

Introduction to The Social Lives of Maps Volume 1

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As Bill Brown and Arjun Appadurai have observed, the biographical lives of things inform us about not only a thing's existence, from its creation until its demise, but of how it has been used, valued, and commoditized. They also inform us about human interaction with things in ways that can allow us to understand the experiences of marginalized and unexpected interlocutors of a thing's existence. Maps as documents have complex lives. In some ways, maps might be considered eternal in that they are subject to revision and these updates comprise moments or stages of their life spans as living documents. In others, maps live short lives when inserted into books that get destroyed, deemed out of date, grow ragged, or end up torn out of the book altogether and introduced into entirely new vertical contexts as wall maps.

Maps are everyday objects, but they are also highly esteemed and valued as antiques, rarified and conserved in the special collections of archives, libraries, and museums who catalogue their lives or provenance. In this sense, maps experience class and privilege similarly to humans, which gives us pause to consider whether other areas of identity are experienced by maps as well. Contemporary mapping platforms such as Google Maps offer entanglements with our own lives;

they collect data about our movements, desires, and interactions, and attempt to interact with us through these connected nodes. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and responsive software designed to interact with humans increasingly make maps living interactions that adapt to and engage directly with us. Finding ourselves on an analogue, paper map offers a similar function in that humans consistently consult the map to both find and see themselves through it. This thematic series of issues of the *Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle* engages with all aspects of the social lives of maps in any way that underlines this material object's lifespan. *The Social Lives of Maps* highlights and explores signature areas of a map's biography as an object, as a living entity subject to being updated and transformed for new audiences, and as a container of knowledge and wisdom capable of influencing human activity.

As the project's guest editor, I will reserve an analytical introduction for the third and final volume of the series, and take the opportunity here to introduce the essays contained in *The Social Lives of Maps*, vol. 1. The first of these essays is contributed by Steffen Wöll, postdoctoral researcher at Leipzig University, titled "Beyond the Artifact: Unfolding Medieval, Algorithmic, and Unruly Lives of Maps."

Wöll explores the social agency that maps have and exert among humans in different periods and geographical contexts by reflecting on medieval mappamundi and their influence on human decision making; the power of hand-drawn maps that graft human experience and witnessing upon the document's biography; and the sometimes-fleeting materiality undergirding maps such as those of the Gaza Strip and that iterate the past existence of Chinese temples. By looking at different types of maps in interdisciplinary, transhistorical and global fashions, the essay also considers how peoples' lives become transformed and even defined by cartography.

The second essay in this volume is by Sean Roberts, a lecturer of art and architecture at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, titled "World Views: Cartographers, Artisanry and Epistemology in Early Modern Italy." In it, Roberts considers how human experience enrobes the map with almost physical features – such as "eyewitness" experience and "hand-written" information, endowing maps with a sense of physicality and thus humanity. At the same time, the copy practices of the period mean that past maps become entangled and involved in the biography of new maps, making many cartographic creations complex from a biographical perspective because these entanglements also point to the human intervenors, copyists, cartographers, scholars, and publishers who grafted past maps upon newer ones, as well as to other visual contexts, such as paintings and book illustrations, that subsequently made their way onto maps. As a result, the role of the cartographer and their craft is inherently interdependent upon the livingness of the map as a document

with the capacity to broadly project the human experience.

The final essay in this thematic volume, contributed by Lynette Russell – an Indigenous historian at Monash University – and Leonie Stevens – a research fellow at Monash University – is titled "The Dutch East India Company (VOC) Tasman Map and Australia: Competing Interests, Myth Making, and an Australian Icon." Known as the Tasman Map, this document traces the voyages of Dutch navigator, Abel Tasman, in the South Pacific. The authors unpack the map's biography, from its origins to its transformation into a symbol of imperialism and power at the Mitchell Library at Monash University, Australia, which acquired the map in the twentieth century. Its presence there has given birth to new mythologies and legends about both the map, the man who inspired it, and the various constituencies that possessed or held the map over the centuries, as well as new modalities of the map's existence once it was transubstantiated from paper into the form of a mosaic for the Mitchell Library's vestibule. In today's world, the map and its discursive veins chafe against shifting social attitudes toward colonization and its impacts on the country's Indigenous people, making it a contested emblem of both violence and nationhood.

These three essays offer a taste of what will come in subsequent volumes of *The Social Lives of Maps*. In this issue, we also include a non-thematic article by Laura E. Ruberto, titled "Creative Expression and the Material Culture of Italian POWs in the United States During World War II," as well as several book and exhibition reviews.