

## Livingmaps Review goes live

In the deserts of the West, still today, there are tattered ruins of the Map, inhabited by animals and beggars; and in all the land there is no other relic of the disciplines of geography.

Jorge Luis Borges *The Exactitude of Science*

Holes in maps look through to nowhere.

Laura Riding *The Map of Places*

The spatial turn in the human sciences coupled with the development of open source digital mapping technologies, the impact of satnavs, and big data visualisation has led to an explosion of interest in maps of every kind. No longer the sole prerogative of land surveyors, military strategists, planners, professional cartographers and academics, map making has become a platform which engages people from all walks of life, a creative tool for the *demos*. Ordinary citizens can now create maps that tell their own story - they can use GPS to plan their journeys by land or sea, they can go geo-caching and adventure into new and unfamiliar environments in search of buried treasure. Thanks to Google, they can get a close up view of almost every city on the planet.

Yet there is a downside to the story. Open source digital technologies may have put the means of mapping into the hands of ordinary citizens but in practice the outcome has been far from empowering. These developments are integral to processes of globalization which have hollowed out the resources of locally-situated knowledge and marginalised its communities of interest and affiliation. As a result, there is a growing disjuncture between the enlarged scale and fluidity of social network mapping through virtual media and the narrowing scope and fixity of lived territories and place making, linked to foreclosures of social ambition and economic opportunity for large sections of the population.

*Livingmaps Review* is setting out to tell both sides of this story. It will celebrate the turn of cartography away from purely technical and academic concerns to become a subversive medium for political activists, visual artists, writers and community organisers. We aim to register the intellectual excitement and political challenge of these new developments, for while there is a proliferation of scholarly monographs and coffee table books, there is precious little writing that is both critically engaged and grounded in innovative practice. At the same time we will not be ignoring the dark matter of cartography hinted at by Borges and Laura Riding - its capacity to erase or obscure which is the reverse side of its power to totalise and make things visible. We believe that *Livingmaps Review* has an important role to play in strengthening democratic politics by documenting and disseminating radical participatory forms of cartography, opening up new spaces and forms of creative representation in and against the mappings of power.

As you will see from this issue our approach cuts across disciplines and fields with contributions from geographers, historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, sociologists,

environmentalists, psychologists, poets, visual artists and graphic designers. Each of the journal's five sections has a specific remit.

- *Navigations* - full length articles with critical apparatus
- *Waypoints* - shorter experimental pieces of writing
- *Mapworks* - a gallery of maps, historical and contemporary, with interpretative commentary or dialogue.
- *Lines of Desire* - fiction, poetry and autobiography on cartographic themes, interviews with theorists and practitioners, and annotated performance walks and photo-documentation.
- *Reviews* of books, exhibitions and events

We have set out to blur the distinction between professional and amateur map makers and to encourage imaginative presentations in experimental audiovisual and graphic formats, especially from unpublished contributors. Further information about our editorial and submissions policy is available from the [Livingmaps Review site](#), which uses the [Open Journal Systems](#) platform for online submission and editing.

We will publish as we go, with two issues per year, in early Spring and Autumn. Forthcoming issues are planned on Indigenous Cartography and Smart Cities.

We hope you will enjoy this launch issue and join in the debate. Contact us with your comments and suggestion for future directions.