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Senses of Place, Senses of the Past: Making Experiential Maps as Part of Community Heritage Fieldwork

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This paper explores the mode of production and potential uses of a specific heritage fieldwork and interpretation tool: collaborative experiential maps. Drawing from a case study in Italy, this paper asks to what extent the experiential map created with the sole input from members of the local community can offer a useful research tool in fieldwork and interpretation — specifically, it discusses how open-ended, collaborative experiential mapping can add to the traditional quantitative ‘distribution map’ commonly used by heritage professionals, landscape archaeologists and historians. This hands-on way of map-making offers a cartographic and visual output to better communicate the complex nature of local heritage, as it situates and blends places, folk-tales, material culture and memories in one straight-forward, colourful and approachable medium.

KEYWORDS mapping, fieldwork, community project, community outreach, cultural heritage, cultural landscape, history, Italy

Scope of this article and underlying assumptions

This paper explores the nature, significance and methodology of a specific fieldwork and interpretation tool — collaborative experiential maps. In line with current thought and practice in cultural geography and heritage studies (that there is no single interpretation of place or of the past, just as there can be no single history of places, people or events) this hands-on style of map-making is able to communicate the complex, dynamic and multi-vocal findings of heritage fieldwork, while also providing a way to integrate multiple tales, senses of place, memories and meanings (both past and present) into specific and situated geographical settings. Open-ended, experiential mapping is a viable and insightful research and interpretation tool, and as such goes far beyond using maps simply to describe the spatial aspects of any given heritage site.

Drawing from my doctoral research and fieldwork in northern Italy (Figure 1), here I suggest that the experiential map can offer a useful interpretation tool for community heritage projects — specifically, that it can add to the traditional quantitative ‘distribution map’ commonly used by heritage professionals, landscape archaeologists and historians. The community-driven, collaborative fieldwork leading to the making of these maps qualifies them as multi-vocal, dynamic and inclusive. They are multi-sensory and open-ended, reflecting teamwork and ‘opening up’ a range of local perspectives other than those of the map-making academic. This kind of map making is hardly used at all in the field of heritage studies at present, although, it will be argued, it can provide a potentially useful complement to quantitative mapping techniques.

While doing this field research, I experimented with place meaning/making by probing further than the usual field plans and two-dimensional and digital map-making to incorporate, instead, slightly ‘unorthodox’ data. For instance, I explored the significance of oral history and local micro-histories, and mapped out the long-term significance of places and landscapes with the input of residents, local amateur landscape scholars and historians. These data resulted in a multi-media database that reflected my interactions with, and interpretations of, a lived-in cultural landscape, not a fossil site (see Trant 1987, 13).

This field research explored the sense of place and *longue durée* of meanings and interpretations populating various heritage sites and landscapes in northeast Italy from the Iron Age to the present day. Coupled with archival research, it sought to identify, capture and map the myriad different variables (often intangible and subjective), about the perceptions and emotions experienced by people living these landscape through the ages. It did not conceive of these heritage sites as ‘timeless and frozen’ archaeological space (Exon *et al.* 2000, 9). As Dawson noted (2005, 155), ‘spatial identity, based on feelings of belonging in a place, develops over time as ‘layers of meaning’ and remembered associations accrue to a location in the course of everyday life’.

These underlying assumptions were somewhat different from those of other landscape archaeologists I encountered while planning this project. For example, there was a certain frustration among some who openly resented the presence of modern, ‘distracting’, ‘ugly’ features in ‘their’ idealized prehistoric landscapes, as well as the presence of people at or near archaeological sites. On the other hand, my approach did not see modern structures as the enemy, but simply as subsequent episodes in a place’s biography (Craik 1986, 56). It viewed subsequent structures as adding to the landscape rather than detracting from any previous meanings and significance of places. It rejected the idea that there must be an adverse reaction to ‘irrelevant details’ on the part of landscape scholars, or that modern traces should be thought of as redundant or irrelevant. Finally, it also questioned the idea that archaeological conceptions of landscape should dominate local ones — that is, it questioned who should rightfully ‘own’ heritage landscapes.

A gap on the map: the evolving politics of mapping

In order to situate this study within the broader context of mapping approaches, I will first review several case studies that, despite a highly experimental approach to place

and landscape, did not capture the experiential immediacy being sought for this research project (although they did help to lay the groundwork for it). This will include some comments on the changing uses and attitudes to maps and photographs in the heritage and social sciences, after which I will turn to my specific case study.

Landscape archaeology in its most humanistic, reflexive mode has, over the past couple of decades, drawn on principles of phenomenology (see Wylie's exhaustive critique of the phenomenological method in 2007, 180–86). Indeed, landscape phenomenology has developed as a sub-discipline within several fields: landscape archaeology (notably Bender, Hamilton and Tilley 1997; Bradley 1998; Exon *et al.* 2000; Hamilakis 2002; Hamilton *et al.* 2006; Holtorf 2001a, 2001b; Thomas 1991; Tilley 1994, 1996, 2004; Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2012), cultural anthropology (Bender 1993; Csordas 1990, 1999; Ingold 2000; Jackson 1989) and landscape history (e.g. Altenberg 2003; Basu 1997; de Certeau 1984). In *A Phenomenology of Landscape* Tilley (1994) applied insights and exercises such as visibility and intervisibility analysis to a humanistic and sensory interpretation and understanding of the Neolithic landscape surrounding the Dorset Cursus in England. He argued that the drive behind the construction of the Cursus and other such monuments was an attempt to encase or to enhance visible symbolic landmarks in a more permanent way (see De Nardi 2013). In addition, his inventory of landmarks included significant natural topographical elements on his maps living 'organically' alongside humanly created features such as megaliths (see Goodison 2012).

However, Tilley's maps were topographically rather than experientially conceived: they failed to produce a sense of lived landscapes and instead depicted places completely devoid of interpretative elements, in stark contrast to his often thick, experimental prose. Besides, the maps were presented as 'objective' and final (that is, not open to alternative interpretations) and they lacked the time-depth that truly characterizes 'place' (see Tuan 1977: 179 ff.).

Following the Dorset experiment, Tilley collaborated with Bender and Hamilton in a phenomenological appraisal of the open heritage landscape of Leskernick in Cornwall (Bender, Hamilton and Tilley 1997). Interestingly, the team presented an innovative format for a site log (e.g., from a variety of viewpoints). It provided alternative points of view from project participants, and created a multivocal narrative of fieldwork and place experience:

We're trapped in the hierarchy of knowledge: however much we try to democratize, we nonetheless end up validating and invalidating the perceptions of the students and subtly appropriating them. We are nervous of their interpretations. However much we accept the subjectivity of knowledge and the reflexive nature of our interpretations, we want to find ways of validating our findings. (Bender, Hamilton and Tilley 1997, 172–73)

However, the maps that Bender, Hamilton and Tilley produce are 'technical' — simply depicting the archaeological features and area, they lack the collaborative, vibrant, open-ended and experiential elements that characterize the narrative found elsewhere in the same paper.

In the same year, Basu (1997) attempted to go beyond the 'Polaroid effect' of previous experimental fieldwork, and explored the modern echoes of events shaping the landscape and people's livelihoods in the Scottish Highlands between the years

1750–1850 (the Clearances). He investigated the impact of this dramatic event on local identities by using historical and literary sources, conducting interviews and fieldwork. His research framework was holistic — it appreciated, reconstructed and visually depicted a historic landscape from archaeological, phenomenological, perceptual, historical and ethnological perspectives. This cross-disciplinarity made it a ‘thick’ piece of research into places, people and memory — a story told by one and many. Although a sensual, dynamic aspect of fieldwork was partly achieved by integrating interviews, poetry and evocative photography into the plot, the almost total lack of maps suggests that the author underestimated the particularity of the geographical and topographical context of the area, relying instead on evocative photographs to capture the mood. This *genius loci* is a narrative without maps, where one is guided by words and the aforementioned images of places and people, but not ‘shown around’ (Basu 1997).

Exon *et al.* (2000) explored the Stonehenge environs as a team of researchers; their multi-sensory, spatial assessment enriched the fieldwork output with photographs, GIS maps, three-dimensional videos and audio recordings, which did to an extent highlight the sensory, embodied elements of being in the field. The photographs enriching the publication (especially 2000, iv, v, 4) are evocative and, by ‘writing’ or picturing members of the team visually into the story, remind the reader that the archaeological fieldwork exercise (and all subsequent interpretations) are mediated by persons, human beings, and are not therefore objective disembodied analyses. The maps, however, remain rather static and utilitarian, showing distributions rather than attempting to convey a sense of place. However experimental this project is, much like Bender, Hamilton and Tilley’s Leskernick endeavour, it seemed to remain grounded in the experiential and imaginative realm of academics, and the resulting interpretations were elaborated without input from local residents or amateurs. Hypertextual memories and 3D sensations (facilitated by the accompanying CD-ROM) interacted well in the search for a Stonehenge sense of place — from without. It dealt with a modelling of experience, rather than with a collation of place-specific meanings.

Altenberg (2003) explored the link between place perception, dwelling and identity in the medieval period in two areas of Southwest England and one in Sweden. Her maps, however, do not reflect the symbolic values she attributes to places and sites but rather simply locate the sites geographically. Furthermore, she does not openly acknowledge any contemporary or historical perceptions of place by local communities inhabiting and navigating these landscapes.

A notable drawback of some landscape studies, then, can be identified as a ‘cartographic myopia’, reflected in rather dry distribution maps (Bradley 1998; Tilley 1994, 2004) where analysis and visual depiction of landscape is either ignored, or performed in a ‘vacuum’. By isolating on the map the period in question, these map-makers more or less disregarded later place dynamics and events that nonetheless contributed to shape the current status and significance of places. The maps these studies produced only quantify, but do not qualify, important elements of the landscape. We are not told, for instance, why a prehistoric landmark is seen as significant or by whom.

In the field of cultural geography, on the other hand, one can sense reluctance to create and display cultural data cartographically and to consider maps as ‘the end result in itself’ (Crampton 2001, 238). Thus, as Perkins (2003, 381) remarks, ‘theoreticians of the new critical cartography usually employ *words* to extol the virtues of socially informed critiques of mapping, leaving to other people the messy and contingent process of creating maps as visualizations’. Deconstructing and analysing the processes and politics of map-making was a reaction against the authoritativeness (Crampton 2001, 237) and presumptuousness of ‘objective’ professional cartographers who expressed outrage against the concepts of ‘partiality and bias’ advocated in much of Brian Harley’s work (Wood 2002, 153–54).

While in the arts, psychogeography practitioners were busy ‘drifting’¹ and revolutionizing the very concept of maps by producing dreamlike drafts of their sensory travels (i.e. Debord 1956), the mood in academia was somewhat gloomier. Cartography scholar and historical geographer Harley (1989) was one of the first key thinkers to tackle the politics of maps, while in the 1990s, Gaffney, Stancic and Watson (1995) argued for a more humanistic approach to GIS software and applications, and warned against the two-dimensional, bird’s eye view given by maps (see also Harley and Laxton, 2001, 156, 205). Llobera (1996, 612) criticized the traditional environmentally-deterministic use of GIS, but argued that while this bias is not inbuilt in the spatial analysis tool itself, it is rather transferred into the software by users with specific environmental research agendas (1996, 613). Nevertheless the emergence, in the last few years, of several GIS-based heritage projects (i.e. Duran and Toz 2002; Duran *et al.* 2003; Moir, n.d.), as well as participatory GIS projects across the globe (e.g. Purser 2012), bear witness to the increasing awareness of the potential of mapping technology to convey meaning and empower local heritage projects. The great benefit of geo-referencing heritage landmarks, be they tangible or intangible, cannot be neglected. Furthermore, thanks to the wide scope of its applications and analyses, GIS can even be made to ‘populate’ the diachronic element of historic landscapes through what is known as historic GIS (Moir, n.d.).

However numerous the useful, democratized practices that GIS enables (Parker 2006, Purser 2012), the sense of place, fascination, and significance of landscapes for living communities are not easily captured and conveyed by the digital medium — just as sensory impressions cannot easily be expressed on a conventional two-dimensional distribution map (or, even, the smaller version of our map which appears as Figure 6 in this printed volume²). The very concept of the map, implying simultaneous vision of every single element of the terrain, is unrealistic (Crampton 2001; Harley 1992; Tuan 1977; Wood 2002) and as such not particularly helpful in interpreting, understanding, or ‘feeling’ places. Another inevitable drawback of traditional map representation (and ‘old school’ GIS projections) lies in the fact that sight is the dominant factor, and the sole medium, by which one literally ‘visualizes’ the landscape thus represented. Sight, however, is but one of five senses that can be used to experience, feel and navigate one’s surroundings, and may not necessarily be the dominant one (see Bender 1993, 1). In addition to this, the human factor in the field is vital to the experience and interpretation of cultural landscapes (see Holtorf 2001b): one can move about, experience things and places (see Goodison 2012, 214–15) — as we shall see below.

What, then, are the implications of maps and map-making, and of taking photographs of heritage places for their understanding and interpretation? Who takes the responsibility for ‘mapping out’ places? Harley and Laxton (e.g. 2001, 5 ff.), Wood (1992, 17 ff.), and Pinder (2005), among others, criticize cartographic positivism and the misled conception of the ‘neutrality’ of maps. However, maps are often the best way to express geographical and topographical knowledge, if not the most straightforward way (Tuan 1977, 77). A reflexive approach to the process of map-making is key here. For instance, as in the case study below, simply describing the experience of fieldwork and landscape explorations of a group of local residents, with words, would not have done justice to the open-ended, multi-layered and multi-sensory experience of the world at a heritage site.

A new focus in mapping has seen a parallel reconceptualization of photography as an important part of the dwelling experience. Capturing and displaying images also generates knowledge, and as such becomes a powerful tool to interpret the world. Berger’s (1980), Shanks’ (1997) and Sontag’s (2003) deconstruction of the ‘objectivity’ of photographs frees the photographic medium from its origins as elitist practice. It is important to note here how both media are increasingly being recognized as viable interpretation tools and effective visual and educational outputs in heritage work.

Moreover, as hinted above, maps and photographs lend themselves well to experiential fieldwork. They can convey a thicker, more rounded sense of place — one where colours, exposure, weather and elements (both included and excluded) reflect the bodily situation and subjectivity of the individual, be that individual mapping or photographing a place.

Working with local communities can obviously be mutually beneficial to residents and to professional heritage researchers — hence the theme of this journal. Whether this mutual engagement leads to mapping, however, is another matter. The University of Aberdeen’s ‘Nunalleq 2013’ project in Alaska (Nunalleq Project 2013), working towards salvaging the archaeological areas threatened by the Bering Sea in cooperation with the local village corporation of Qanirtuuq, is an example where local vernacular traditions (place names) have become part of the investigation and interpretation of multi-layered heritage landscapes. As noted by ‘Charlotta’ in the blog ‘Nunalleq 2013’:

More references to the burning of the village are found in oral history. Yup’ik lore tells about the bow and arrow wars that took place in the mid 17th century. According to legend the wars started with ‘an eye for an eye’ after an incident with two boys playing. In local history the village of Arolik was attacked in summer, everyone in the village was killed and the village burned. Some mothers dressed up their boys in their finest garments and offered them to the attackers in hope that they would be spared, but the attackers killed them even so. Some people tried to hide in the tunnels, but they were found and killed and the dead were thrown in the lake. ‘So it was that the Kinak warriors wiped out the entire village of Arolik’ (told by Charlie Pleasant of Quinhagak in Yupik Lore. Oral tradition of an Eskimo people). It is fascinating how well this story matches the archaeology of Nunalleq. (Nunalleq Project 2013)

We do not yet know what the cartographic output of such exciting collaboration and multi-textuality is likely to be, but may reasonably anticipate interesting results.

One working example of ‘thick’, multi-sensory implementation of both the photographic medium and mapping stems from the ‘Ethnohistorical Study of the Community of Archery, Georgia’, where local residents have participated in the documentation, care and mapping of their town. As noted by one participant, ‘Several of these photographs, both historic and modern, were overlaid onto the county map and the resulting combination of historic, modern, and spatial data was highly effective in stimulating memories and discussions among those at the meeting’ (Goodwin 2011, n.p.). A significant part of the collaborative fieldwork took place at the local cemetery, which proved to be a meaningful task for those whose families are buried at the site: ‘many of those interviewed were descendants of those buried in the cemetery and were able to provide us with narratives of their lives. This was specially [*sic*] important, as the addition of these narratives to the resulting map added immeasurable value to our final product and will continue to be incorporated as the project continues’ (2011, n.p.). Local mapping was done by overlaying the community’s findings over County and National Park Service maps, and used as a template for recording memories, associations and town-specific values.

As a final example, among the vast sea of micro-blogs available online, one seems particularly worthy of mention: a blog about community heritage maps in Kilkenny (Cross 2012³), whereby a group of locals sat down and, again starting from two-dimensional maps, attempted to draft their sense of place as a group endeavour. As they put it:

Maps get people talking and we can start listening. We use other conversations starters too, there is quite a bit of stuff in our toolbox, but the main thing is to get people talking, gossiping, chatting and laughing. Then we start recognizing what people know, what they care about, what they value, what they want to keep and what they want to change. (Cross 2012)

This is an effective and engaging example of how maps can be an empowering, bonding and negotiation tool, although the main difference between the Kilkenny mapping initiative and the case study which follows is that our maps were produced in the field and are therefore transient, in motion, sequential and narrative, rather than a desktop exercise.

Case study: view(s) from a hill

Turning now to my case study, the experiential map illustrated in Figure 6 — a montage of topography, pictures and words, relies on photographs of objects and landmarks in their wider context, as well as less tangible artefacts such as impressions, memories and associations. Here I will briefly describe the larger cultural and geographic contexts of this map, as well as the methods used to create it.

As an example of material culture from both prehistoric and Roman archaeological periods, the hill of Monte Altare (Figures 2–4), varied in use through the centuries. The predominant cult in the Iron Age (seventh–fifth centuries BC) seems to have been centred on fertility and on the replication of natural elements in the material culture (i.e. bronze sheet laminae depicting — evoking? — the rugged peaks of the hill),

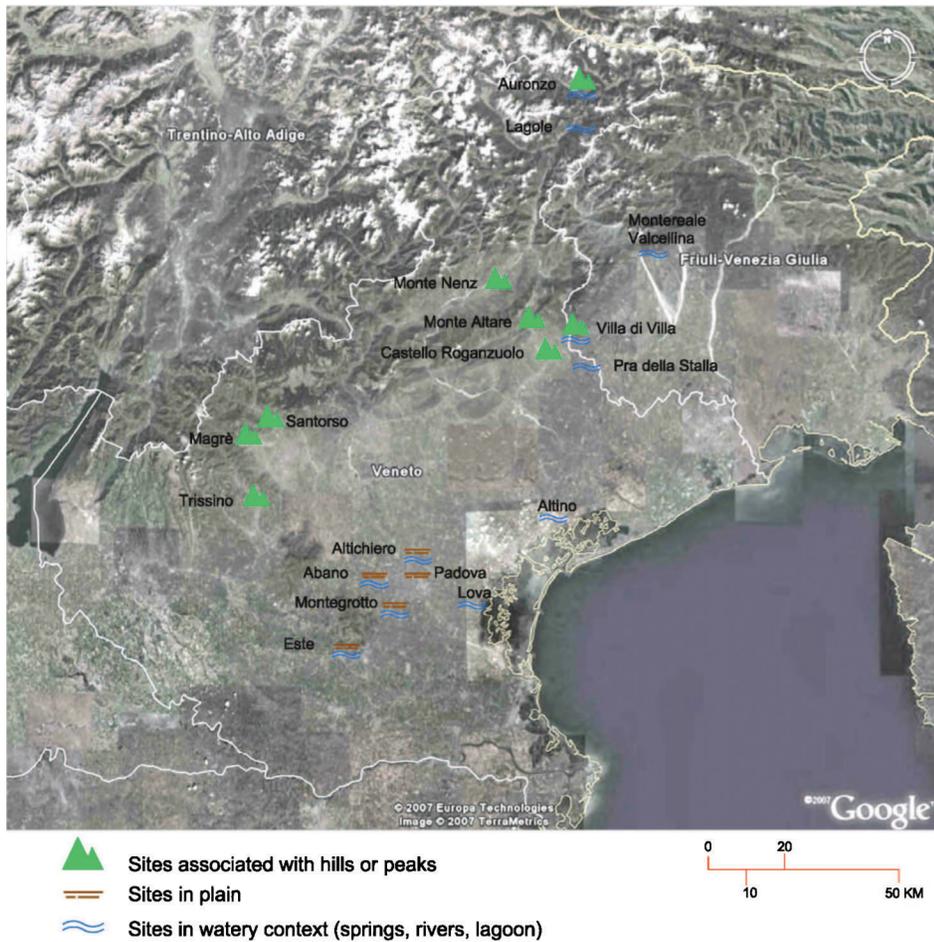


FIGURE 1 The Veneto in northeast Italy.

Map author's own

followed in the Roman period by a divination cult, evidenced by the recovery of numbered divination tablets. The significance of the soothsaying practices of old is likely to be reflected in a local toponym for a cave in the upper slope — known to the locals as ‘the old granny’s cranny’ (De Nardi 2013).

Medieval diocese records show that members of the local communities perceived Monte Altare as a negative landmark: the recovery of ‘pagan’ objects had gained the hill the nickname of *Colum Maledictum*, ‘Cursed Hill’ as early as 1398 (Arnosti 1990, 6; Sergio De Nardi, pers. comm.). This place continued to be meaningful, and lingered in people’s fascination: the incriminating objects were seen by locals as phallic bronze statuettes (Arnosti 1993; De Nardi 2006).

Our mapping fieldwork exercise took place over 14 months between the spring of 2007 and summer of 2008, once every two months or so. Ten team members (consisting of members of the local community, including myself and two amateur historians; ages ranged between 30 and 75), visited the site at different times of year to



FIGURE 2 The hill of Monte Altare.

Author's own photograph

experience the place and its ease of accessibility under different weather conditions. We approached the site from three different directions and assessed the different impressions it created.

In the making of ‘experiential’ maps, the local townsfolk and a professional researcher sought to generate interpretations of this heritage landscape as experienced by us during fieldwork — the maps could therefore inform subsequent visits to the site, whereby visitors would be able to engage with local understandings of place and contribute their own unique experience and feedback. Moreover, unlike the distribution maps found in most archaeological publications or information panels, our maps do not claim to be the ultimate source of knowledge, or to represent the sites ‘objectively’: they are filtered by perception and by the context in which we produced them (see Pinder 2005). The team members brought their varied interests, backgrounds and/or specialisms to the project and to the subsequent discussions. Those who had an interest in heritage, interestingly, did not break down their understanding into disciplinary subsets such as history, geography, archaeology or formal place names study like the professional scholars who had engaged with this site; nor did the locals seek to orientate their perception according to whatever task they were performing in the field.

The collaborative map as research and interpretation tool

All team members contributed to every stage of the production of the experiential maps. We made and used ‘open-ended’ experiential maps in the field as interpretative tool and as team exercise: this kind of open-ended, multi-scale cartography expresses feelings, impressions and emotional responses to landscape and place as well as historic data and metadata. This kind of mapping exercise reveals and explores the nature, implications and relationships/links between places and significant objects/artefacts in their context (i.e. heritage sites and artefacts).

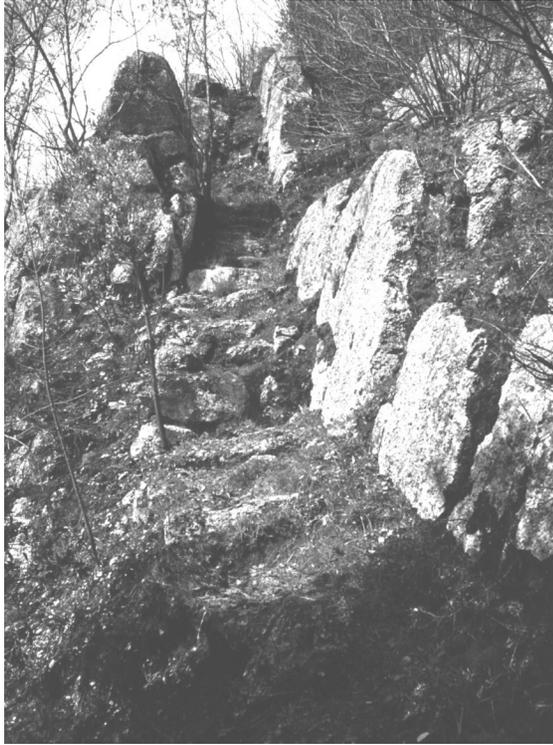


FIGURE 3 The stone staircase.

Author's own photograph

Figure 5 shows a diagram of our methodology, in which floating balloons indicate several accretional stages, meaning that at each stage more and more information is fed into the map-making process, but whose sequence is not specified. Steps were sometimes repeated, or skipped, at the discretion of the team. The only glitch we encountered during the desk-based stage of map preparation, aside from the time-consuming sifting through of numerous potential 'quote candidates', consisted in the objection by some team members to the idea that we could make away with working with an actual, printed out map draft and just talk through ideas and impressions out loud. This to them felt like 'distancing ourselves' from the place, from its contours and shapes. Naturally we took this perspective on board and the second stage in our map exercise typically became the printing of a first rough draft. Although we began with the basic topographic map of the area donated by the *Comune* (Council), the cartographic conventions we used to shape these maps were adapted to the needs and perceptions of the team, to 'fit in' the world of the participants (see MacKian 2004, 620). At this desktop-based stage we drafted the experiential landscape as expressed in the field notes, photos and recordings on top of the topographical map of the area - the collage phase, voted by the map makers as the 'most fun' as it took them back to their childhood scrapbook attempts! We unanimously decided not to substantially alter the structure of the topographic map, so that others could identify, navigate and reproduce the map of the locality if they so wished.



FIGURE 4 Boulders on the hill top of Monte Altare.
Author's own photograph

In each draft of the map we embedded meaningful elements of the land, both cultural elements (i.e. history, lore, memories and material culture) and the impressions of people — emotions, moods. As Holtorf (2001b) points out in reference to the dynamics of the fieldwork experience, it is important to ask ‘what is the particular atmosphere of an archaeological site, and could that be relevant for its

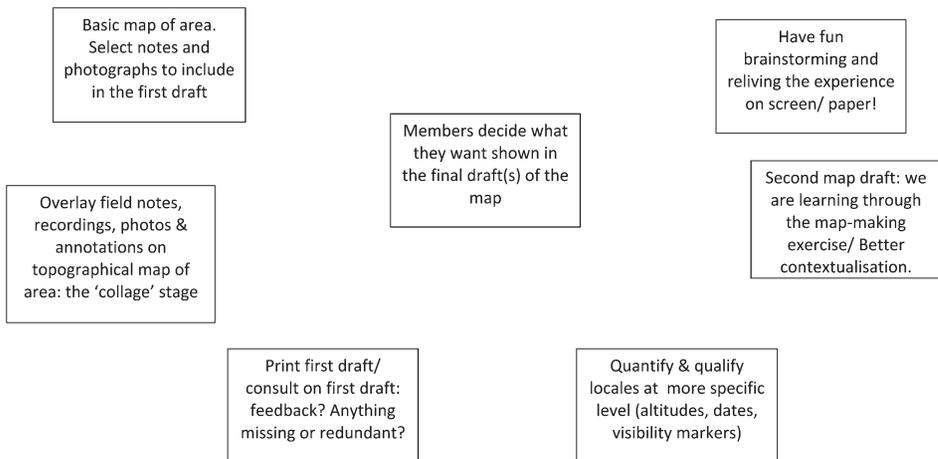


FIGURE 5 The making of the experiential map: diagram.

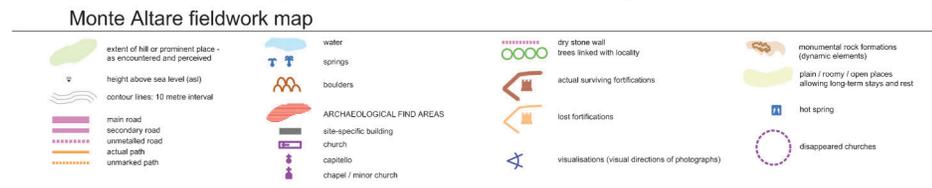
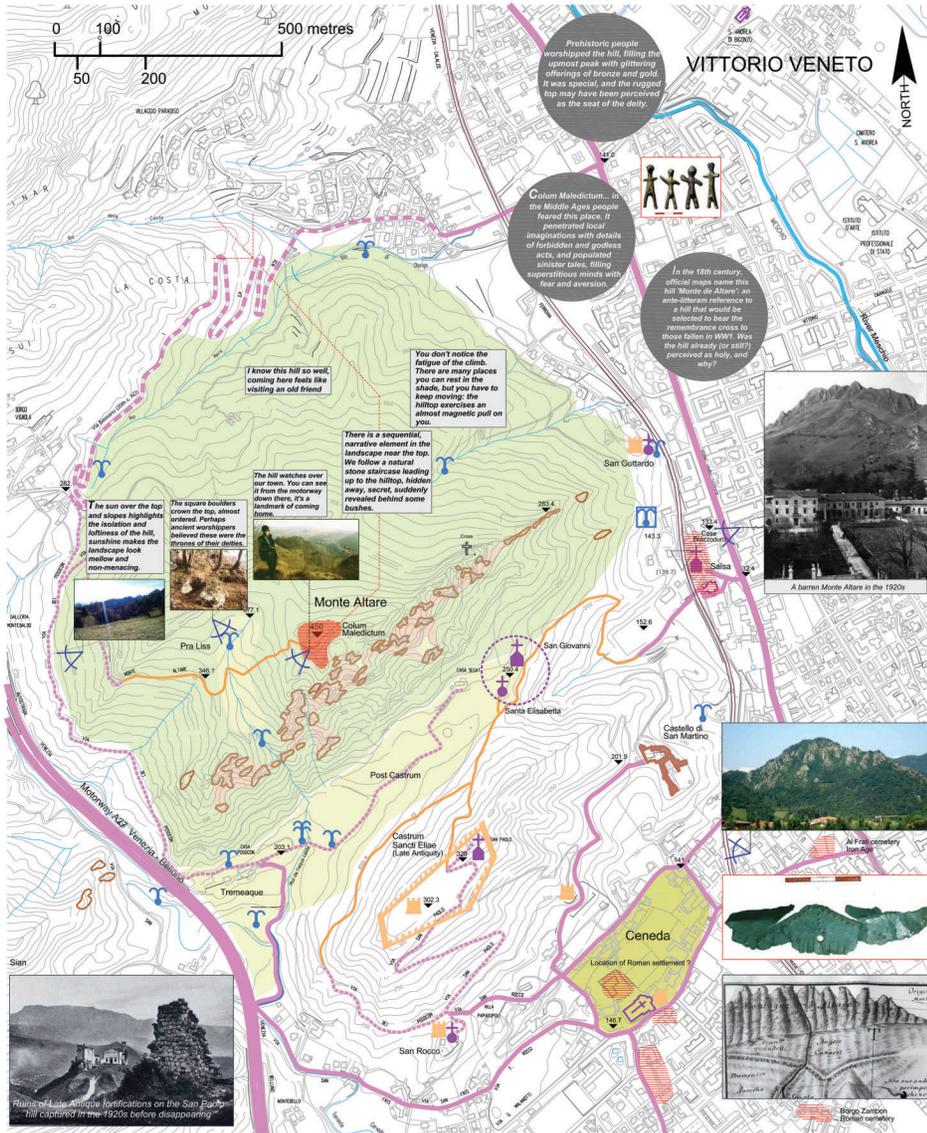


FIGURE 6 The fieldwork map of Monte Altare: a communal effort.

interpretation?’ Our team did. We met once every two months for revision and comments; we all made additions and corrections as we went along in a keen awareness that no draft of the maps could ever be called ‘final’ or ‘conclusive’, and

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that they would reflect our memories and experiences not only of that landscape, but also of the fieldwork experience (see Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2012, 258).

We contextualized, walked, photographed or described locales within the greater landscape of Monte Altare. At a later, second draft level, we further quantified and qualified each locale (i.e. ‘We took five photographs looking west towards the hill top at 350 meters above sea level on the east slope because that is when we had the first glimpse of the hill top and the upper slopes’⁴).

All sessions were audio recorded: photographs, sketches and sound recordings sought to qualify impressions in the field. For instance, after negotiating a modestly steep meadow at the hill foot, two of the participants pointed to the top, concealed by bushes: ‘We’ll get to the staircase soon.’ The ‘staircase’ (Figure 3) in question was a narrow corridor-like sequence of upright stones ascending from the upper slope to the hilltop (Figure 4), the latter an irregular space punctuated by square boulders arranged in roughly circular patterns. One participant commented: ‘These blocks could have been experienced as thrones of the gods of Monte Altare in the old days.’⁵

In the making of the maps, fieldwork diary notes and audio recordings of participant conversations were essential ingredients of every stage of the mapping process — these proved to be very important and effective in preserving/expressing the ‘moment’, the mood of the expedition, and all the nuances of tiredness, expectation, jollity and disappointment felt by team members throughout the day. To do this, at regular intervals I asked the participants how they were feeling, in terms of both physical and emotional impressions. The most elderly participant, a 75-year-old lady, commented that ‘they must have been very fit back then to climb this hill [...] but then if you really wanted to know your future, then, yes [...]’.⁶ A lady in her late thirties confessed that she had not really thought about the hill of Monte Altare as an archaeological site before — rather as a lovely picnic spot and a great location to exercise her dog.⁷ She felt affection towards the place, and was glad to be reassured that her ‘emotive’ input was not considered irrelevant by the other team members. Not only did the maps we made reflect the topography we negotiated, they evoked our senses of place, expectations, and physical and emotional impressions of individuals in the field. Far from being parenthetical in our interpretation, these notions became protagonists on the maps, standing out in the forefront (see Parker 2006, 472). The resulting maps trace the history of meaningful locales as well as defining the actual and imagined/idealized topography of places, and express a multitude of contemporary impressions, opinions and perceptions.

Final reflections

Our collaborative fieldwork generated multiple, ‘thick’ engagements and interpretation of landscape that intentionally go beyond the standard written fieldwork report and site-specific photographs. Through mapping, we have attempted to convey a sense of place and of living heritage, telling its story(ies) in words and pictures (see Shanks 1997). The fieldwork map of Monte Altare, as a result, appears as a densely narrative palimpsest of symbols and meanings past and present, a multiplicity of vistas — a journey across ‘time and space’. It breaks down the barrier between nature and culture in a meaningful whole, where natural elements such as springs and peaks,

and both lost and existing buildings and structures make up several overlapping landscapes within one landscape. These elements tell a story in multiple voices: the map reveals and hides locales, places appear and disappear, and the thick, intense complexity of objects, places, histories, memories, fear and attachment, dwelling and abandonment, hereness and otherness compete for our attention. The maps combine physical elements of landscape with memories, associations, anecdotes, myths, artefacts, aspirations and frustrations. They attempt to capture the ‘thick’ element of being in the field, of searching and learning, often by trial and error (like the slightly anxious map I sketched when I got lost on one of Monte Altare’s woody patches); they can portray and filter landscape layers not only of beauty and positive emotion, but also of fear, confusion or annoyance. The hill and its surroundings reveal their many moods⁸ (à la Heidegger) through the eyes, perceptions and actions of many, and through a series of open-ended montages in the experiential maps (see Shanks 1997, 84).

Far from being an open-air museum, the heritage area of Monte Altare becomes encased and enmeshed in the busy every-day life of the region. Places like this ‘become the landmarks of a remembered geography and history and they form the intersection between official and vernacular cultures’ (Johnson 2002, 294). This research suggests that these sites, and the way they can be visualized and published, would also position fieldwork and map-making at the intersection between traditional mapping practices (with all their ‘baggage’ of guilt) and more bottom-up, socially produced modes of mapping (see Goodwin 2011; MacKian 2004). This inter-disciplinarity is a promising indication that local history, archaeology and cultural geography can come together in fruitful and challenging ways in the endeavour of telling stories, bringing history to life and raising people’s awareness of heritage as lived experience, rather than stuffy relics bounded in dusty displays or inaccessible tomes.

Unlike the drifting Situationists and their dream-mapping, our team decided to keep the maps faithful to the terrain and topography of the site, not only — as noted above — to allow others to easily identify, navigate and perceive the landscape in their own time and in their own preferred manner, but also to celebrate the locality, its people and traditions — a task that would have been difficult to achieve with an overly abstract, non-Euclidean dream-map.

Who are the would-be users of such maps? Overall, by their very open-ended and un-dogmatic nature, experiential maps can be of as much benefit to heritage and landscape scholars working with communities, as they are potentially more-than-narrative research tools expressing and qualifying the day-to-day experience of doing fieldwork, of dwelling in long-lived locales and taking part in heritage-oriented participant observation. It benefits and involves local communities as stakeholders who ‘belong’ there, and who can literally ‘put’ their own geographical and cultural values ‘back on the map’. The people of Vittorio Veneto found the research project exciting and after the pilot ‘teamwork’, more were willing to get involved, get walking up Monte Altare, and engage with their past and traditions.

In the autumn of 2011, my colleagues at the Gruppo Archeologico del Cenedese (an amateur archaeological society) and I collaboratively hosted an open-access conference, which was attended by many local citizens who had great interest in what our field-walking and map-making team had been doing. The maps themselves,

however, were the star feature of the event: everyone gathered round the table where the Monte Altare map (in its original Italian) was laid out. They took turns pointing at the text and at the pictures, commenting among themselves — some in agreement, some willing to add something of their own or something different to the map's layout. A 67-year-old gentleman present at the conference suggested that to make the map even more inclusive, some text in the native dialect of Vittorio Veneto could be incorporated — although he did note with pleasure how the place names (e.g. the Old Granny's Cranny and Pra' Liss or Smooth Meadow) were all present in their original dialect form. The reaction of local people to the map our team created was promising, and I felt as if our work had inspired them, too, to be part of this or similar projects, and made them curious to get to know their familiar landscape with an eye to the past and its many meanings. Finally, it is important to point out that unlike GIS maps, the use of which entails a certain degree of computer literacy and access to the necessary media and software, a paper map like our own can be handled, copied, circulated and read by almost every sighted, literate person of reading age. It can be put in one's pocket and carried around — a material culture object or a memento, well thumbed, able to tell not only the stories incorporated in its fabric, but also its own story and vicissitudes after its creation, printing and distribution.

In conclusion, this imaginative, lively and hands-on approach to mapping and visualizing places and landscapes could be extremely useful and provide access to a more holistic sense of what landscape meant and still means to people past and present. It can convey 'the creative collaboration between present consciousness and the experience or expression of the past (Boyarin 1994, 22 cited in Johnson 2002, 295) — so that we can gain insights into what it means to have 'ancient stuff' near you, the meaning of which is continuously re-negotiated.

On a broader scale, it can be inferred that today, as yesterday, places become part of material culture whenever people interact with them, perceive, remember and even forget them. In this sense, intangible elements of the landscape such as memory, myth and associations qualify places as much as more tangible and visible topographic elements, and as such they can be mapped and depicted just as effectively with a little imagination and enthusiasm. Whether for the purpose of research, knowledge construction, education or insights into the living, this sort of map makes the embodied experience of people interacting with places, and the visualization of multiple understandings of landscape across time, not only possible, but desirable. By collaboratively creating maps in this way, the landscape scholar/historian can stimulate the local community to create topographic and pictorial narratives that incorporate micro-histories, memory and identity, which in turn have a scope going significantly beyond the traditionally elitist artefact and trench analysis, but also beyond the documentary monologue.

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Notes

- ¹ By drifting ('derive' in French) I mean the way Situationists used the fabric of the city as a non-traditional geographical space, as a blank canvas, or as a surrealist tale waiting to be written and performed. This became known as Psychogeography. The movement was founded by French left-wing artist and thinker Guy Debord, and was active in France and continental Europe in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. For an overview of what 'drifting' means in Debord's own words, see <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html>.
- ² A much larger version of the map shown in Figure 6 can be seen at <http://www.maneyonline.com/doi/suppl/10.1179/2051819613Z.0000000001>.
- ³ <http://susancrosstelltale.com/2012/09/15/look-listen-and-learn-community-heritage-mapping/>. Accessed on 1 July 2013.
- ⁴ Mirto Masut, fieldwork June 2008.
- ⁵ Carlo Forin, fieldwork May 2007.
- ⁶ Maria Visentin, fieldwork July 2008.
- ⁷ Loretta Favero, fieldwork August 2007.
- ⁸ Moods are the disclosure of the different ways in which things in the world can 'matter' to Dasein (Heidegger [1927] 1996, 141 ff.).

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