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Mapping Society: The Spatial Dimensions of Social Cartography, by Laura Vaughan

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Mapping Society: The Spatial Dimensions of Social Cartography. By Laura Vaughan. London: UCL Press, 2018. ISBN 978-1-78735-307-7 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-78735-306-0 (paper). Pp. xix, 247, ill. STG £45.00, £25.00 (paper).

Laura Vaughan, in *Mapping Society: The Spatial Dimensions of Social Cartography*, suggests social maps can be “records of social enquiry in relation to the role of urban configuration in shaping social patterns over time” and through their analysis, scholars can better understand “the power of space in shaping society over time” (1). To Vaughan, a professor of Urban Form and Society at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, social maps capture a moment in time and can be read to consider life at that moment: “does it capture data in sufficient detail that we can learn from it something about how urban society worked at the time?” (4). To historians of cartography, *Mapping Society* presents a very different take on familiar maps.

Vaughan defines social maps as: “maps whose purpose is to represent specific aspects of society at a given time and place” (1). As industrialization led to dramatic urban growth, around 1800, early social scientists began investigating and mapping the emerging urban problems to consider their extent, cause, effects, and possible solutions. Cartography was developing new methods and techniques, providing graphic means to capture the evolving urban scene. The resulting maps today are viewed as archetypes, advancing our understanding of social issues as well as cartography. Vaughan applies space syntax theory and methods to these maps to consider the ways societies shape urban spaces and how urban spaces lead to certain “regularities in social behavior” (223).

Vaughan approaches the maps chronologically, beginning with disease maps, then maps of poverty, “nationalities, race and religion,” and finally “crime and disorder.” With each subject, she considers their development, discussing the maps’ authors and agendas, their

creation, and utilization. Vaughan situates the archetypes – John Snow’s “Street Map of Soho . . .” (1853); Charles Booth’s London poverty maps (1889, 1898-9); Hull-House wages and nationalities maps (1895); William Stead’s map of Chicago’s Nineteenth Precinct (1893) – in the context of the history of investigating and mapping the social issues, capturing the evolution of mapping these topics.

The map history sets the stage for Vaughan’s interest in the segregation of social space. Vaughan then uses the maps to consider the “spatial logic” of these cities, the social phenomena, and the spatial patterns. In each chapter, she provides a space syntax analysis example: taking a historic map and analyzing its streets configurationally, representing “the city’s public streets and squares as a continuous systems” and considering “how well connected each street space is to its surroundings” (226). Space syntax analysis maps are created from the historic maps and presented as a colored inset alongside the detail they are analyzing.

Ultimately, Vaughan’s goal was to consider ongoing urban problems, such as poverty, and reflect on systematic explanations for their persistence. It is clear from her historical analysis that she sees social isolation underlying many issues. In our rapidly urbanizing world, spatial segregation is, and will continue to be, an issue facing all societies. Vaughan concludes that improved connectivity and mobility may help “break down barriers between communities” (211).

Vaughan’s *Mapping Society* is an interesting study of the ways in which early social scientists used mapping to consider the spatial ramifications of social issues and how today these maps might be used to shed new light on old problems. Her careful reading of the maps and their spatial dimensions provide new insights into the historical record. The volume is richly

illustrated most images in color. Photographs illustrate housing types and living conditions to clarify her points.

Unfortunately, little of the history of cartography literature is cited, with just a few noted exceptions. Benchmarks works on social mapping, such as work on Hull-House maps, are also not cited. Vaughan's approach is largely from an urban, architectural perspective. As a result, I was often left wondering about the maps themselves: who made the base maps? How accurate were they? If we closely examined them, what might we find? Only in a few instances does Vaughan remark on the spatial extent of the map itself, such as what groups would have been included or excluded if the map's boundary had been shifted. And then there is the complicated issue of the maps' social histories. There is some discussion throughout the volume regarding the ways these maps were wielded as part of efforts to address social issues but this seems to take a back seat to the data: its collection, its organization (colors, categories), its patterns (clustering), and the streets' spatial organization in relation to the map's social phenomena. I wished for more engagement with the humans behind the maps: those who provided the framework for the data, those who focused the map on particular social issues, and those who circulated the images to their own ends.

Vaughan's *Mapping Society* presents a very different approach to historic maps, allowing a glimpse into the ebbs and flows of past urban life. For those interested in the history of social mapping, it is a fascinating exploration. It will, undoubtedly, introduce spatial syntax theory and methods to new audiences. The whole volume or select chapters could be used in classes in history of cartography, urban geography/urban studies, and social geography.

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