that deal with her series *Gare du Nord, Paris* from 2014-2015. Led by her voice and hands, Fassler walks spectators through her notes, drawings, and photographs of the three-month daily visits on the station, which she explored as a complex intersection between the city and the periphery, colonialism and French identity.

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Mapping along the Refugee Complex: Attempting to Map Urban Action

sur place: two drawings on paper, text board, video, Berlin 2015 *Wiederaufnahmeprobe*: installation with drawings on textile, paper and film, video, Berlin 2015 *Connecting Spaces*: two drawings, video, Berlin 2016

In 2015, metroZones developed a tripartite series of mappings, in collaboration with various artists, that addressed the urban experiences of refugees. The polyphonic mapping *sur place* reconstructs urban occupation of space and the organization of everyday life under exceptional circumstances. The multi-layered notation *Rehearsing Revival* tracks the struggle for a self-organized refugee center in the city. In March 2016, metroZones organized the workshop entitled *Connecting Spaces*, in collaboration with Napuli Paul Langa, Muhammed Lamin Jadama, and Muhammad Asif Syed, who shared experiences and drawings on spatial networking in Berlin and beyond.

Pedro Ceñal Murga

Walk the Line: The Distributed Vertical Border

Ten models, installation, printed book; Mexico City 2015-2021

The installation explores the spatial production of mass migration and how the displacement and detention of migrants impact the territory they navigate. In 2015, Ceñal Murga studied formal as well as informal settings that emerge from the migratory movements from Central America through the territory of Mexico, toward the US. On that basis he elaborated a series of architectural objects that propose a typology of spatial functions that shape the migrant’s all but linear route.

Peter Spillmann, Labor K3000,

TRANSIT MIGRATION

MigMap: Governing Migration, A Virtual Cartography of European Migration Policies

Four graphics on paper, Berlin/Zürich 2004-2005

MigMap is the result of a transdisciplinary collaboration between sociology, political science, anthropology, political activism, and artistic practice. It investigated new forms of supranational governance in the European migration regime and creates a picture of how the production of knowledge was taking place, who was participating in it and had access to it. The resulting mappings visualize selected information on players, debates, processes, and events that constitute Europe’s migration policies in the early 2000s.

metroZones | Christian Hanussek

Hellersdorfer Tapete

Wallpaper, wall poster, videos with workshop participants, Berlin 2015

The *Hellersdorfer Tapete* is the result of a 14-month case study on a peripheral site in Berlin, the Hellersdorf district in the north-eastern margins of the city. The research includes fieldwork and conversations with residents, workshops and mapping exercises. The exhibited wall posters — that were installed in local subway stations — as well as the wallpaper resulted from an artistic translation of field recordings into a graphic/artistic form, in order to decipher the interconnections of this specific urban structure.

Diana Lucas-Drogan

Haut von Hellersdorf

Textiles, performance, video, Berlin 2017

This mapping investigation is a collaborative and transdisciplinary recording of the socio-political life of refugees and locals in Hellersdorf. Mapping of the sites were turned into dresses in motion that were worn outside of Hellersdorf. Performing these textiles became another way of recording, mapping, and narrating.

Supplementary Program

The exhibition will be accompanied by an event series — featuring lectures, roundtable discussions, film presentations and workshops — that examines the making and reading of maps from different perspectives while also exploring the boundaries of mapping. In the *metroZones-Schule des städtischen Handelns* (metroZones-School for Urban Action), mapping practices will be tested and discussed.

Opening	16 April	19:00
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metroZones.Saloon #14	17 April	16:00-19:00
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We Call It Mapping

Discussion with metroZones and the exhibition artists about the diverse strategies and experiences of mapping.

With Pedro Ceñal Murga, Larissa Fassler, In Dissent/ Dagmar Pelger, Tytus Szabelski, Christoph Schäfer, Simon Sheikh, and others.

metroZones-Schule für städtisches Handeln	23-25 April
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The Making of Maps: Property and other Spatial Measures

In the first metroZones school, the mapping method as a collective and collaborative process will be explored and tested in practice. The object of research will be the exhibition location itself — the Bethanien as a contested space — as well as questions about the property relationships and spatial measures surrounding Kreuzberg’s Oranienstrasse. With Dagmar Pelger, Nishat Awan, Agata Lisiak, and others.

Friday	<u>Lecture</u> by Nishat Awan in conversation with Agata Lisiak and Kathrin Wildner	19:00
Saturday	<u>Workshop</u>	10:00-19:00
Sunday	<u>Workshop</u>	11:00-15:00

metroZones.Saloon #15	7 May	18:00-21:00
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The Boundaries of Mapping: Operational Spaces and Performance

This double event engages in a dialogue on the boundaries of mapping from a performative perspective, ranging from mapping performances to operational space. From that kind of distance, the evening approaches the question “Is this still mapping?” from various angles while negotiating differences and overlaps through conversation.

Guerilla Architects a.o., in conversation with Jochen Becker and Diana Lucas-Drogan.

metroZones.Saloon #16	20 May	21:00
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A Walk

Using the tools of documentary filmmaking and an expanded visual language, Nigerian artist Rahima Gambo explores the experimental narrative of mapping as “walking.” In her film, documentary storytelling, embodiment, psycho-spiritual geography, sociopolitics, urban environment, and autobiography intersect.

Rahima Gambo in conversation with Christian Hanussek and Laura Horelli.

metroZones-Schule für städtisches Handeln	28-30 May
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Re-Reading Mappings: Space, Conflict, and Violence

In the second metroZones school, we shift the focus from the making of maps to the reading of maps, conceiving mapping as a method for thinking about situated spatial knowledge and power in cartographic practice. Through collaborative map reading, we uncover different or even divergent approaches to reading, and distinguish among cartographic discourses, strategies, and languages. What role do mappings play in the materialization of urban conflicts and violence? With Sergio Beltrán-García, Monika Streule, and others.

Friday	<u>Lecture</u> by Sergio Beltrán-García in conversation with Anne Huffschmid	19:00
Saturday	<u>Workshop</u>	10:00-19:00
Sunday	<u>Workshop</u>	11:00-15:00

metroZones.Saloon #17	3 June	18:00-22:00
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Stadt als Byte: WebTechUrbanism, New Work, and the Recoding of the Urban

In this roundtable, researchers, artists, and activists from London, Poznań, Warsaw, Barcelona, and Berlin address the question of how platform economies and digital technologies are reformatting urban space, everyday life, and particularly working conditions — as well as what opportunities for appropriation and recoding are available. Topics covered will range from the operations of online giants like Amazon in Berlin and Poznań to experiences with digital commons.

With Bartek Goldmann, Tytus Szabelski, Scott Rogers, Ulf Treger, and others.

The ongoing research project *Stadt als Byte* is supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

metroZones.Saloon #18	4 June	18:00-22:00
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The weekend workshops for the metroZones School (April 24-25 and May 29-30) feature a public section and a section closed to the public.

metroZones.Saloon #19	5 June	18:00-22:00
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Please register for all events individually at →→mappingalong@metrozones.info

^[1] All events will take place in English

^[2] They will be held online or in person, depending on current circumstances

^[3] Up-to-date info about tours, support programs for the exhibition, and visitor requirements are available at: →→ kunstraumkreuzberg.de and →→ metrozones.info