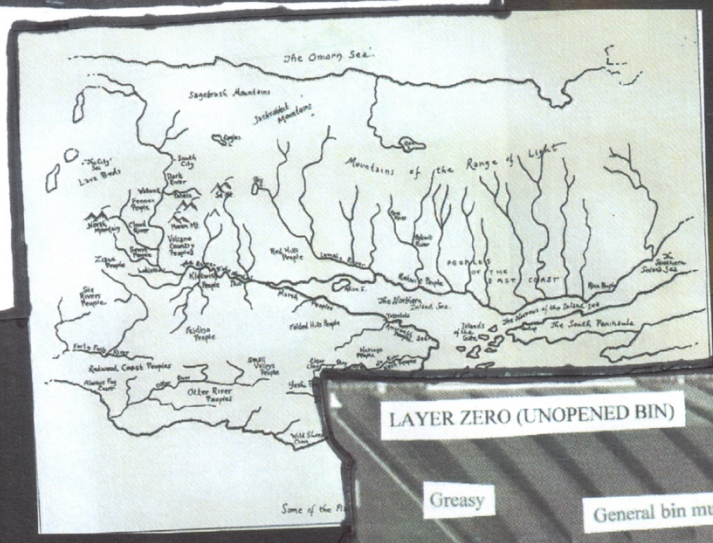
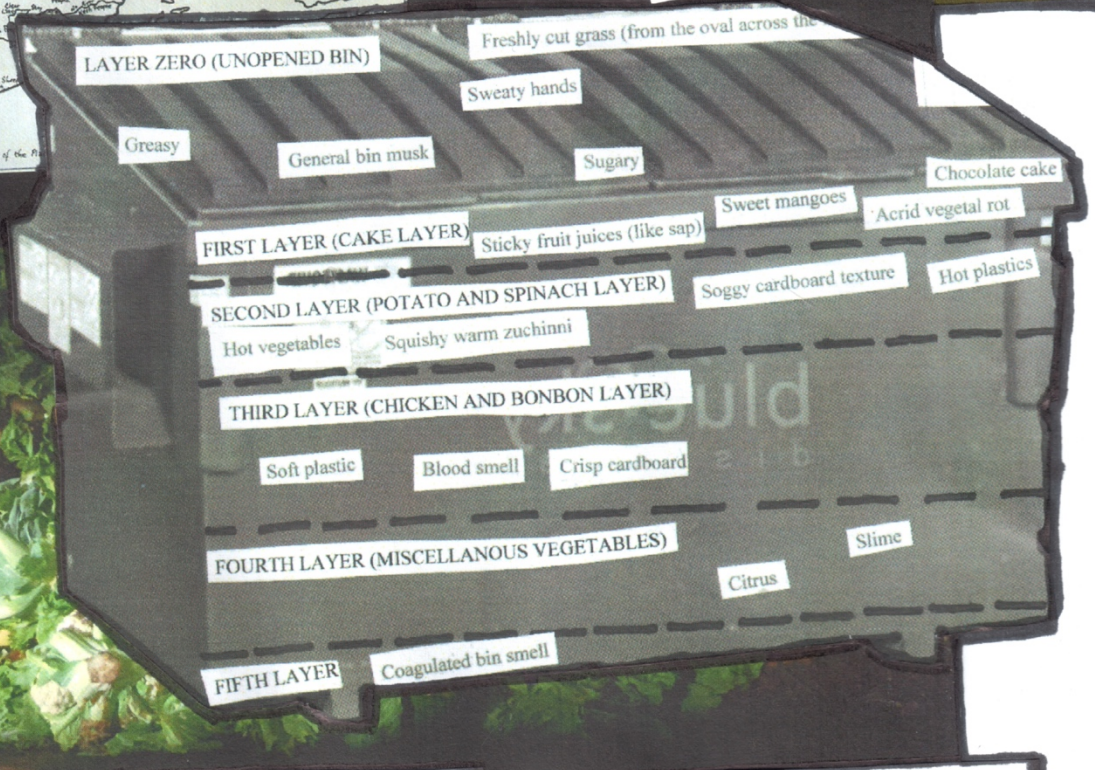
emergent mapping

mapping sense AND feeling

By Willow Ross & Frances Grimshaw





Created on unceded Wurundjeri Country

intro

In our practice of mapping we layer information and meaning to create new ways of sensing and knowing. Our maps are always a representation of an experience. Whose experience? Which bodies, and how did they feel? Where in the world? These are questions that we as mapmakers cannot shy away from.

What we're not

Map making, like any storytelling, runs the risk of entrenching existing power dynamics, and for this reason, we want to make clear what our maps of feeling are not. As mapmakers: we do not create maps that entrench colonial ways of place-making. We do not obscure the mapmaker and attempt god-tricks. We do not forget the body.

So what are we pushing against? There is an idea out there of a 'normal' map, one with the lines and legends, borders, and Murderous Coloniser placenames. Should the history of this kind of mapping be X-rated?[1] Mapmakers in this field have always been in the service of violent national and colonial powers. These maps name and control land, resources, communities, people, making them easier to extract and profit from. They erase bodies and experiences. These maps represent an experience of administering power, but it is often disguised as objective truth.

Our map making does not hide behind claims of objectivity. Maps, like theories and rifles, have power to coerce and control. Luckily, colonisers and for-profit companies don't hold a monopoly on mapmaking. Making other maps challenges their power grabs when our maps tell embodied, everyday, resistant stories. "Uncharted territory" is a myth but there is plenty of territory—interior and exterior, emotional and material—for us to represent.

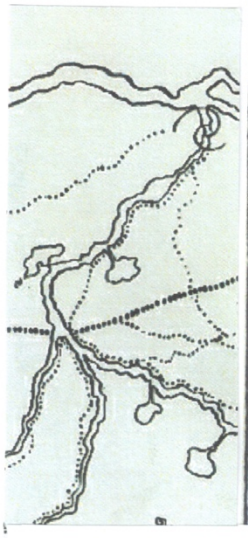
[1] This is from David Livingstone's *The geographical tradition: episodes in the history of a contested enterprise* which was published in 1992. It mostly follows the history of academic geography and its close relationship with colonialism, concluding that one couldn't really exist without the other.

What we are

Our maps are embodied, material, super-subjective, and focus on the process of map making rather than the object. We value the unique ability of maps to represent emotions, ideas, and experiences. We recognise that mapmaking can mean multiple things, or as Lydon (2003) says: "Maps visually represent worldviews and knowledge and therefore have unique spatial power."

We are all mapmakers. Lydon's community mapping shows how ordinary people and communities can use maps to express stories about their everyday lives and places in them[3]. Like community mapping, our map making is a learning and story telling process.

The maps we share here are artefacts of our **practice** of mapping. We rematerialise (bring us back to earth). We are emotional. We sense (stop and smell the roses, or trash). We know the mapmaker, and challenge dominant ways of seeing (including our own). We pay respectful attention to Country, history, and non-human agency.



What are our influences?

This process of mapping has been drawn from our own material and immaterial entanglements. Frances grew up on Gadubanud Country in South West Victoria, Australia, where she had a lot of space and time to wander and create. Her work owes a lot to that place. Willow calls lively Wurundjeri Country home, and has spent time honing her senses to the smell of trash in urban dumpsters, practicing and unpicking the political implications of dumpster diving.

We draw from materialist feminist practice, Indigenous scholarship in so-called Australia, anti-colonial work, and the ideas of our friends in community organising. Some key influences include Bawaka Country collective, Sarah Pink, Donna Haraway, and Sara Ahmed[4].

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mapping every stone displaced

Worimi artist Dean Cross has this great meditation on the way that materials are ignored by maps but hold their own agency and history. Holding three perfect skipping stones, collected from his home on Ngunnawal/Ngambri Country, he writes how each stone is a cypher for its own history. Geological processes and the flow of water etched onto the surface of time. These stones wouldn't show up on any maps made by colonial hands, but they are part of someone's Country and ambassadors for that country. How would we map place differently if we included the history of every part of the ground we map? How would we map with Country in mind? Every stone displaced, and every stone mapped over, persists[2].

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[2] Dean Cross, every stone displaced, was part of an exhibition called Making Ground that took place at Alexandra Battery in nipaluna/Hobart. It was presented by CONSTANCE ARI for Mona Foma 2021.
[3] See Lydon, M. 2003. Community Mapping: The Recovery (and Discovery) of our Common Ground Geomatica Vol. 57 1999-2003 Anniversary Issue - Cartography in Canada

Orientation and sensibilities:

The first and most fundamental skill of our mapping is attentiveness. Attentiveness is a highly present and curious kind of focus. It's a suspension of judgement, an openness to surprise, a willingness to become aware of things you usually take for granted. When you direct attentiveness towards orientation, subjectivities, emotions and senses, you support yourself to make excellent maps of feeling.

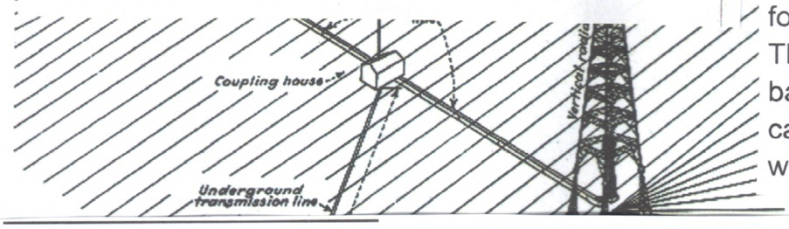
Orientation: Where and when are you? This can be interesting, because although we are not gods or giants, human entanglements are broad. They reach distant shadow places and sacrificial zones that materially support modern life. What routes have your ancestors trodden since they crawled out of the ocean, and what narratives do you wish to (re)present about them? And on a more immediate temporal scale, are you wishing to reflect the light of day, or the shadowy night? Are you making a map of the past, present, or future?

Subjectivities: It pays to be attentive to the subjectivities of the mapmaker and the humans or non-humans that make and use the map. What political, social and environmental forces have shaped the perspective of the mapmaker? As in, who are you, where are you and what do you want? Whether or not this information seems directly relevant, knowing your social, material, axiological coordinates puts you in the landscape of the map. This is how we turn the subjective nature of our maps into their strength.

Desire – A part of attentiveness is being awake to liveliness, to what you are drawn to or, what *draws you* toward itself, to sensuality, desire and care. Deborah Bird Rose talks about the kiss of life, the "kiss that teaches us that others enable our lives … This beautiful, located, embodied, life-affirming mutually giving and receiving, historical and future oriented kiss offers a great and seductive lesson: to be for one's self, one must always, also, be for others"[5]. Desire works like the kiss. It makes things alive; draws us toward each other; brings encounter to the surface.

Sensory experience

What do you sense? Smell, taste, texture, temperature, sound, vibration, disgust, desire? These are all bound up in our bodies. Right now you might be reacting to something in your environment: a too-warm humid summer, the lingering taste of your last meal, or the hot metal smell of your overheating laptop. Material feminists like Sarah Pink have taught us how our bodies' experiences can help make sense of the places and social worlds we inhabit[6].



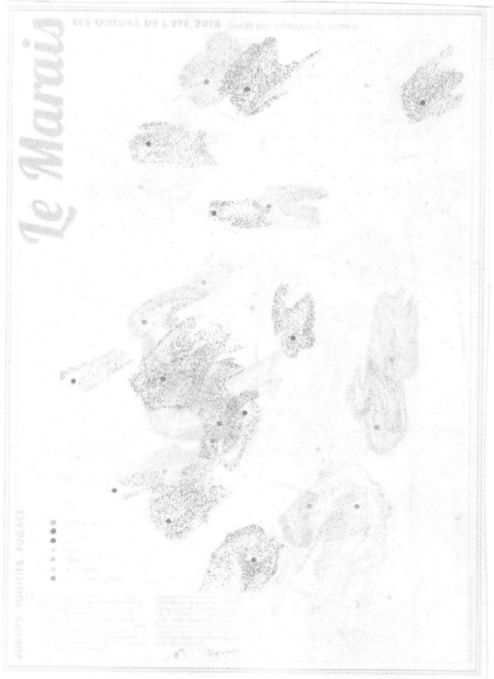
Willow's research focuses on the rotting world of dumpster diving. In her work, she follows how dumpsters divers use their senses to work out when food waste is salvageable, and when it's best avoided. This leads to inhuman encounters with rodents, bacteria, insects, and more. A focus on the senses can tell us about who (and what) lives in the social worlds we inhabit, and how we might bump into them.

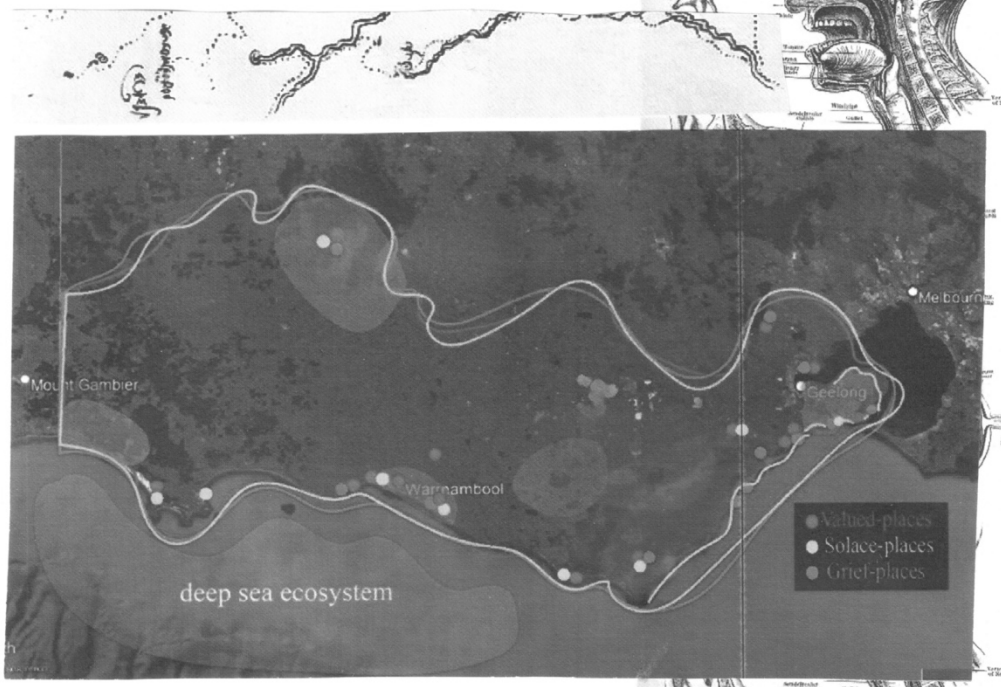
[4] For example, see Bawaka Country,et al. (2019). Everything is love: mobilising knowledges, identities, and places as Bawaka in N. Gombay, & M. Palomino-Schalscha (Eds.), Indigenous places and colonial spaces: the politics of intertwined relations (pp. 51-71). Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

[5] See Malone, et al. "Shimmering with Deborah Rose: Posthuman Theory-Making with Feminist Ecophilosophers and Social Ecologists." Australian Journal of Environmental Education 36, no. 2 (July 2020): 129–45.

[6] See Pink, Sarah. "An Urban Tour: The Sensory Sociality of Ethnographic Place-Making." *Ethnography* 9, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 175–96.

An example of sensory mapping came out of Paris' Marais quarter, following the smells of the Marais on a summer's day. Perfumes, paints, leather, fresh planted bamboo and jasmine were mapped according to colour, place and duration. Volunteers collected 937 "smell notes" such as "aftermath of the party", "tranquility in the city", "cellar rot", "hot tire/asphalt in the sun" and "cement and roadworks"[7].





Emotions –
In one of Frances' projects[8] she asked her participants 'where' they felt feelings of grief and solace about climate change[9]. In the responses, it became clear that many participants felt emotions with and through specific places. For example, feeling a sense of expansive freedom at an empty beach. The importance of place in these feelings were not something they had noticed before, and it was clear that the process of mapping created an attentiveness to the ways they felt *with* place. Frances represented this in a map made on Photoshop using both shading, lines and dots. In the map, it's clear how different emotions also coalesce in the same places.

Non-judgement and ethics of care are important when being attentive to emotions. Emotions are a big part of the meaning-making engine and come with a lot of cultural and social baggage. It's worth paying attention to all kinds of emotions. For example, disgust can teach us a lot about racist social conditioning[10], grief might tell you about what is important to people, while desire might teach us about what is forbidden or lacking.

Where do you feel? How large or small is that feeling? Where does it live in your body?

[7] Le Marais: ses odeurs d'été 2018 is an art and research project exhibited at the MAIF Social Club in Paris, 2018 and with related work published in "Mind the Map: Illustrated Maps and Cartography" and The Common: A Modern Sense of Place by Amy Sande-Friendman.

[8] See Grimshaw, F. (2022) Feeling climate change in Barwon South West: Emotions, place and adaptation governance. Honours thesis. http://hdl.handle.net/11343/324477

[9] This project was funded in part by the Life Course Centre.

[10] See Ahmed, S. (2013). The cultural politics of emotion. Routledge.

Mapmaking:

Ingredients – Find your 'data'-set. What do you want to map? Choose a couple of things (like grief, lust, fruit trees, the smells of a market) and imagine how you might represent them.

When we made our map, we wrote down all the feelings and senses associated with dumpster diving, and put them together with notes on time and place. We then narrowed it down to just a few experiences that we wanted to represent.

Step 1 - Set your context. (Where, what scale? Does it need to be to scale? Do you need to have an image of the streets or is it more abstract?)

Step 2 - Choose your symbols (Is this better visualised through dots, or shading? Will I use words or symbols? How can I use colour to differentiate?)

Step 3 - Do you want others to understand your map? (You don't have to). If you do, you might want to add a legend where you explain what your symbols mean.

If you are using an actual place, it can also help to situate it on a larger scale by showing it in context of the city, region or continent.

Step 4 - Map your data. Bring your experiences, feelings, emotions onto the map. Be as creative as you like: differentiate your data using colours, textures, and formats.

Step 5 - Share your map. How do you want to communicate your map making? Sometimes it can help to accompany a map with writing, like diary entries.

In the Paris Marais smellmap, researchers opened an exhibition with live scent samples in vials so that visitors could experienced the mapped smells for themselves. There are no rules!

Step 6 - Step back and enjoy.

Figure 1: Smellscape map of our second dumpstering site at South Preston Woolies, bakeries & Aldi

Figure 2: Mapping the emotions of our journey through two dumpster sites & one drop-off at a friend's house

Mapping the dumpster: smells, textures, feelings

Map making in the world of waste - One balmy night in January, we set out to make a map of our dumpster diving experience. Put simply, dumpster diving is the practice of getting perfectly edible foods out of supermarket bins, which are often thrown away for cosmetic reasons or superficial best-before dates.

Our trip involved taking one of our usual dumpstering routes through Preston on Wurundjeri Country, and making field notes on our experiences of: sight, sound, taste, smell, texture, temperature, and feelings.

We noticed that the two of us came across similar senses, but processed them in different ways through our feelings and familiarity with place. The smells and textures of the bins stood out most to us: greasy, sugary, cut grass, horse blanket, soft vegetable flesh, crisp cardboard.

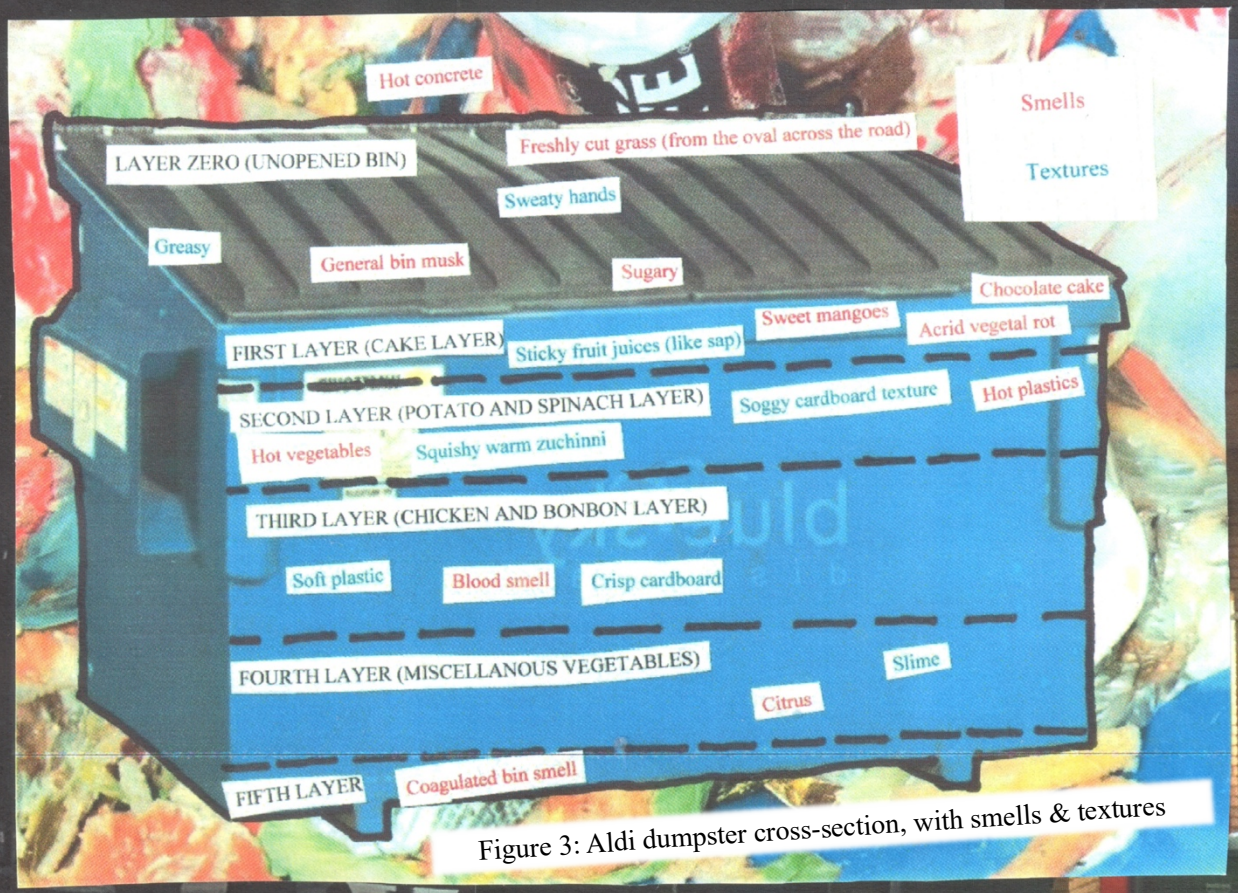


Figure 3: Aldi dumpster cross-section, with smells & textures

We decided to make three 'maps' from our experience: a feelings map of the entire trip, a smells map of the two dumpstering sites, and a smells and textures cross-section of one particular bin.

This helped us to understand why our emotional attachments to smells and textures differed, and gave us a intensely subjective map of the landscape of dumpstering in our neighbourhood.

We hope it inspires you to dream up your own feel-maps at home.