MAPPING FOOTSTEPS:
HAND-DRAWN BIRDS EYE VIEW MAPS
AROUND THE WORLD

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Abstract: In this paper I will reflect on my experience drawing bird’s eye view maps for various community and locally-based tourism groups in Peru, Madagascar, Italy, and Mongolia. Through a year-long fellowship I traveled to these countries seeking out situations where an artistic, hand drawn map could be useful to represent a local, cultural landscape. With this goal, I discovered that custom made bird’s eye views could be highly effective to fit the needs of rural, community-minded tourism organizations. Keywords: hand-drawn maps, bird’s eye views, community mapping, tourist maps, international community-based tourism, sense of place.

BACKGROUND: RECENT TRENDS IN COMMUNITY MAPPING

In North America, map-making is being made more decentralized and public. The proliferation of household digital technologies and the availability of the internet have allowed the modern cartographic process to be more widely accessible than ever before. In addition, there is also a strong current of political and cultural will in North America to bring attention and power back to local places and distinct ecological regions (Aberley, 1993). With the decentralization of map production has come a variety of localized cartographic practices—mapping projects with specific educational, political or environmental purposes. Often projects emphasize the uniqueness of certain cultural landscapes. Most of them involve the input of community members in an attempt to map local knowledge that has never before been acknowledged in nor represented by a formal map.

Applications of community and participatory mapping have been paralleled by the emergence of ‘social cartography’ as a theoretical topic among geographers (Harley, 1988). In the past decade, a strong social critique of cartography has challenged the way in which geographers have looked at maps. Brian Harley's work—“Deconstructing the Map,” and “Cartography, Ethics, and Social Theory,” published in *Cartographica* in 1988, and 1990—has been the keystone of this argument (Brewer & McMaster, 1999). Harley called for an epistemological shift in map interpretation, from an uncritical, normative approach to a deconstructionist approach (1988). This shift helped to reveal the lack of social considerations in cartographic theory. The work of D. Wood (1992) and M. Monmonier (1996) have further bolstered research in social issues of cartography, and has helped popularize the discussion of maps outside of academia. With this foundation, studies in social cartography have begun to look at ways to represent local (often indigenous) knowledge, as well as mapping recreational, environmental, health, or public safety data for direct community use. Exposing the social silences in standard cartographic theory and production has fueled interest in applied research using alternative mapping approaches, as seen in community mapping and land use/occupancy mapping around the world.

One such example can be seen in Nancy Peluso’s work (1995) in Indonesia, and her concept of 'counter-mapping' in the context of forest communities. Sketch maps and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) were used to redefine local access to lands previously claimed and managed by national resource departments. 'Counter-mapping' thus refers to the map as a protest in an uneven geopolitical power relation. She is careful, however, in noting that counter-mapping is not claiming to totally reverse the power relations—it is not making mapping a “science of the masses” (Peluso, 1995). The expenses and expertise necessary in technical mapping projects make the process of map-making inaccessible for most of the local people (1995).

Doug Aberley’s ‘bioregional mapping’ (1993) is another example of alternative, participatory mapping on a local level. His approach, applied to first nation communities in British Columbia, is one that combines scientific and traditional knowledge, cultural and biophysical information, and is a ‘living document,’ made by community members themselves. Aberley has developed a detailed and consistent methodology for creating bioregional maps, and grounds them in historical techniques in community-based planning (1993).
In each of these cases, there was an effort to make the cartographic process public and as transparent as possible while also aiming for scientific validity and objectivity. Immense amounts of time, energy and organization allow for the distribution of cartographic authority onto groups of individuals rather than onto one ‘all-mighty’ expert cartographer. Although participating community members are normally guided through pre-set data gathering procedures, their input is what makes up the map, not an expert’s. For many mapping projects, especially those involving land use/occupancy issues, the map’s ‘language’ needs to be as scientific and objective as possible in order for the map to serve its purpose (Tobias, 2000). Often these maps are used as evidence in a court of law to defend land claims or help settle long-standing disputes over ownership and use of environmental resources.

As Tobias warns, “possession and control of culture translates into considerable political power” (2000, p. xi). It is understandable that for participatory and community-based mapping methodologies to achieve their goals of self-possession or control, the maps must speak the powerful language of scientific proof and technical accuracy (Tobias, 2000). Such are the challenges of making maps in order to prove or legitimize serious cultural and environmental claims or needs. Alternative or creative representations rarely translate into much legal power, although as this paper suggests, they can be powerful in other ways.

Thus, for purposes of political and scientific validity, one’s personal experience of place must be kept as objective as possible in most mapping projects. Unfortunately, this discourages the making of expressive, freely hand-drawn, culturally unique maps of local landscapes. I like to suggest in this paper, however, that although creative, experiential maps will not help in the courtroom, they are very powerful tools in other contexts. If, as Picasso said, ‘art is a lie that helps us understand the truth,’ then artistic maps may help us see the reality of cultural landscapes in a way no GPS unit can.

We must continue to make maps based on personal experience if we wish to encourage individual experiences in places. Like stories, hand-drawn maps are a magical language that can speak to many. Perhaps that is why many well-loved children’s books contain hand-drawn maps. As Hugh Brogan writes, “susceptibility to the beauty and suggestiveness of maps may not be a universal trait—what is?—but the works of many storytellers show that it is at least very common” (2004, p. 150). The art and craftsmanship of wonderfully hand-drawn maps must not be lost to the yellowing pages of antique book collections. The need for expressive cartography is perhaps rising. There is a growing niche for those who can help us remember how to visualize and care about unique places. Maps such as these may help inspire a sense of place and belonging, an attachment to our home in unique cultural landscapes, and a responsibility to support local and regional communities. This paper is a recollection of making maps through personal experience of place. The framework of the project will be outlined, followed by brief descriptions of several individual map projects. A generalized methodology will then be discussed, followed by project challenges and conclusions.

PROJECT FRAMEWORK

The opportunity to travel the world for one year and draw maps of rural landscapes was offered to me through a Watson Fellowship. Thomas J. Watson Foundation fellowships are one year grants for unique, independent study and travel outside of the United States, awarded to graduating seniors nominated by participating institutions. I received a fellowship through Middlebury College, where I was finishing a B.A. in geography. Thanks to the Watson’s emphasis on creative, personal and eccentric projects, I was able to pursue what I truly longed to do. I sought to draw maps based on personal experience exploring landscapes on foot. No one had much advice for me on how to do this, so the year was an adventure, searching the world for people who could use hand-drawn maps.

I chose four countries: Peru, Madagascar, Italy, and Mongolia for their regions of rural, highland landscapes. I focused on rural highlands because I wanted to find areas where the landscape was still largely experienced on foot, where there were human-scale, non-motorable routes—trails, foot paths, dirt roads—for both utilitarian and recreational purposes. With only a large backpack’s worth of belongings, I was prepared to travel on foot and local transportation for the majority of the year. I had a handful of contacts in each country, although I didn’t end up using many of them. My language skills in Spanish and some basic French helped immensely, but I always was learning new languages—such as Quechua and Aymara, Malagasy, and Mongolian—to speak directly, however simply, with locals as I traveled.

Time was a constraint. I needed to get around the world in twelve months, while still successfully investing time into site-specific mapping projects. Several international flights were booked in advance, but most of my transportation was by bus and train. Early on I realized that at my pace I would never be able to fully remove myself from the tourism infrastructure of each country. I depended on it in several cases. It would be foolish to try to deny my perspective as a foreign tourist, as
a traveling backpacker, as I explored each place. So instead of denying it, I did my best to embrace it. I got to know those who worked in the tourism sector in rural areas, learning from the restaurant cooks, the hostel owners, the wives of tour guides. And with their help I discovered an ideal niche for the type of maps I sought to create given the limited time I had in each place.

As an outsider I could make maps for other outsiders. Personally, I was always disappointed with the maps and graphic information that was available to travelers. Maps were at too small a scale and so many brochures and guidebook entries seemed the same. I recall many backpackers’ conversations in international hostels about the bleakness of ‘touristy’ places, and how they were all the same. Indeed, the local tourism industries appeared to all be appealing to tourists in the same way—homogenizing potentially intriguing idiosyncrasies about distinct places for easy consumption. By making hand-drawn maps based on personal experience as an outsider myself, I sought to encourage others to see particular landscapes as special places, admiring their unique physical and cultural qualities and respecting the presence of local communities.

PROJECT NARRATIVES

“The coded visual language of maps is one we all know, but in making maps of our worlds we each have our own dialect” (Harmon, 2004, p. 11).

The following are brief narrative descriptions of how the context and vision for each mapping project emerged while I traveled. The names of the contacts have been changed.

The first mapping project was with Marco, the owner of a hostel and restaurant in Huancayo, Peru. His business also provided guided tours into the jungle, mountains and local craft communities. We discussed the need for quality maps of the area, and we agreed on a short-term mapping project. Over the next several weeks I stayed in his hostel free of charge while doing the fieldwork needed to produce about eight or nine maps of various walking and biking tours available to tourists. Marco’s goal was to increase visitors’ awareness of the amount to see and do in the Huancayo area, a unique Andean valley with spectacular alpine landscapes, a rich agricultural history and several artisan-based communities. As the first attempts of my fellowship, these maps were rough and rather cartoon-like, lacking much consistency.

Also in Peru, I also worked with a locally run travel agency in Puno that organizes guided tours of areas around Lake Titicaca, including community-based homestay-style tourism in several island and coastal villages. They compete with the plethora of other tourism agencies running similar, but perhaps more standardized trips and tours in the same region. As soon as I met the general manager, Jose, in their small and friendly but bustling office, I knew I was in the right place. He was very enthusiastic about a mapping project, having several outreach programs already underway. Jose made the necessary travel and accommodation arrangements within the next few days. Mutual respect and trust grew continually, and was the reason I was able to complete several maps in different rural areas in a very short period of time.

Jose thought that my maps would be especially useful for two different communities on Lake Titicaca. One was in Llachon, a small town on the tip of a peninsula pointing out towards the popular tourist destinations of Taquile and Amantani islands. The second was a small island near the Bolivian border—Anapia. Several community development projects were occurring on Anapia, including a community water tank, a new library, and English language lessons to accommodate a small amount of international visitors. Hand drawn bird’s eye views seemed a fitting representation of the kind of experience that the communities, tourists and travel agency could agree on.

The third mapping project was based in Madagascar, one of my destinations where I didn’t know anyone upon arrival. Through weeks of networking I found my way to the door of Paul in Ambalavao, a small town in the southern central highlands. Paul is an American who was working for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) helping to structure and eventually hand over a new, fully functioning national park—Andringitra—to the ‘Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées’ (ANGAP), the national park department. Over the next several weeks I learned why my mapping style would suit Andringitra well. WWF and ANGAP envisioned the management of the park to offer social and economic benefits to the local community. All visitors would be required to travel with a local guide. In this context, representational maps of the incredible park terrain would be very useful to promote visitation (fig. 2), but not maps accurate enough to encourage independent travel—which often denies community interaction and bypasses local approval. For Andringitra, I was trying to create images that conveyed the unique landscape character of dense rainforest and unworldly granite peaks, documented the well-built trail infrastructure already in place, but keep precise topographic information hidden from view.
After three months in Madagascar I flew to Italy. Through a friend I knew about Spannocchia, a well-maintained Tuscan farm outside of Sienna, Italy. The Spannocchia Foundation ran internships there for students to learn traditional techniques of farming and wine making. I had heard that the farm had endless trails. Through emails I proposed a mapping project. The directors agreed to the idea, and since the foundation was used to having volunteers come for two or three weeks, the estimated timeframe for my map would fit right in.

I sought to make a map that conveyed the antiquity of the farm. I examined old Italian maps available in public libraries, and studied several historic documents that were kept at Spannocchia itself. I spent most of my days walking the trails myself, noting any and all visible historic features. It was difficult to amass all the current geographic information and draw an image of it with an historic cartographic style (fig. 3).

Finally, I had to get to Mongolia. The only map project that I had started to arrange before my arrival was one for an adventure tour company in Mongolia called Boojum Tours. So I knew I had a map project waiting for me...if I could just get there! Finding my way across Asia took a little time, but I managed to get from St. Petersburg to Ulaan Baatar in a few weeks via the Siberian Express. Arrangements with Boojum Tours were made mostly through emails with the director, John, and in Ulaan Baatar, where I met with their staff in town. We made an agreement that I would join a two week horseback trip into the Rhenchinlumbe Valley, and would in turn create two or three maps of the region. Boojum Tours
appeared to have earned the respect and friendship of numerous community members in the Darhad Valley, and has been committed to socially and economically supporting the local culture for several years.

The map project with Boojum was the final one of my fellowship year, so of any project it was the most professional. I had learned many ‘tricks of the trade,’ how to do my work, how to estimate the appropriate time frame for the requested products. In addition, the open, rolling landscapes of Mongolia were ideal for mapping. Elevated views from hills and mountainsides were vast and expansive. And with three weeks to travel on foot, horseback, and jeep, I had the time and resources to visit and visualize a much larger landscape than in previous projects (fig. 4). The substantial trust the company had in me from the beginning resulted in better, more thorough maps.

![Figure 4. Khovsgol Region. No single tourist camp or site is highlighted.](image)

**METHODOLOGY**

“To walk all these territories, I have only imagination, but that is not, I would argue, a poor man’s instrument of measure. … (The) personal atlas in our brains…happens to be the most sophisticated, supple map-making device ever created.”

(Hall, 2004, p.16,17)

With only a small number of highly diverse mapping projects, it is difficult to generalize about the overall methods used. Yet I am compelled to discuss some of the common denominators between the projects, if only for the sake of informing those who may be interested in making similar sorts of maps in the future. When asked the simple question ‘how did you make those maps,’ I have never known what to say. This section is therefore dedicated to those inquiries. There is always much discovered using a ‘learn-as-you-go’ technique and these projects were no exception.

The single most important aspect of each project was my relationship with one main contact. The mutual trust and understanding that developed between my contact and I was the foundation of the project. Even in hindsight I cannot find any system for how I found my contacts for the map projects. At times it seemed pure luck, stepping into an office right off the street, or chance networking—following up on a name scribbled on scrap paper. Each contact was involved in some form of rural tourism which provided a certain degree of structure in which to frame the project. They knew the landscapes well and had connections with local communities. Often the map was to fit in with more ambitious projects of social or educational outreach in these areas. Their broader aims were naturally directed with some bias and personal opinion, and there was always conflicting interests when it came to tourism and rural development. Political agendas and complex power relations were always part of the local social fabric. My maps were inherently situated in these uneven power dynamics, and as I traveled I grew less naïve to my privileged position within them.
It didn’t take long to tell if my contact and I ‘clicked’ on the potential value of a new type of map for the specific place. Showing them previous map projects was the best way to articulate what I meant. I was always amazed by the immediate mutual understanding once I put maps down on the table or attached them in an email. Once in agreement about starting the project, it was essential to agree on what areas were to be mapped, how the maps would be used and for whom, the rough time frame, how the final map would be copied and distributed, and living situations. However, I don’t believe I ever formalized any of this with written statements or signed agreements. As I look back, it was basically entirely founded on mutual trust. In many cases not all of these aspects were decided in the very beginning, and none of it was written in stone. I would indicate upfront that I needed to take the final map originals with me. As I grew more accustomed to making maps for people, I tried to insist on more upfront agreements. This way, before I even began exploring the landscape, I knew what I was looking to include in the maps, what scale of detail would be necessary to note, and how much time I would have to gather information.

Living in the landscapes I was mapping was essential. Befriending and spending time with local community members was also imperative; it gave me the time to show them what I was trying to do, and to hear their opinions. Thus accommodation arrangements were a critical aspect to the success or failure of the project. Often I would be relying on the hospitality of community members during my stay, and issues could arise if my unique situation wasn’t clearly communicated and agreed upon by all those involved. But because of the ad-hoc nature of my accommodations, I befriended many more people than I would have had I arranged private accommodation in advance.

At some point, usually before arriving in the region to be mapped, I would do my best to gather all the available maps of the area. Map availability is an interesting topic in many countries. Since I didn’t have any efficient way of formally requesting maps from the government, I would buy them from vendors on the street. Often my contacts knew the limited extent and questionable accuracy of available maps, and would be able to guide me in how much effort to put into tracking them down and how much faith to put in them. Government cadastral and topographic maps were helpful mainly to verify place names and overall shapes of lakes, mountain ranges, roads and rivers, but often they were at too small a scale. For the most part, I would have some kind of small-scale topographic map to hike with and several commercially produced brochure maps to compare with my findings.

Once I finally had some sort of base camp in the area, there was only one thing to do: start walking around. Days were usually spent walking around on and off trails with a small notebook and a map. For me, the most trustworthy way of understanding the contours of the landscape and the relative importance of various landmarks and landforms was by walking in, around and through the terrain as much as I could. On foot I would chance upon things no map or person ever mentioned. I took detailed notes and drawings along the way. By ascending hills and mountainsides I was able to gain perspectives that would be very similar to a bird’s eye view. Sketches from these high points often became rough outlines for my maps. This process of exploring the landscape on foot could take from one week to one month. It was up to me to see what I needed to see in order to personally construct a holistic mental image of the place.

The process of gathering this spatial knowledge was largely a personal one, although strongly influenced by interactions. I would often be guided by locals along certain routes to specific cultural sites, viewpoints, etc. Through our conversations (often working through language barriers), I would learn bits and pieces of local history, plant names, toponyms, and recent changes or issues in the community. Yet much spatial knowledge that was shared with me never ended up on any map. I tried to avoid revealing any features or sites that I learned were private, sacred, or places that visitors were not welcome. In that sense I never attempted to represent the cultural landscape from the local’s perspective, since I was bound by my own identity as a visitor, and limited to my own experience of the area. While I aspired to respectfully articulate what I had learned from the community, the ‘data gathering’ process was personal. While this is perhaps the greatest limitation of the maps, it was also a strength. It allowed me to draw with my own spatial imagination and intuition without an obligation to document the spatial knowledge or map authorship of others. Artistic maps can afford this freedom, but the tension between personal and local individual’s perspectives still must be acknowledged.

I could have doubled or tripled my time in each place, yet at some point the maps had to get done. The next step was to hunker down wherever I was staying and integrate all the information I had and get it down onto one piece of paper. I would redraw over and over how I was going to arrange all the mountains, rivers, towns, and sites in the most intuitive way for the viewer. In this simplification process, many details would have to be omitted. Either they were not a priority for the given audience, or there simply wasn’t space. This step of the cartographic process could take several days of drawing. Ideally I would have always liked an opportunity to run a sketch draft by my contact person, but often they were not
available on location. Before pulling out the permanent pens, it was best to be sure that the geographic information I had sketched out met my contacts’ needs.

Most map sizes ranged from 8.5” x 11” to 10” x 14”, due to the types of paper I carried with me. All maps were drawn with fine, waterproof Micron pens. I structured the drawing process, drawing set ‘layers’ of information one at a time. Major landforms first, toponyms second, trails and roads third, and so on. Yet rarely would this work out as cleanly as planned. This smallest slip or misplacement of a line took patience and creativity to resolve. In hindsight, preliminary watercolor washes could have provided a nice background texture for the map and could have replaced tedious efforts of hill-shading and forest cover detail in pen. Additional map graphics were custom designed to meet the unique needs and tastes of each contact and their respective locale. Font style, small illustrations of villages, local flora or fauna all helped embellish and enrich the image.

Another issue was the language I used for labeling towns and other features. Although English would suite the majority of international tourists, I labeled many features with the local language, since this the name I had learned and how the community would refer to these features. In places like Madagascar, multiple languages could be used, namely English, French or Malagasy. Many of my choices were quick intuitive decisions or best guesses that should have been reviewed by a community member.

I rarely had any chance to show my maps to the local community at large. I would have like to have arranged this, since I might have learned their opinions and perspectives in an open forum. There were difficulties in organizing this, however, and I simply did not have the experience nor resources to organize and facilitate such an event. I did, however, always enjoy showing the final maps to those community members I knew personally. Fortunately, few were disappointed, so the remaining steps of the project unfolded with enthusiasm and satisfaction.

The final step was to copy or scan the map originals to leave my contact with quality working files to manipulate for publishing purposes. Getting to adequate technical resources often included several days of travel back to the nearest large city. I put significant time and effort in ensuring that quality copies remained, but it all depended on the technical resources available. Fortunately in most cases the small size of the maps allowed for basic digital scanning.

CHALLENGES

“...the most important thing a map shows, if we pause to look at it long enough, if we travel upon it widely enough, if we think about it hard enough, is all the things we still don’t know.”

(Hall, 2004, p. 19)

I discovered many errors and problematic issues in the project process as I went. Since I was traveling continuously throughout the year, and each mapping project was with new people in a completely new place, I could never fully adjust and plan for the potential new hurdles. But what I had to sacrifice in methodological consistency I tried to make up for in flexibility. Over several months, I was able to recognize common issues that reappeared consistently, though disguised, in each particular context. With only a handful of projects to compare, I hesitate to make generalizations. Therefore I will just briefly suggest the following are potential problems applicable to this kind of freelance mapping.

Without any kind of formal team or committee, all the projects were built upon personal relationships. This situation always has its strengths and weaknesses. The whole project is riding on mutual trust, honesty and respect. There was no set structure to fall back on for distinct roles, responsibilities, and procedures. The success of the project largely rested on my abilities to keep all relationships positive, professional and fully functional. This was a heavy load at times, especially when involved with organizations or groups that had internal conflicts or power struggles to begin with.

By drawing maps for certain groups, I was putting myself in a position of working for them and not necessarily just with them. This distinction was often vague and issues of authority and power could have arisen much more strongly than they luckily did. I also typically felt indebted to those providing various arrangements for me. Although I tried to remain as an independent entity, the bottom line was that I was producing something for someone else. The map could be seen as an exchange for my ‘room and board’ during the project, so towards the end I was the one that ‘owed’ the map. At times drawing the map felt like writing out a big, illustrated check!
There were also clear limits to working with tourism-based groups and organizations. Like with any cartographic process, I always felt the presence of uneven power-knowledge relations embedded in the foundations of the project. It was difficult to get outside of certain perspectives and biases that these groups had towards the future of the rural, cultural landscapes in which they worked. My role was to help make maps that furthered this vision and use of the landscape, whether it be encouraging tourists to hike on certain trails, to visit the homes of certain craftspeople, or to discourage visitation of other areas. I felt forced to accept the assortment of prejudices and power-struggles that those interested in the final map may have had. Although maps were geared towards tourists, they were intended to be beneficial to the local communities as well. Preferably I could have arranged for some kind of official community approval or need assessment.

Tourism is a money making industry. In many rural areas, tourism offers profits exponentially greater than income earned from traditional agricultural or economic means. Thus, tourist maps can have a great deal of power—the power of persuasion. Although I did not wish it to be so, I knew that my maps could be used just as fancy advertisements, drawing tourists in for the purposes of business and profit. Once in the hands of my contacts, there would be little I could do to influence how the map was used. Those who provided the resources and supported the project would be in control. But like the entire project, the future use of the maps was based on mutual trust. As I had hoped, most groups I worked with went to great efforts to put the maps towards a general public use.

The maps themselves contained many errors. Many of these, such as warped distances and distorted directions, were intentional and unavoidable in drawing an artistic bird’s eye view. Yet I do acknowledge that these inaccuracies can mislead the viewer’s perceptions, and perhaps steer their travel behaviors. As in all cartographic processes, my omissions and inclusions had social dimensions and reflected upon my personal interactions with certain individuals and the limitations of my own knowledge. How would an inclusion a little known trail affect the status quo? What if I failed to include an important cultural site? I am likely exaggerating the actual impact my maps could have on these places, but it is important to be conscious of the possible implications.

CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

“To bring lasting orientation into modern space is a mythic task”  
(Entrikin, 1991, p.65)

I left every project site not knowing the map’s fate. Who would benefit? How would the map be used? Would it be used at all? After returning to the United States at the end of my fellowship in July of 2002, I kept in contact with several people, and heard every now and then of a map in a brochure or website. This winter, two and a half years later, I sent out letters to all of my contacts, asking them what they had done with the maps and if they were of any use. The following are their responses, via personal communication in 2005.

From contact in Huancayo, Peru: “About the maps...originally the idea was to make the maps to include them in a book for guiding around Huancayo, therefore the deal with you was to give you full board and facilities to make the maps, also the contacts and sometimes the trips. Well, they were used by many people to move around but as you know things change and they have been useful as information for travelers to move around and to find the houses of the craft people and to have an idea where to go.”

From contact in, Puno, Peru: “Your maps have been very useful to all of us. First, in the communities, we have been using your maps to show to tourists the location of their communities and to show the different paths to get to tourists sites of interest in their villages. Your maps are hanging up in the walls of their restaurants and houses. Tourists love the maps because it does not exist—maps like this to show the location or geography of this rural area. For us as a travel agency, it was very helpful to design new paths and tours on the communities. We use it to show to tourists how they will walk and where they are going. Many people do copies of your maps because they are very nice hand made maps and because we tell them your story.”

From contact at Andringitra National Park, Ambalivoa, Madagascar: “The handmade maps of the trail system that you did for us were scanned into our computer at WWF, all text on the maps was translated into French and then we worked with a printing company in Antananarivo to color the maps. They were then compiled into a brochure which incorporated the park rules and individual trails. We ordered 5,000 copies of the brochure and, over the last two years, have sold approximately 80% to tourists. The same printing company did one postcard of the entire trail system that we sell to
tourists. In October of this year we inaugurated our new visitor center and one of the important displays is a blown up version of your trail map (fig. 5) so that the person at the desk can explain to tourists the trails available.

"Figure 5. Enlarged trail map at Andringitra National Park Office."

*From contact at Spannocchia, Siena, Italy:* “I have to report that to be honest your map has not been put to great use here. It was an exciting project for us, and you certainly did a very nice job on it, but unfortunately your final version had so much detail on it that when we reduced it to what was for us a usable size it became difficult to read. It’s a shame that such a great concept and such good execution haven’t been able to be put to better use. I think the biggest problem was caused by the quantity of trees that you drew in; when we reduced the drawing to 8-1/2 x 11 or even 11 x 17, the mass of tiny trees made it very dark. Also, at that scale it was rather difficult to read the text elements. We have just a photocopy, and I don’t think that is at the original scale. I think if you had been able to work with us on the practical application of the map, or perhaps we had checked it for practicality as you were doing it, we might well have been very successful. What we need(ed) it for was something that with just a fold or two could be carried by our guests as they explore the property.”

*From contact in Rhenchinlumbe, Mongolia:* “We have used the maps a great deal. We printed them LARGE and they hang in the Khovsgol member of parliament's office, the National Park headquarters and at various tourist camps (fig. 6). We also made postcards of the map and I will be glad to send you a supply. We also have them up on the web. We altered some of them a bit, digitally, to make them work better for our purposes (moving the key to the upper left corner on one, for instance and colorizing them a bit). We love them and are happy to sing your praises.”

"Figure 6. Photo of visitors outside of National Park Office, Mongolia"

Many maps have successfully helped create forums for conversation about place and local landscape. Some have encouraged trail use and low-impact tourism, while encouraging interaction with local communities. And most importantly, for me, I believe the maps serve as modern illustrations of the unique qualities of places, affording them the attention and reverence they deserve and encouraging us to value the places that are special to each of us. They offer a modern example of how artistic maps can be powerful, effective means of communicating experientially-based spatial
information. Plus they were created and published in an inexpensive, efficient and timely manner. There was no need for computers or global positioning equipment to lug around or get through customs, no multi-tiered committees or large teams to assemble and manage. For all these reasons, there is still a place for hand-drawn work.

As alternative, community-scale mapping practices are currently being tried and tested, the door is open for creative ways to visualize local landscapes. Visual imagery will always have its restrictions, no matter what materials, medium, or perspective is used. The key is to use these restrictions to the image's advantage to persuade. As artistic renderings, my maps are clearly subjective and personal, yet they communicate useful spatial information that is roughly accurate and often never before represented on paper. I would argue that hand drawn maps have been, and continue to be, useful in orientating us to and situating us in meaningful places. Perhaps we need these kinds of maps now more than ever, to confront what Entrikin calls the “mythic task” of finding a spatial reference for meaning in our lives (1991, p. 65).

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BIOGRAPHY

Molly Holmberg is a graduate student in geography to be completing her masters at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her maps can be viewed on her website, www.mollymaps.com. She is currently in the process of forming a small freelance map company and is always looking for interesting mapping projects all over the world. Her current research focuses on community mapping techniques and landscape visualization. She is from Orono, Maine, and attended Middlebury College in Vermont for her undergraduate degree also in geography.