Performing Mimetic Mapping
A Non-Visualisable Map of the Suzhou River Area of Shanghai

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Introduction

In this paper we examine a process of mapping the Suzhou River area of Shanghai, focusing on the procedure of its making as well as on the re-exploration of the city as performed through the map, rather than on its material outcome as a final object. We argue that the map is actually the mimetic re-performance of the exploration and experience of the Suzhou River area. Through the description of the processes involved we analyse the position of this particular map within contemporary discourse about mapping. We also question the purpose of the process, its desired outcome, the consciousness of the significance of each event within this procedure, and the possible significance of the final traces that the map will leave behind.

This map was created by a group of four map-makers who were postgraduate students of architecture at the University of Edinburgh, and it was part of the M.Arch./M.Sc. course requirements. The overall procedure was not predetermined from the beginning; the strategy was not specified in detail and the sequence of activities, involving and evolving the map, was intended to be mainly intuitive. The mapping was a re-exploration, a re-visiting and navigation within the part of Shanghai under study. As a result, we suggest that the map-making process is a 'mimesis', in the sense that it re-performed the physical exploration of the actual site that had taken place earlier. Mimesis, as a 'conscious' repetition and creative evolution of an action (rather than a pure imitation or tracing), is a

key concept that will be discussed in further detail throughout the paper.

After the mapping had been carried out, the procedure was analysed, post-rationalised, justified, and partly documented. In this paper we also question the methods and reasons for these later practices, as well as their possible meaning, purpose, demands and/or context. This paper presents the map in detail, sidetracking where necessary in order to give information about the Suzhou River area, as well as about the academic course as the context within which the mapping was carried out. In this way it interprets the map-makers' gestures and reveals possible links between their performance and this area of Shanghai itself.

Mapping procedure 1
The part of the city selected for mapping

The physical object was not intended to be a conventional cartographic map (carto meaning 'written-on-paper'), rather it was to be a multilayered model. Everything started on a piece of plywood (approximate size 1 x 1.7m) upon which a series of interventions were layered using a variety of materials and techniques [fig.1].

The mapping process presents the map-makers' experience of the Suzhou River area. The Suzhou River had always been a significant boundary in Shanghai; connecting and separating territories, neighbourhoods, activities and people. During the last two centuries both sides of the river have been
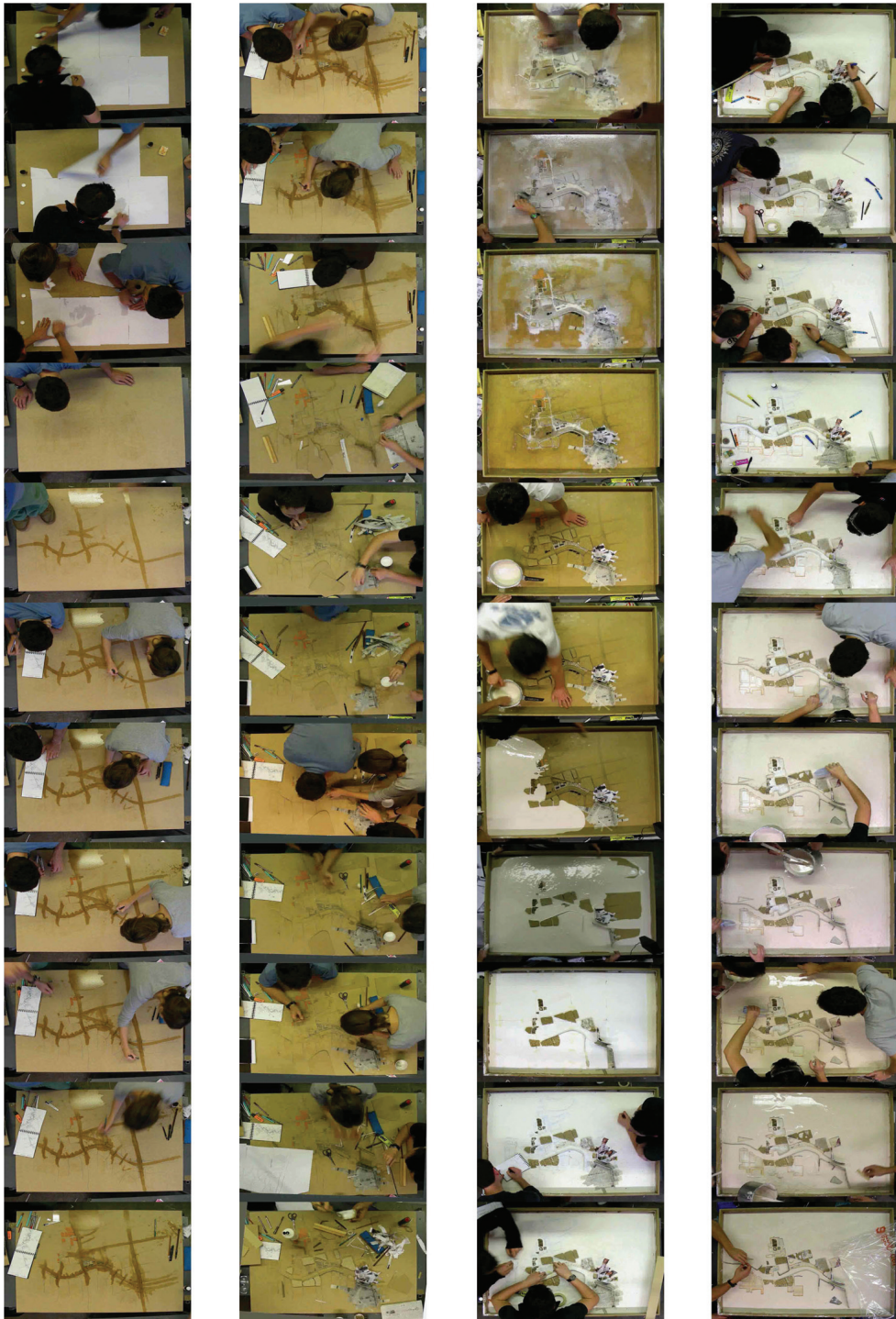
Fig. 1: Model-making process. Photo courtesy of the authors.

connected and disconnected several times; the layout of the activities occupying the neighbouring zones were also rearranged. During the foreign concession era (1842 to 1943), for example, the regions on either side of the river were completely separated. The southern side had been part of the British settlement and the northern part of the American one. At that time several bridges had been demolished and transport between the two sides either forbidden or controlled. Since there were no connections, the Suzhou River area turned into the 'back' side of both regions, and functioned as an industrial zone with small factories and storage spaces. The transport systems on either side developed independently, and even the building typology on either side is different. Later on, when the concession era officially ended (in 1943), the banks of the river started to get gradually reconnected; the demolished bridges were rebuilt and new ones were constructed. The city 'turns' once again towards the river, and many activities started to take place there, such as commerce, transportation, and everyday activities like cooking and recreation (e.g. tai-chi).

Over the past few decades this part of Shanghai has been developing rapidly. Several activities – varying along the waterway – take place, but traces of the past are visible too. The older buildings are different on the two sides, and the road network is very busy and inefficient, partly due to the fact that it was developed independently on either side. Many of the inhabitants of the Suzhou River area are immigrants from other parts of China – some from the Three Gorges region[1] and others from other rural areas.

Mapping procedure 2
The context of the mapping-procedure place (the game-board rules)
The place where the mapping is carried out inevitably affects the procedure a lot; the spatial, conceptual and physical context matters. The reason for the mapping, although not easily definable, emerges (at

least partly) out of the course's and the individual students' orientation, the course's guidelines and the students' own interests and inquiries.

The map was created within the design studio of the M.Arch.[2] program of the University of Edinburgh, during the academic year 2005-2006. The course organiser was Dorian Wiszniewski and the authors were engaged in the course as tutor and student. The title of the overall project was 'Architecture in Borderlands – Borderlands in Shanghai' and its general aim was the study of the city of Shanghai, the production of maps and drawings and the designing of spatial interventions. The wider project or 'thesis' consisted of a series of smaller projects described by a series of handouts, which progressively disclosed parts of the project to the students. In detail, the project consisted of:
(1) A small conference that introduced the city of Shanghai to the students.
(2) A visit to the city itself.
(3) An 'hypo-thesis' – drawing maps of the city and fragment interventions that suggested a scenario of territoriality, out of which the map under examination was created.
(4) A 'proto-thesis' that tested the previous propositions by designing sequences of oscillation between the concrete and the abstract at a range of scales.
(5) The 'thesis' itself, which mainly consisted of a building design (including 'its own footprint and its technological imprint').[3]
(6) Finally, the 'thesis closure' allowed a re-framing of the 'thesis' by revisions, the creation of a drawing report and the presentation of the overall project. One of the last handouts given to the students summarised the project as follows:

Remember, the enquiry into Borderlands is a question of territoriality. Borderlands are in-between conditions – areas between areas of resolute difference, areas of territorial dispute or areas formed by utter indifference. They are understood through questions of limit, connection and discontinu-

ity, inside and outside and, although they may be political or philosophical in character, they always have architectural manifestations that have circulatory possibilities and limits. A Borderland of course may be considered a threshold condition, but, under the specific deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation strategies that the enquiry of Architecture in Borderland initiates, Tectonics in Borderlands takes a positive outlook and speculates into the possible architectural manifestations of new limits and thresholds that emerge from renegotiating the political and philosophical tensions in Borderland.[4]

As is obvious from the quote above, the course adopts a Deleuzian terminology/worldview both implicitly and explicitly, and it has a clear orientation towards creative map-making. Mapping was not just a separate analytic phase of the design process, the map-making process was already interpreting the site and intervening in it.

Mapping, as a generative process, has become central to the focus of architecture, suggesting – as Mark Dorrian calls it – a 'cartographic turn'.[5] According to this view, Deleuze and Guattari provide the philosophical background that backs up the cartographic turn and with it the 'end' of man, humanism and architecture as stable entities that have a fixed representable meaning. The interest shifts, thus, to what the representation does; how representation changes the city itself. Within this approach, the mimetic process is not a one-way mechanism of the map imitating the city; it is a two-way interaction which acknowledges a mutual interface between the city and the map. In this way, the cartographer can never master the map, and neither can he dominate the terrain.[6] The strategy is not to implant architecture within the site, but rather to 'unground it, to detach it from its accommodation to the dominant discourses within which the identity of the site is constructed.'[7] Mark Dorrian proposes a schema that sees Eisenman and Libeskind as paradigmatic figures who made a major contribution towards the

'cartographic turn' in architecture, either as a pursuit of the exile of the human from the anthropocentric functionalism (Eisenman), or in an attempt to re-establish a 'phenomenological' bringing forth into visibility, memory and historicity (Libeskind).

Mapping procedure 3
The first move (the 'Icarus' conventions and beyond)
The first thing that was done within this mapping process was the tracing of a conventional urban planning map onto the plywood surface. The urban planning map was printed onto A4 paper sheets and then printed onto the base surface by acetone.

This stage already sets the question of scale, orientation, size, and of the initial information drawn onto the map surface. The overall size derived from the size of the drawing table; the place where the map was made – the design studio of the particular school, the industrial design dimensions of such tables, etc. – although of no significance to the represented place (the Suzhou River area), mattered at this stage of the mapping procedure. The tracing of an urban planning map is also an issue worth noticing. The starting point, quite often, is the most ordinary or conventional information about a place; its plan. By plan we mean the traditionally known drawing (to scale) which presents the outlines of the built forms, the edge of roads and rivers. Even before 'starting' our mapping we already encountered the 'ordinary', some fundamental and useful (at least in the everyday life of architects and designers) ways of representing, understanding and communicating some 'objective' aspects of the place. This choice already brings forth, in the context wherein we work, a map made up of lines that present information that is generally used – for the majority of building interventions carried out in the western world – for the documenting of a site or a plot. At the same time, the fact that it is (intuitively) considered as 'given' indicates the group's intention to go (or draw) beyond that.

The selection of the plan as a first gesture is already a strong decision; it is not a video, a story or a book that is mapping the experience of that space – it is a *plan*, a simulation of a visual overview. The tracing, made here, represents some of the experience that 'Icarus' would have had from above the city. If we follow Michel de Certeau's distinction between experiencing the city from above (like Icarus) and from within, walking and exploring it step by step, this tracing provides a kind of 'overview'. It is not a complete overview since it only gives the geometrical shapes of the built blocks, the roads, and the outline of the river, at a certain (spatial) scale; nevertheless, neither is it the route of a *flaneur*.

The following performances of the map-makers, as we will later see, challenge this first gesture of capturing the overview, and attempt to re-perform the routes of a *flaneur*. Their practice is the mimesis of the experience of the city – simultaneously – both from above and from within; both from far away through ('overview') maps and photos, and from within (the recalling and re-practising of the memory of the actual experience of the place step by step). It is – at all times – a struggle between the desired understanding or overview and the experiential immediacy that only the actual physical experience on the site can offer. The inevitable conflict between (1) experiencing the place without knowing the overview, and (2) re-experiencing the place with the knowledge of this overview, seems to be an intriguing point in this process. In other words, it challenges the impossible situation of experiencing a place with and without knowing what the next step brings.

Mapping procedure 4
The first improvisation (performance)
The second activity carried out was to draw the routes that the map-makers walked, with water – using a brush. The longer the time spent along an actual route, the slower the brush stroke. The faster and more complicated the turns and routes, the faster the brush strokes. The parts of the route that were traversed several times during the group's visit to Shanghai were drawn (with water) several times as well.

The water evaporated within a few seconds or minutes; the time for it to evaporate and disappear depended upon the amount of water applied to the plywood surface. While the brush was re-visiting a road (or part of a route) it might find traces of a previous visit, if it was an intense or slow one, or had been repeated several times; or else the trace of the previous crossing(s) had already vanished. The time it takes for the water to evaporate could be proportionally equivalent to the intensity or duration of a memory, either of the atmosphere, or of small details of the place.

The point where the description ends and the interpretation or justification starts is not clear. What the map-makers had in mind while making the map, and interpreting their activity after the map-making process, are two series of thoughts and activities not easily distinguishable. What was carried out by intuition or by some spontaneous reasoning, might have been forgotten in the meantime, and replaced by some other justification, reasoning or interpretation that suddenly appeared obvious after the initial drawing activity was accomplished.

An old Shanghainese man used to walk along the part of the Suzhou River under study every day, carrying a brush and a bottle of water. Every day, at the same time (and sometimes, if the weather was good, twice a day), he used to write with his brush and water a phrase that had been spoken by Mao Zedong when fighting against the Japanese during the 2nd Sino-Japanese war, in which he had taken part when he was young. As he told us, he was doing this calligraphy exercise regularly in order to practice his body and his mind. The phrase was ten to fifteen metres long and took fifteen minutes

to write. While he is writing the last few characters of the phrase, on a sunny autumn morning with a temperature of 15ºC, the first ones start fading. This story can be narrated in several different ways and accordingly related to the map-making technique in various ways.

It becomes apparent that there is some sort of mimetic relation between the old Shanghainese man and the map-makers. One interpretation could be that by their mimetic practice, the map-makers 'affect' the city itself. They rewrite it again and again, and re-perform in the studio something that they encountered on site. This is not dissimilar from our earlier analysis of the cartographic turn, as a wish to invert the one-way mimetic power of the city towards the map. Assimilated to magic, mimesis expresses this power of representing the order/disorder of a cosmos through re-enaction.[8]

The performance of an activity reflecting the practice of the Shanghainese man, can also be interpreted in another (parallel) way: by drawing routes with water, a few seconds later one does not have in front of one an overview of the complete experience or route; one only has traces of the most intense or recent moments of the route. The overall labyrinthine navigation within the city is not visualised in this way, which may, at this stage, be a desired thing. Although the map-makers could already have an overview of their routes, they chose to have their previous 'steps' erased or, rather, evaporated.

Mapping procedure 5
Exploring the Suzhou River area on foot (embodiment)
After performing several routes with water, the map-makers re-performed some particular ones with pencils, ink and colours; they also drew certain buildings of the studied area by various means. Buildings of the same typology, the same time of construction, or function, are mapped in an equivalent way. The buildings, thus, have been mapped by

different tools according to the characteristics of their various aspects. The territories on either sides of the river – the British and the American settlements – are drawn, thus, by different means; not because of the tracing of historical maps, but because of the differences noticed on the site. The information drawn on the map was collected mainly through the experience of the site from within; by walking it. At some stages of the map-making process, the areas on either side of the river were re-performed by different map-makers – by different members of the group. The fact that the two sides had been for a long time separated was being re-performed by the strategy and procedure of their mapping.

One member of the group of map-makers drew the roads with intense commercial activity using a black pencil. He also mapped the area where people practiced tai-chi, using small pieces of wood directed towards the river. Another member drew with colour the buildings accommodating companies, amongst which were several western ones. By use of other pens and materials, other attributes of the space were mapped; the place of the residential buildings (according to the explorer's observations), the place of intense commercial activity, the public places that accommodated everyday family activities (such as cooking or washing clothes), etc.

The map-makers were re-performing (through their minds and hands) the routes that they had followed on the site and thus re-experienced the city. This event could be characterised as 'mimesis', in the sense that the map-makers were re-performing themselves; re-visiting and re-embodying the experience of the city, re-performing the visit and exploration of the site, this time, on the plywood map-space.

The analysis of the map through the concept of mimesis takes as its starting point the classical Aristotelian view that sees mimesis as a fundamental concept of artistic creation. Every art according to

Aristotle (especially tragedy) is a mimesis of a praxis. In the second chapter of the *Poetics* he makes clear that the 'objects' of poetic mimesis are 'men in action' (*μιμοῦνται οι μιμούμενοι πράττοντας*).[9] For this we employ the concept of mimesis as a strategy towards knowledge, interpretation and understanding: 'Like is known by like' writes Aristotle, citing Empedocles.[10] Mimesis for Aristotle is constituted by mythos and praxis, which are both close to time and action. This view of mimesis should be seen in opposition to Plato's understanding of this concept, which is closer to image, imagination and imitation.[11] For Plato the issue of mimesis is related to the theory of forms where the distinction between ideas and appearances is clear: all appearances copy the divine forms (the appearances are in the darkness of the cave while the forms are in the light above). Within this view, the artistic mimesis – e.g. the painting of a chair – is a double mediation; the carpenter imitates the 'Ideal Form' and the painter imitates its imitation. Accordingly, the map of the Suzhou River can be considered as a map of an image of the city. By contrast, within the Aristotelian understanding of mimesis, the map under examination can be considered as an active re-enactment of human life, as was perceived during the students' visit to Shanghai. The focus of our analysis is the active participation in the mimetic phenomenon of map-making, and not the mapping as a final-product-oriented process.

Mapping procedure 6
Floating population, floating boundaries, floating buildings (demolishing and re-building the model)
While the group visited Shanghai, a new bridge, connecting both sides of the Suzhou River, was being built. The bridge-in-progress and the surrounding bank of the river (under reconstruction) were mapped by vertical cardboard elements, and covered by strips of recent Chinese newspapers. To be more precise, what was actually mapped were the vertical obstacles that prevented the map-makers from crossing the construction site. The group learned about the bridge from local people and the local newspapers. What is being mapped (in the first place) is not the (non-visible) bridge-under-construction, but the blocking elements and the blocked, inaccessible territory. What is mapped, thus, is what was actually experienced by the members of the group on site. The newspapers were bought and read in Shanghai. Then, they were taken to Edinburgh by the map-makers, together with pencils, inks, brushes and other things and tools.

Part of the wall of the riverside is represented by vertical cardboard. Some parts of this wall (the ones represented on the map) are quite high, blocking the view of the river. They serve, thus, as a 'back' for several outdoor public activities, such as commerce, cooking, hanging clothes to dry, etc. They might also act as a precaution against humidity; in the past the walls along the longer parts of the river were high, possibly to prevent it from flooding.

The newer buildings, that – as far as the group members were informed – were not meant to be demolished, were mapped as blocks of wood stuck onto the plywood surface. Their height on the map doesn't represent their actual height; the wooden blocks indicate the field of land they occupy. The territories that were being demolished and those which were being rebuilt or were soon to be re-built, were drawn in outline using ink.

The buildings which were being demolished while the group was in Shanghai were drawn and constructed by blocks of wood, and then erased or removed by water or carving tools. As the map makers noticed (and as they were also informed before visiting the city), during the last few years the Suzhou River area has been changing extremely rapidly. Small old houses and blocks are being demolished and new high-rise buildings are being constructed, while the inhabitants of the demolished

ones move to other parts of the city. While the plots remain unbuilt – after the demolition but before the construction of new buildings – they are temporarily inhabited by Chinese people (mainly migrants) who build their own sheds out of wood, and tents. Pockets of the population float from one area to another, the value of the land changes rapidly, and the spatio-temporal mix and sequence of situations becomes more and more complex. While luxurious flats are being built and inhabited, small houses are being demolished (and their inhabitants look for affordable accommodation in other, mainly suburban, places), and in the meantime temporary constructions house moving populations. The layout of the built territories, and also the layout of groups of inhabitants, shifts from day to day.

Within these last few steps of the mapping process a range of information and spatial elements was mapped, represented or re-performed using various ways and means. The mapped aspects were the ones recorded or remembered by the map-makers; this was due either to randomness or to their significance. Randomness and possible significance were, thus, the two parameters that brought the above-mentioned information to the map-making field (without the identification of one or the other always being possible).

Mapping procedure 7
Re-exploring, re-performing, re-concealing
After some stages of re-performing the experience of the actual place onto the mapping-place, the group covered everything with a fine layer of Vaseline. Then, plaster was poured onto the model and most of it covered. The Vaseline allowed the possibility of removal, if desired, later on. What resulted was, thus, a white surface with which to re-start mapping; the previous practices are there – not visible though, and not easily accessible either. At this stage, the plaster covered everything, rendering it invisible, apart from the wooden blocks presenting the seemingly permanent buildings, and some

(seemingly permanent) parts of the river wall too.

After the plaster dried, the group retraced some of the lines from the urban planning map mentioned at the beginning. They knew, thus, the precise position of their previous mapping interventions. Using some carving tools, they 'dug' into the plaster and removed bits that covered certain territories, such as the busy riverside public space where tai-chi, commerce and everyday recreation took place. The previous notation of these places again became visible on the surface.

At the same time, the group members placed some vertical plastic planes enclosing the territories of buildings being demolished or of the ones recently demolished (and where new ones are going to be built). On these territories, as mentioned earlier, there are people living in small temporary sheds that they built themselves. These temporary 'floating' spaces of the floating population are being notated by an enclosure that prevents them from being flooded by the following layer of plaster.

A second layer of plaster was poured onto the map. This time, within the enclosed spaces one can see the thickness of the plaster layer just poured, as well as the upper surface of the previous one. A large part of the map again became a blank for further study, performance or mapping – apart from the above-mentioned territories-in-progress. Those remained 'excavated', uncovered, while the rest of the place would need to be carved and literally excavated in order to be brought (once again) to the surface.

Thus, if the map was to be 'read', the 'reading' activity would include carving, scratching and breaking, in order to uncover and make visible parts of the mapping process. The one who reads the map, at the same time creates it too; he gets inevitably involved in the map-making process. The map-makers also read the map they create, and when

needed, cover it and re-reveal it. The 'play' of the memory and the conflict between the whole and the fragmented experience, re-emerges as a challenge to hide and reveal parts of the (re)experience of the Suzhou River area.

Mapping procedure 8
Re-viewing the mapping and the mimesis
The issues mapped or presented by the map-performing are some of the events and conditions of the studied site; not the only ones and not necessarily the most important. They are, though, of some significance to the activity of exploration. It is a re-exploration of the place, and as such it makes visible – at least for a while – some of its qualities. As a re-exploration, it addresses issues that the map-makers came across either consciously or not, through their journey. Some of the information was put on the map-board straight away, and some others emerged out of the overlaying of multiple representations and actions. As James Corner mentions, referring to Robinson and Petchenik's arguments, 'there are some phenomena that can only achieve visibility through representation rather than through direct experience'.[12]

'The map 'gathers' and 'shows' things presently (and always) invisible, things which may appear incongruous or untimely but which may also harbour enormous potential for the unfolding of alternative events'.[13] What is mapped does not indicate what there is or what happens on the studied site; the map indicates qualities and it functions as an active milieu itself, so as to engage not only with the actual reality of the place but also with the potential ones. Italo Calvino's room with the glass spheres could be considered, thus, as a kind of map of the city; the spheres presented the future of the city as each one of the inhabitants had imagined it, and which was never realised as such.

The map's significance, as Mark Dorrian mentions, referring to Deleuze and Guattari, turns out to be related more to what the map as 'architectural strategy/representation does rather than what it means'.[14] In our case the map-in-progress presents and conceals itself. It also signifies, in the sense that it creates a situation against which the possible viewer has to re-act (by the cutting, carving and digging mentioned earlier), in order to experience the map's potential. According to Deleuze and Guattari, '[t]he map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by the individual, group or social formation.'[15]

Here comes the question about the use, the function and the readability of a map or mapping process. Some geographical maps are tracings, and although they might not give more information than one would find on the site, they are of some use. Their production does not reveal; it is not an exploratory experience for the map-makers. The outcome, though, that the physical map produced, will be used by travellers and visitors to the place. Other kinds of maps provide an enlightening experience for their makers, since the map-makers re-explore the place and reveal or bring forth interesting things and experiences. These kinds of maps may have the potential to be experienced by other people rather than their makers, or not.

In our case, the map does not exist (in some sense) as a final object; it is a procedure or re-performing of the experience of the site. There is, though, the video recording of the mapping process, and also the map-board, left in the state it was in when the mapping process stopped. The mapping procedure as such, though, cannot be re-visited, since its being lies in the making of that map, in the being-involved in the making and not in the viewing of it, or of its video recording. If the purpose of that map was, as we argue, the better understanding of the place and the re-experience or re-performance of it, by a creative mimesis, then

the map cannot have a receiver, a reader anyway. Having said that, one might still argue that this map does have receivers, since we are now presenting it. Our presentation, though, is another map, and its existence depends fully upon our narration. Without our narration that map is almost unreadable.

Deleuze and Guattari, referring to the map, argue that '[i]t can be drawn on the wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation'.[16] According to their arguments, the map can have any form – it can be of any nature desired. Within this field of thought we can name as 'map' the experience of the mapping, or the potential experience of the map re-visited: a viewing of the map that would involve its physical deconstruction in order to gain a rich physical and conceptual experience of its nature and making. Still, we could argue that the map as such, as a means without an end, is a pure 'gesture.' Giorgio Agamben describes gesture as a kind of activity that opposes Aristotelian teleology:

…if producing is a means in view of an end and praxis is an end without means, the gesture then breaks with the false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes morality and presents instead means that, as such, evade the orbit of mediality without becoming, for this reason, ends.[17]

As we have already mentioned, Deleuze and Guattari are key-figures in the cartographic turn in architecture. Especially with the example of the orchid and the wasp[18] they expose the limitations of mimesis as mere imitation. Nevertheless they still mention the mimetic characteristics as part of the semiotic chains that the rhizome connects.[19] Referring to maps in particular, they pose the question: 'Does not a multiplicity have strata upon which unifications and totalisations, massifications, mimetic mechanisms, signifying power takeovers, and subjective attributions take root?'[20] But they quickly affirm that the opposite is also true, exposing the dangers of simple dualisms of tracing: 'The imitator always creates the model, and attracts it. The tracing has already translated the map into an image;' Finally, they acknowledge that the entire understanding of their book as disseminating and dispersing its unity through mimetic procedures between each plateau. This view of mimesis and mapping is not dissimilar to contemporary approaches that relate mimesis to play;[21] play is related again through the game-board mapping to the educational aspect of the map:

In the case of the child, gestural, mimetic, ludic, and other semiotic systems regain their freedom and extricate themselves from the 'tracing,' that is, from the dominant competence of the teacher's language a microscopic event upsets the local balance of power.[22]

Although the course required an 'active' map to be presented, the map under examination was not a map-to-be-presented. It was a 'game' played by the group members (the map-makers) in order to re-visit, understand and interpret the city and particularly the part of Shanghai that was studied. The map-making was a field for discussion, interaction and interpretation – for a game; it was a field for events that were not to be presented as an object map-outcome.

In order to understand mimesis as a play/game one has to understand the shift that Nietzsche brought forth by going beyond the Greek philosophers (Plato and Aristotle), focusing on the 'performative' aspects of mimesis. The 'performative' mimesis becomes a play as a 'dramatic representation where the artist takes art personally.'[23] For Nietzsche the art-as-play is the only way for humans to find the truth, a truth that is different from truth-as-correspondence. 'Nietzsche's notion of play was radical, since he ultimately understood it through a cosmic (rather than human) disinterestedness.'[24] This disinterestedness is a characteristic of the child's attitude and (in our case) becomes prominent in the way that the map was actually left

aside half/non-finished. It is considered here as half-finished in opposition the 'finished' or the expected which would consist of a visible material (possibly readable) map.

The fact that mimesis creates a second nature (physis), has been identified as a major philosophical problem even from the early treatises on the topic. Plato, recognising the power of mimesis, privileged it as a fundamental way of educating the noble quality of men in his ideal city, since the mimesis of their outlook can 'settle down into habits and second nature in the body, the speech, and the thought.'[25] Nevertheless, for the same reason Plato actually prevented the poets from joining his Ideal state, because through the mimetic acts of poetry and theatre 'one forgets his own role or duty in the state, for if a guard always mimes foreign characters, his soul would be split up between these untrue lives.'[26] In another instance, Plato argues that in order for Ion to recite Homer, his *nous*, or his self awareness, is not with him anymore.[27]

Within the context of this mimetic mapping, it could be argued that mimesis was a way of approaching the other in order to establish a dialogue with it – where 'unconscious strata of culture are built into social routines as bodily disposition.'[28] It could be argued that the mimesis of the old Shanghainese man writing with water (by applying the same gesture onto the map) made the map-makers step out of themselves in order to become temporarily the other. Performing a mimetic action, in this sense, is an instantaneous trip to the Other, becoming the other for a while and coming back again, changed only by the experience of being someone else. What is gained through this mimetic activity is not a tangible outcome that can be rationally measured as such. In some sense it is – by nature – against rationality:

Mimesis on the other hand [of rationality which is abstract, oppositional and hierarchical], is respon-sive and concrete. It works through images rather than concepts and approaches the other (nature, the unconscious, social others) as something different yet related, more 'powerful' than the self. It responds emotionally, intuitively. Through gesture and movements it sets forth the self's experience of what it feels apart from yet also a part of, assuming -for the moment- the features of the other.[29]

The map-makers were inspired by the old Shanghainese man's technique, onto which they projected their own thoughts and metaphors. The reason for engaging in such a practice is not clear, neither is it absolutely nor rationally justified. It is a mimesis of praxis within a different context. The difference of the context already shifts the situation, the reason and the possible meanings or significance of the praxis. Thus, apart from the experience of the other's self that the mimesis (to some extent) provides, the repetition of the praxis in a different context provides a better understanding of both contexts as such.

After the map
Arguably, the mimetic aspect of mapping has been over-emphasised in an attempt to apply it to heterogeneous and even contradictory processes. To some extent, in contrast with the map-makers' practice (who performed mimetically without being aware of it), the use of mimesis in this paper is intentionally amplified: a mimetic excess.[30] This excess is a subversive mechanism that wishes to challenge and question the suppression of mimesis in western 'civilised' societies.[31] This unprompted revival of the mimetic practices by the students brings forth a trajectory of pre-reflective human activity. By putting mimesis back into the game, the map-makers spontaneously transgressed the conventional binary oppositions (subject/object) and offered an accessible re-narration of Shanghai.

Within this paper our aim was to revisit the map-making process described, revisiting at the same time the part of Shanghai that was studied. Our

aim was to understand, explore and interpret some aspects of the city. What revealed or interpreted Shanghai, was the narration of the creation of the map, rather than the object-outcome of the map-making process. The narration of the map-makers' practices and choices brought into question issues concerning the map-making practice as such: its purpose, techniques, readability and recipients. The mapping described was accomplished as a mimetic process of their actual experience of Shanghai. The mapping was revisited and narrated, here, as a mimesis (again) of the map-makers' process, through textual description and interpretation. The map, thus, cannot be seen but can only be inter-preted again and again; just like the city. The map does not represent the city; it does the city.

Notes

1. There is a hydroelectric dam being constructed at the Three Gorges area. Because of that, a vast region is being flooded and the inhabitants of the numerous towns and villages are being relocated, some within the same province (Hubei Province), whereas many others to other eastern and central provinces.

2. The M.Arch. course in the university of Edinburgh has the special characteristic of being a two year (four semesters) course that is dealing with one single big project, the 'thesis'. For most of the students this is the 5th or 6th year of their architectural education, whereas for some others it is part of their postgraduate M.Sc. degree. The M.Arch. is formally divided into two years (M.Arch. 1 and M.Arch. 2). The first semester, formally called Architectural Design Opening, introduces the course; semesters 2 and 3 form the main body of the course named M.Arch. 'Thesis'; the fourth and last semester allows for 'wrapping up' and is named *Architectural Design Thesis Closure*, giving also the opportunity to the students to prepare an Academic Portfolio. Two further lecture-based courses run paral-lel to M.Arch. 'Thesis' entitled 'Studies in Contemporary Architectural Theory' and 'Architectural Man'.

    The mapping described in this paper has been carried out by the group consisting of: Will Flint, Gregor Horn, Anastasia Karandinou, and Jeremy Lewin (M.Arch. and M.Sc. students).

3. Dorrian Wiszniewsky, 'Closure Thesis Handout, MArch, Architectural Design', Architecture Faculty, University of Edinburgh, 2007, p. 4.

4. Ibid. p. 2 [bold in the original]

5. Mark Dorrian, 'Architecture's 'Cartographic Turn', in *Figures de la Ville, et Construction des Saviour*, edited by Frederic Pousin (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2005). p. 61

6. Before controlling/understanding things have to be internalised through mimetic actions (mimesis is a kind of autism).

7. Mark Dorrian, 'Architecture's 'Cartographic Turn', p. 61.

8. '…mimesis is a creative imitation where something that exists potentially is recognized and re-enacted as something actual. For example, movement can be recognized and re-enacted as a significant gesture; sound, as song or music; visible reality, as image or picture; and ideas, as an articulated and structured experience. In its most original sense, mimesis is a re-enactment of order.' See: Dalibor Vesely, 'Architecture and the Question of Technology', in *Architecture, Ethics and Technology*, edited by Alberto Perez-Gomez and Louis Pelletier (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), p. 33.

9. Göran Sörbom, *Mimesis and Art: Studies in the Origin and Early Development of an Aesthetic Vocabulary* (Bonniers: Svenska Bokförlaget, 1966). p. 189-190.

10. David Appelbaum, *Disruption* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). p.103.

11. Arne Merlberg, 'Theories of Mimesis', in *Literature, Culture, Theory*, edited by Richard Macksey and Michael Sprinker, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1995). p. 44.

12. James Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping', in *Mappings*, edited by Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion, 2002), p. 229; see also: 'Mapping is neither secondary nor repre-sentational but doubly operative: digging, finding, and exposing on the one hand, and relating, connecting and structuring on the other. Through visual disclosure, mapping both sets up and puts into effect complex sets

of relationship that remain to be more fully actualized. Thus mapping is not subsequent to but prior to landscape and urban formations. In this sense, mapping is returned to its origins as a process of exploration discovery and enablement. This is less a case of mapping to assert authority, stability and control, and more one of searching, disclosing and engendering new sets of possibility. Like a nomadic grazer, the explanatory mapper detours around the obvious so as to engage what remains hidden.' Ibid. p. 225.

13. Ibid. p. 225.

14. Mark Dorrian, 'Architecture's 'Cartographic Turn'.

15. Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Athlone Press, 1987), pp.13-14.

16. Ibid. p. 14.

17. Giorgio Agamben, Vincenzo Binetti, and Cesare Casarino, 'Means without End : Notes on Politics', *Theory out of Bounds*; V. 20 (Minneapolis ; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 57.

18. Ibid. p. 11.

19. Ibid. p. 8.

20. Ibid. p. 14 [our italics].

21. Miahi Spariosu, 'Mimesis in Contemporary Theory and Interdisciplinary Approach', in *Imitation and Play in Western Culture*, Vol. I, edited by Miahi Spariosu and Giuseppe Mazzotta (Hohn Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984),.p. x; p. 78.

22. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Vol. 2, trans. by Brian Massumi, (London & New York: Continuum, 2004/1980), p. 16.

23. Kwok-kui Wong, 'Nietzsche, Plato and Aristotle on Mimesis', (2003), in *DOGMA*, edited by Angèle Kremer Marietti and Thierry Simonelli: http://dogma.free.fr/txt/KwokKuiNietzschePlatoAristotle.htm. (accessed 9 May 2007).

24. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built Upon Love, Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics* (Cambridge Massachusetts; London, England: The MIT Press, 2006). p. 24.

25. Plato, *Republic* 395d1-3.

26. Kwok-kui Wong, 'Nietzsche, Plato and Aristotle on Mimesis'.

27. Plato, *Ion* 534b5-6.

28. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, (New York, London: Routledge, 1993), p. 25.

29. Karla L. Schultz, *Mimesis on the Move: Theodor W. Adorno's Concept of Imitation* (Berne, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1990), p. 16.

30. 'Mimetic excess as a form of human capacity potentiated by post-coloniality provides a welcome opportunity to live subjunctively as neither subject nor object of history but both, at one and the same time. Mimetic excess provides access to understanding the unbearable truths of make-believe as foundation of an all-too-seriously serious reality, manipulated but also manipulatable.' In Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity,* p. 255.

31. 'Civilization has replaced the organic adaptation to others and mimetic behaviour proper, by organized control of mimesis, in the magical phase; and, finally, by rational practice, by work, in the historical phase. Uncontrolled mimesis is outlawed.' In Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Verso Classics (London, New York: Verso, 1997), p.180.

Biographies

Anastasia Karandinou is a registered Architect-Engineer, a graduate of the National Technical University of Athens, Greece. Currently she is a Ph.D. student (funded by the AHRC council) and a design tutor at the University of Edinburgh, where she also obtained an M.Sc. in Advanced Architectural Design. She has participated in architectural competitions such as the UIA-Velux international competition 'Light of Tomorrow' (3rd prize), and the ARCO design competition (distinction). She has also taken part in exhibitions such as the Biennale in Barcelona (March 2006 where she exhibited an architectural landscape project), and the 5th PanHellenic Exhibition of Architecture in Patras, Greece, in October 2006. Her doctoral thesis explores issues such as the sensuous, the electronic or hybrid, and the political aspects of space, as to what forms the 'immaterial' within contemporary architectural discourse.

Leonidas Koutsoumpos is a registered Architect-Engineer, a graduate of the National Technical University of Athens, Greece, where he also received a postgraduate degree in theory and philosophy of architecture. He has been practicing architecture in Greece, both as a member of architectural offices, and with his own projects. Being awarded a fellowship by the Greek State Scholarships Foundation, he is currently completing his doctoral degree in Architecture at the School of Arts, Culture and Environment at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. His research explores architectural design education in terms of ethics, through philosophy and ethnomethodology and he has also been working as a design tutor, both in Athens as well as in Edinburgh.