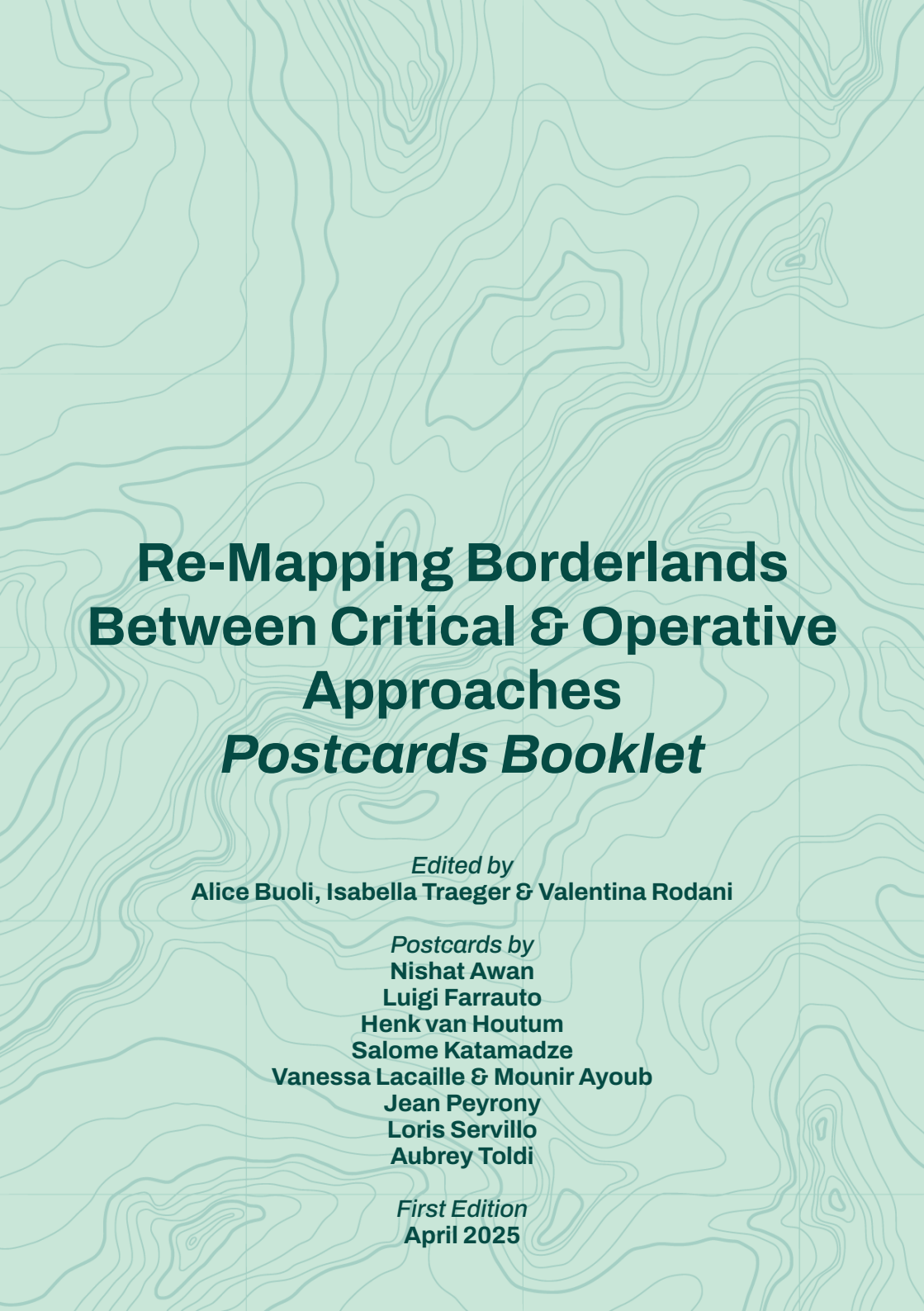


The background of the entire page is a light teal color with a white topographic map pattern. The map features numerous contour lines of varying thickness and spacing, creating a complex, organic texture. Overlaid on this map is a faint, light gray grid consisting of both horizontal and vertical lines, forming a series of squares across the page.

Re-Mapping Borderlands Between Critical & Operative Approaches *Postcards Booklet*

Edited by
Alice Buoli, Isabella Traeger & Valentina Rodani

Postcards by
**Nishat Awan
Luigi Farrauto
Henk van Houtum
Salome Katamadze
Vanessa Lacaille & Mounir Ayoub
Jean Peyrony
Loris Servillo
Aubrey Toldi**

First Edition
April 2025

The research seminar **Re-Mapping Borderlands Between Critical & Operative Approaches** has been held in hybrid mode on March 26th, 2025, at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASTU), Politecnico di Milano. It was organised and curated by Alice Buoli, Isabella Traeger & Valentina Rodani (DASTU, Politecnico di Milano).

This booklet collects a visual dialogue across critical and operative cartographic approaches on re-mapping borderlands. The postcards, the keywords and their author's perspectives weave together a tacit and yet to be explored collective visual imaginary on borders, borderlands and beyond.

The event was co-funded by **DASTU**, the **Department of Architecture and Urban Studies**, & **CRAFT**, the **Competence Center on Anti-Fragile Territories**, Politecnico di Milano.

The seminar is part of the research project funded by the EU - Next Generation EU - PRIN 2022 Call for proposals - D.D. No. 104, February 2, 2022 - M4 C2 Inv.1.1 Prot. No. 20225TN2R9 - Project title: *Italian Borderscapes After 2020. Mapping, Unfolding, and Re-Framing Border Territories in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic* - CUP: D53D23010950006.

Texts and images by the "Italian Borderscapes after 2020" team, respective authors © 2025. Other images contributors and copyright holders are named in captions.

First edition, April 2025



Re-Mapping Borderlands Between Critical & Operative Approaches

by Alice Buoli, Isabella Traeger
& Valentina Rodani

#RE-MAPPING #BORDERLANDS #IN-BETWEEN

How can we map and represent border areas in their complexity and transitory nature?

How can we integrate critical and technical dimensions in the production of knowledge frameworks that support policy design and cross-border cooperation tools?

The seminar “Re-Mapping Borderlands” invites a collective reflection on these issues, fostering a dialogue between **theoretical perspectives rooted in critical cartography and operational and technical approaches** that intertwine descriptive, interpretative, and imaginative dimensions.

Through contributions from international guests and experts, the seminar will delve into the **maps-power-action nexus**, examining cartographic representations both as tools for shaping knowledge and

governance of cross-border territories and as performative practices that claim possibilities for intervention in contested and frontier spaces.

The event’s primary objective is to encourage a **shared reflection** on the potential of cartographic representations as instruments of resistance, imagination, and concrete action.

‘Migration Map’, Đorđe Balmazović (2015).
Source: Henk van Houtum (2024), *Free the Map. From Atlas to Hermes: a new cartography of borders and migration*, nai010 Publishers, p. 99.
Courtesy of nai010 Publishers.

ALEPPO, SYRIA



ALEPPO

DESTROYED HOUSE.
CATANE STREET ALL
DESTROYED, SHUT DOWN.

SOLD HOUSE TO
FINANCE TRIP.
ABOUT 8000€ FOR TRIP.

50 PEOPLE SLEEP IN ONE
HOUSE IN ALEPPO BECAUSE
TOWN IS RUINED.
13 PEOPLE IN ONE ROOM

SYRIA

BUS

A'ZAZ

BAN SALAMI

TICKET 55€

ATHENS

3 DAYS

FERRY,
2000
PEOPLE,
18H TO
ATHENS



SIMI
GREECE

2 DAYS,
GOT PAPER
FOR 6 MONTHS
TO GO OUT
OF GREECE.

GREECE

THESSALONIKI

MET PEOPLE FROM
AFGANISTAN, SUDAN,
LIBYA, ALGERIA...
THEN WALKING TOGETHER

WALKING 5 HOURS.
RELAX 30 MIN, POLICE
COMES, THEN STAY HIDDEN,
WAITING POLICE TO LEAVE, THEN
GO AGAIN WALKING FEW HOURS.
POLICE COMES... HIDE... LIKE THAT
UNTIL CROSSING TO MACEDONIA.

MACEDONIA

4 DAYS
WALKING,
WITHOUT FOOD,
ONLY RED BULL AND
CHOCOLATE BARS.

TO MUCH MAFIA IN
MACEDONIA.
MAFIA TAKE OUR MONEY
AND MOBILE PHONES.
200 PEOPLE WERE IN GROUP
SO MAFIA DIDN'T ATTACK US.

LOJANE

1 DAY, STAY IN
VILLAGE, IF SEE
MAFIA RUN IN
MOSQUE TO HIDE.

BOGOVADA

TAXI
80€

SERBIA

BEOGRAD

POLICE DIDN'T GIVE
US ANY PAPER JUST
SENT US TO BOGOVADA

BOSS (AFGANI
MAN)
NEGOTIATE AND BUY
TICKETS FOR ALL GROUP
AND CHARGE US €50 FOR
TICKET WHICH REGULAR
PRICE IS ABOUT €20.

MIRATOVAC
SERBIA



REYMANLI
TURKEY

TURKEY

REYMANLI
TURKEY

ASMIR



15 PEOPLE IN BOAT.
1000€ IF BOAT IS FU
IF IT IS MORE
COMFORTABLE UP
TO 3000€.
TRIP WAS 2H. LONG.

Free the Map. From Atlas to Hermes: a new cartography of borders and migration by Henk van Houtum

Henk van Houtum is Professor of Geopolitics and Political Geography at Radboud University Nijmegen and the coordinator of the Nijmegen Centre for Border Research. His research and teaching focus on the cartography and geopolitics of borders, bordering, and migration.

For more info: see www.henkvanhoutum.nl

Selected recent publications:

- Houtum H. van (2024), *Free the Map. From Atlas to Hermes: A new cartography of borders and migration*. Nai010 Publishers
- Van Asseldonk, M. and H. van Houtum (2025), We have never owned "Us": A philosophical critique of nationalist b/ordering and othering ideologies, *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23996544251319637>
- Bueno Lacy, R., & van Houtum, H. (2024). Europe's spectacular borderlines: on refugee camps, banlieues and other spaces of exception. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 47(12), 2652–2674. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2344685>
- Osso, B. N., & van Houtum, H. (2024). 'Now You See Me': Refugees Looking Back at the EU's Border Camp Watch in Lesvos. *Geopolitics*,

1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2024.2382469>

• Winkelmolen, L., Garidou, P. T., & van Houtum, H. (2024). Waiting for Today's Barbarians: How the Fall of the Roman Empire Is Anachronistically Exploited to Serve a Contemporary Discriminatory B/Ordering and Othering Agenda. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2024.2330067>

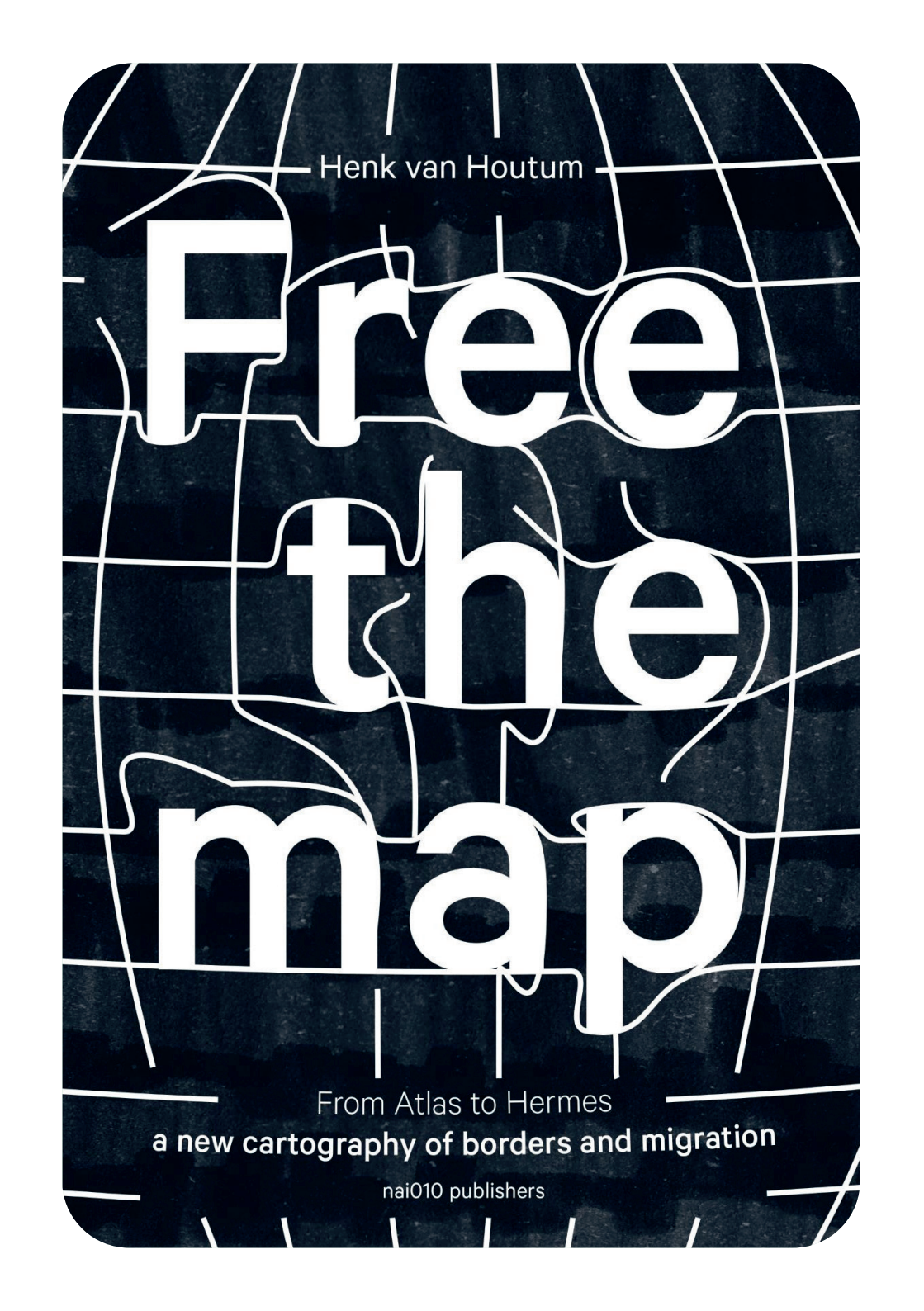
• Houtum, H.J. van & Uden, A.M. van (2021), The birth of the paper prison. The global inequality trap of visa borders, *Environment and Planning C*; https://henkvanhoutum.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021-Rethinking-biopolitics-pagina-20-23_pages.pdf

• Houtum H.J. (2021), Beyond Borderism: Overcoming discriminative B/ordering and Othering, *TESG* <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/tesg.12473>

• Houtum, H.J. van & Bueno Lacy, R. (2020). The Autoimmunity of the EU's Deadly B/ordering Regime; Overcoming its Paradoxical Paper, Iron and Camp Borders. *Geopolitics*, 25(3), 706–733. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14650045.2020.1728743>

• Houtum H. van and R. Bueno Lacy (2020), The migration map trap, on the invasion arrows in the cartography of migration, *Mobilities*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 196–219: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17450101.2019.1676031>

Image courtesy of nai010 Publishers, Henk van Houtum (2024), *Free the Map. From Atlas to Hermes, a new cartography of borders and migration*, nai010 Publishers, 2024, cover.



Henk van Houtum

Free the map

From Atlas to Hermes
a new cartography of borders and migration

nai010 publishers

Topological Atlas

by Nishat Awan

#NAVIGATION #ORIENTATION #AFFECT

Nishat Awan's research focuses on the intersection of geopolitics and space, including questions related to diasporas, migration and border regimes. She is interested in modes of spatial representation, particularly in relation to the digital and the limits of witnessing as a form of ethical engagement with distant places. Her book, *Diasporic Agencies* (Routledge, 2016) addressed the subject of how architecture and urbanism can respond to the consequences of increasing migration. She has also addressed alternative modes of architectural production in the co-authored book *Spatial Agency* (Routledge, 2011) and the co-edited book *Trans-Local-Act* (aaa-pepray, 2011). Her work has been exhibited at Nieuwe Instituut, Istanbul Biennale, Busan Museum of Modern Art and Yorkshire Sculpture Park, amongst others. She is currently working on

two book projects that are the result of the long-term project, *Topological Atlas*. She is Professor of Architecture and Visual Culture at UCL Urban Lab.

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Laboratory, UK
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Topological Atlas
<https://www.topologicalatlas.net/>

Image courtesy of Nishat Awan



Mountains

hyper-reality

Calidram

Border and Hospitality

by Vanessa Lacaille & Mounir Ayoub

#BORDER #HOSPITALITY

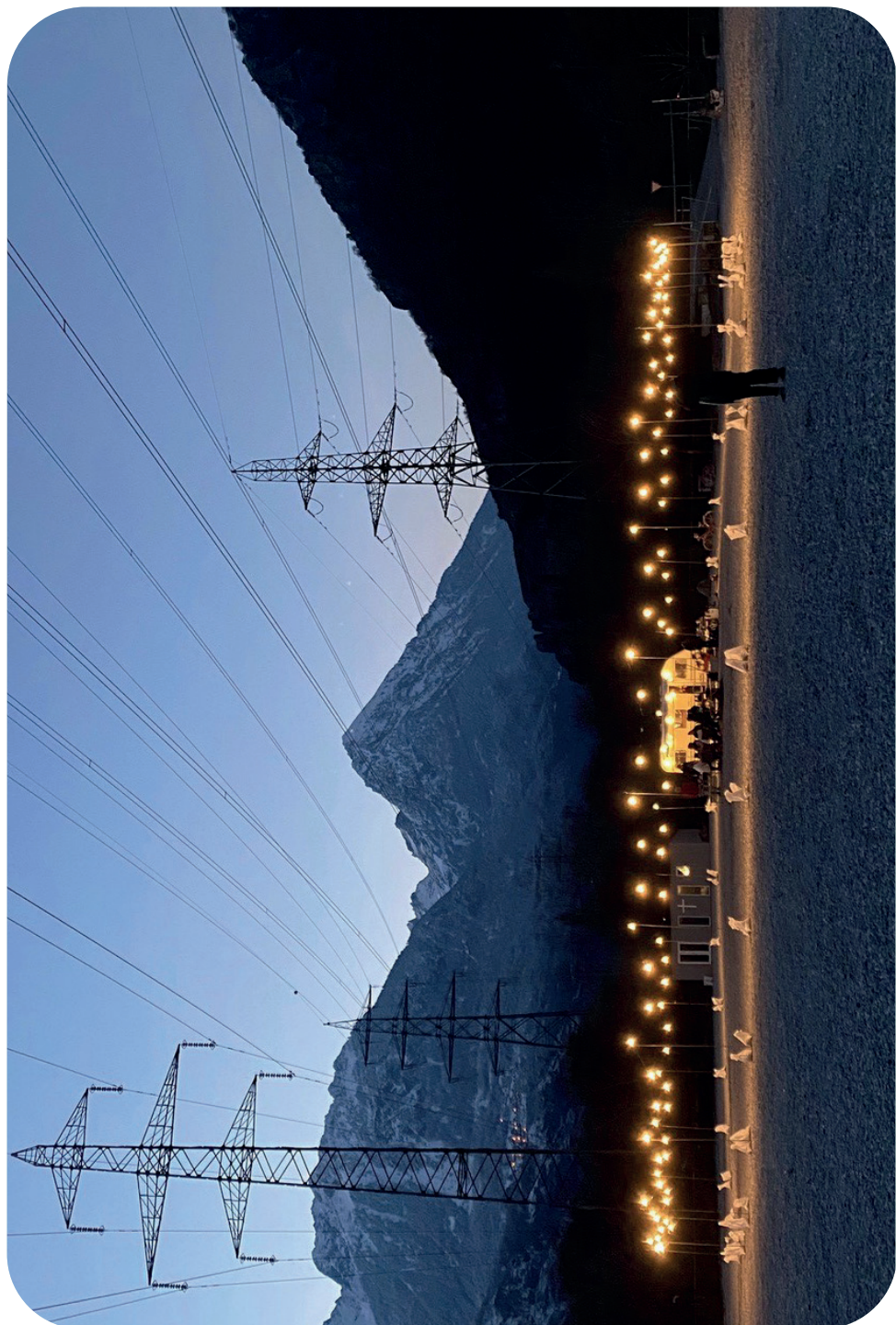
Originally from the Reunion Island, **Vanessa** is an architect with a master degree in landscape design. She is co-founder of Le laboratoire d'architecture with the Tunisian architect, journalist, and architecture critic **Mounir Ayoub**. Together, they work on architectural, landscape and territorial studies, as well as editorial and curatorial projects throughout Europe, the Arab world and the Indian Ocean region. In 2021, they were the curators for the Swiss Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021 in Venice with their project *oræ - Experiences on the Border*. Ever since, they decided ever to continue their research on the theme of Hospitality and to dedicate their teaching to this topic. In 2022 they were guest professors at the EPFL in Lausanne. The same year, they were invited to participate at the Biennale Architettura 2023

in Venice by the general curator L. Lokko with their contribution *Welcome in Nomadland*. Since 2023, they are guest professors at the Accademia di architettura (USI) in Mendrisio.

Vanessa Lacaille
Founder Le laboratoire d'architecture
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www.lelaboratoirearchitecture.com

Image courtesy of Vanessa Lacaille & Mounir Ayoub, Installation in Martigny, 2022.



Re-Mapping borderlands, the experience of Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière by Jean Peyrony

#CROSS-BORDER LIVING AREAS #MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

Jean Peyrony is Director General of Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT), a non-profit organization helping local authorities to develop cross border cooperation projects. Before, he has been working in the European Commission, DG REGIO, in the Unit “Urban development, Territorial cohesion”; in DATAR (French national agency for spatial planning and regional development, now ANCT) where he was in charge of European cooperation (ESPON, North West Europe and Alpine Space Interreg programmes), and of policy design of the EU cohesion policy; in the national agency for spatial planning in Paris region, where he was head of the Observation Unit, and took part in the writing of the regional masterplan; in public/private partnerships for urban development in Paris agglomeration and in La Reunion

island (French outermost region), where he was project manager. He is a former student from Ecole polytechnique and Ecole nationale des Ponts et Chaussées.

Jean Peyrony
Director General of La Mission Opérationnelle
Transfrontalière (MOT)
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<http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/la-mot/presentation-mot/>

Image courtesy of Jean Rubio (MOT),
Coopération transfrontalière France-Italie, 2019

Coopération transfrontalière France-Italie



Echelle locale

 Parc naturel frontalier ou structure de gestion transfrontalière d'un espace naturel

Echelle ALCOTRA

 Plan intégré territorial (PITER)

 Principal équipement opérationnel transfrontalier

 Tracé du Lyon-Turin

 Groupement Européen de Coopération Territoriale (GECT)

 Parc marin international des Bouches de Bonifacio



Imaginaries, Institutions, Maps. Borders as a Narrative Construct

by Loris Servillo

#IMAGINARIES #INSTITUTIONS #BORDERS

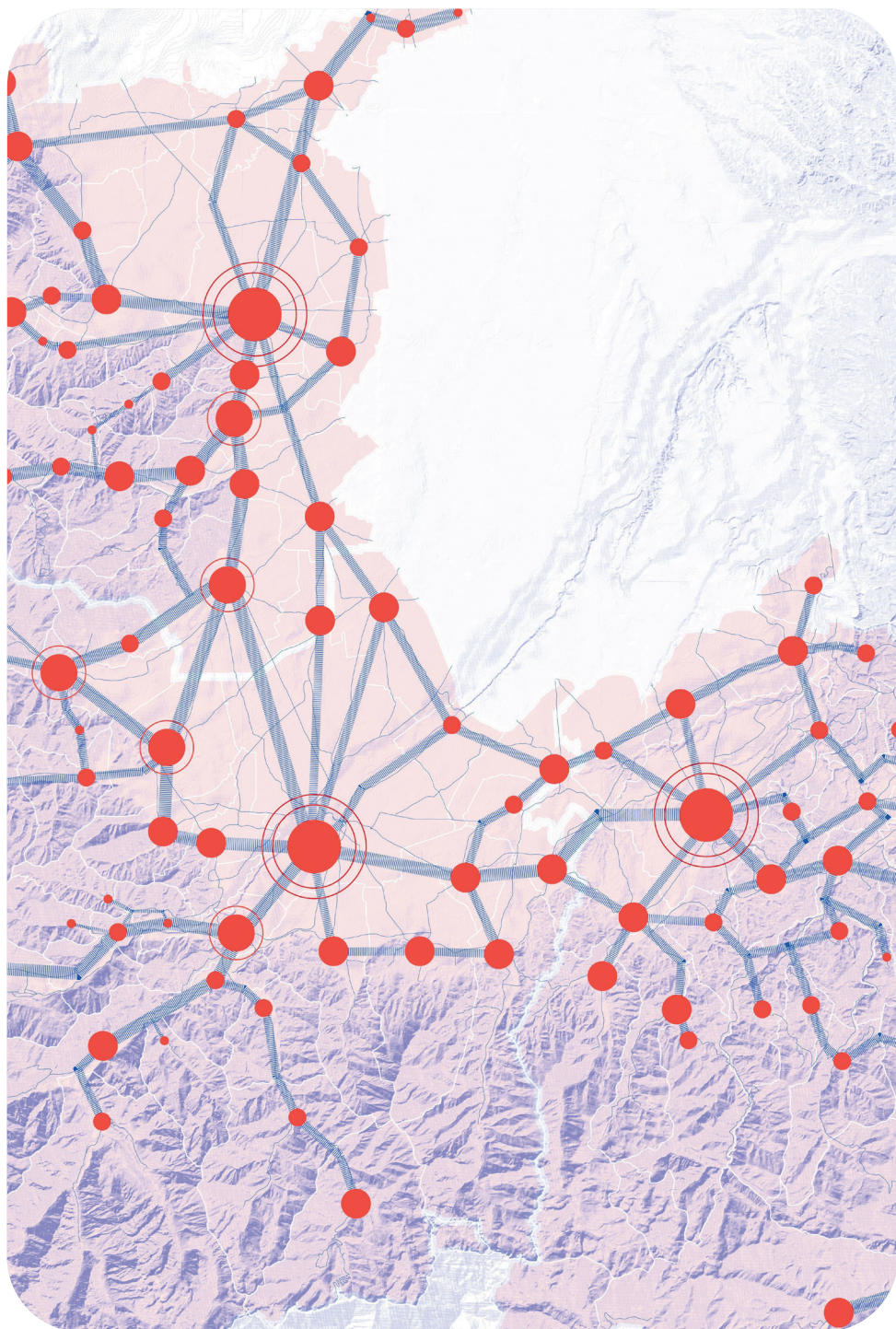
Loris Servillo is Full Professor of Urban Planning and Territorial Policies at the Polytechnic of Turin and Director of the Interdepartmental Centre Future Urban Legacy Lab (FULL). His research agenda is dedicated to the study and definition of territorial and local development policies and regeneration strategies, with a particular focus on the issue of spatial fragility and marginality. His research agenda focuses on the institutional contours of spatial governance processes, and how they intertwine with the ambition to implement a just, ecological and digital transition. Association of Borderlands Scholars (ABS).

Loris Servillo

Full Professor of Urban Planning and Territorial Policies, Polytechnic of Turin, IT
loris.servillo@polito.it

Director of Future Urban Legacy Lab
<https://full.polito.it/>

Image courtesy of Loris Servillo



Traces of maps and maps of traces: fictional border landscapes by Salome Katamadze

#CARTOGRAPHY #LANDSCAPES #TRACES

Salome Katamadze is a Georgian-born Landscape Architect based in Milan (IT); her research interests focus on the physical and cultural transformation of the landscape in the conflictual border territories and the interaction of the political power domination on the unbuilt environment. Since 2022, she has been a PhD candidate at Politecnico di Milano, addressing the mutation of the borderland between Georgia and the Russian Federation due to its continued hostile dynamics throughout the post-Soviet era. She received her master's in Architecture at the University of Ferrara in 2020. In 2020/21, she was a fellow at Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche sul Paesaggio. In her professional and research activities, she has been a fellow resident at the International Research Center for Design and

Architecture of Domaine de Boisbuchet, a teaching assistant at Politecnico di Milano and a guest lecturer at several universities. Since 2020, she has been a co-founder and partner of NOIA practice, an architecture office operating in Italy and Georgia. From 2024, she is a visiting PhD researcher at TU Delft, at the group Border&Territories.

Salome Katamadze

PhD candidate in Urban Planning Design and Policy, DASTU, Politecnico di Milano, IT
salome.katamadze@polimi.it

Co-founder and Landscape Architect at NOIA practice
www.noiapractice.com

Image courtesy of Salome Katamadze

СОВЕТСКОМУ СОЮЗУ
СОВЕТСКОМУ СОЮЗУ

Atlas of Georgian
Soviet republic

- Dep. of
Geodesy and
Cartography

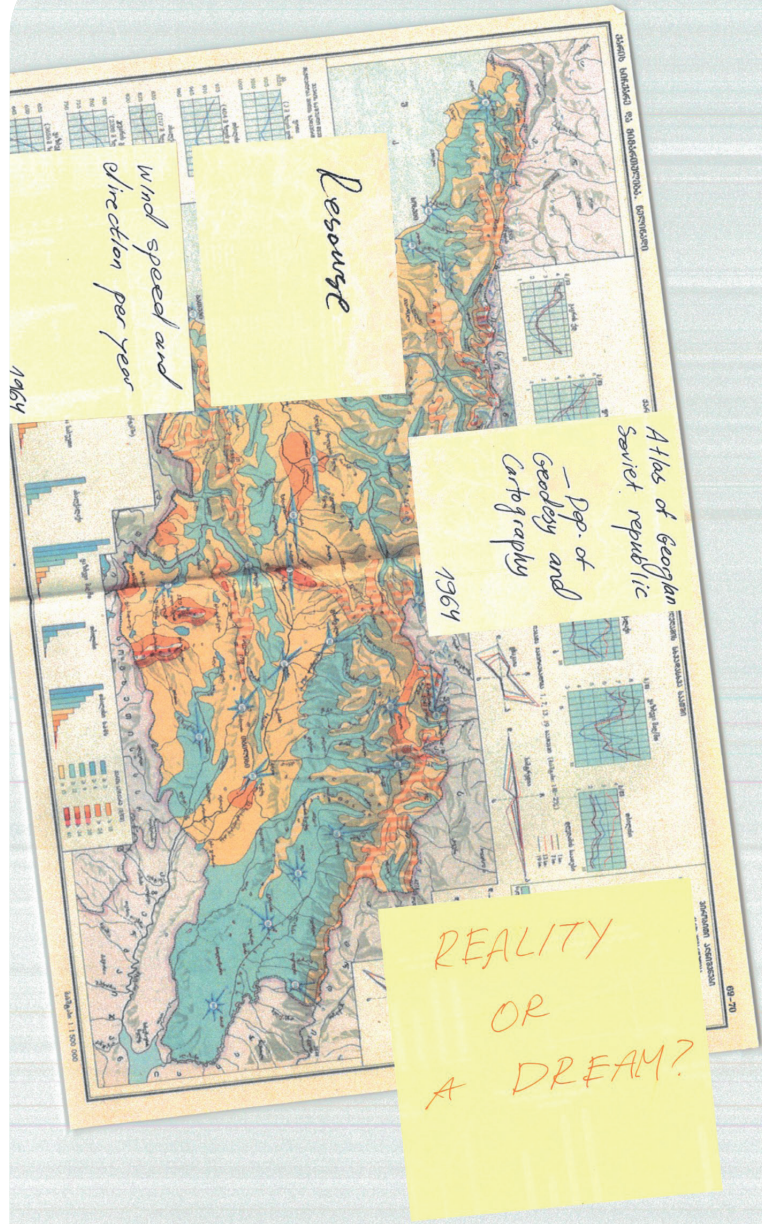
1964

Resource

Wind speed and
direction per year

1964

REALITY
OR
A DREAM?



Question the (digital) mapping hype by Aubrey Toldi

#COMMUNITY PLANNING #DIGITAL PRACTICES AND PRESENCES #COLLECTIVE MAPPING

Aubrey Toldi is an American linguist and planner, currently working as a post doc researcher and adjunct professor in the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASU) at Politecnico di Milano.

Before joining Polimi, she was a 2019-2020 Fulbright Research grantee hosted by the University of Catania, exploring how web-based community mapping is actually used in planning practice alongside a community with a strong history of participatory processes. In May 2024, she obtained her PhD in Urban Planning, Design, and Policy from Politecnico di Milano. Her thesis further reflected on how digital practices and presences are presently shaping collective mapping processes. Pushing back on the tendency to cast 'digital' as an empty signifier in collective mapping approaches, her research outlined some of the

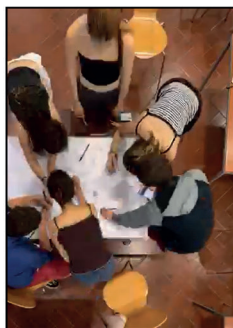
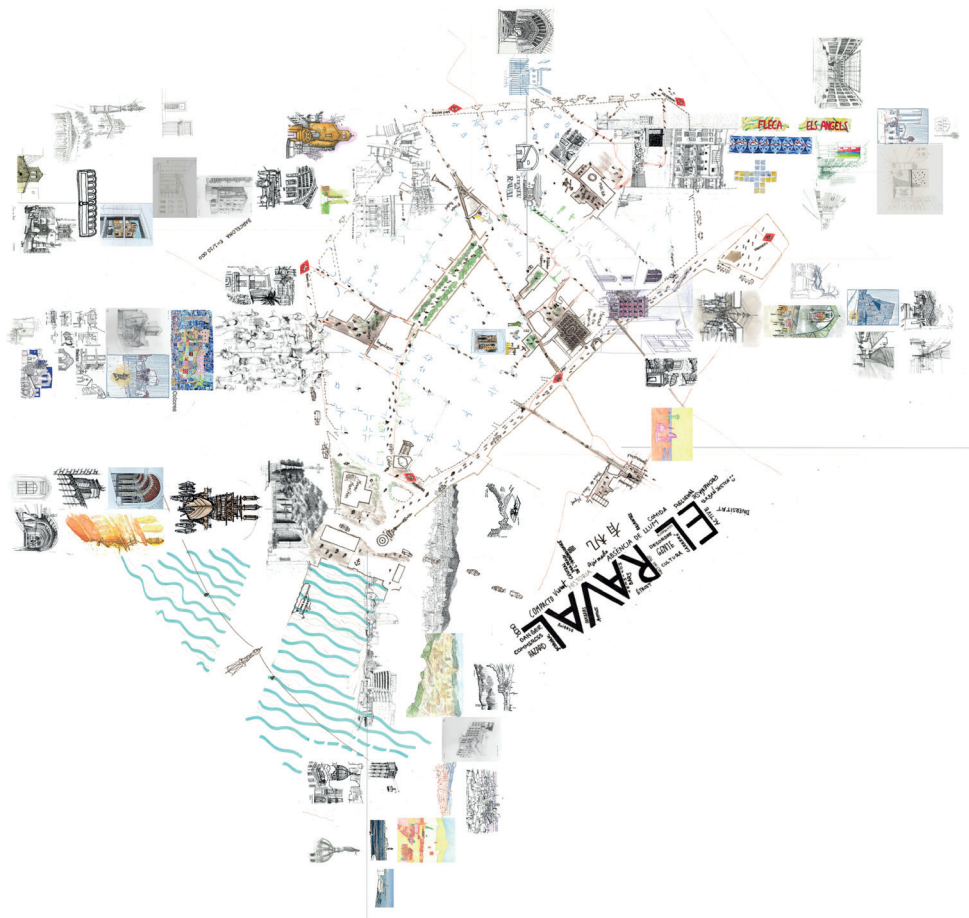
ways (how) and places (where) community work is currently struggling for interpretation by, with, and through digital mediums.

At present, she is involved in the action-research project '(E) Welfare in the City.' Her current research focuses on how national programs, such as Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), can respond to specific needs of vulnerable groups in diverse urban settings; and the capacity that physical spaces (namely social infrastructure) can play in mitigating digital disparities.

Aubrey Toldi

Postdoctoral researcher and Adjunct Professor,
DASU, Politecnico di Milano, IT
aubrey.toldi@polimi.it

Image courtesy of Aubrey Toldi, Urban sketching
in Barcelona, 2023



Narrating the World by Luigi Farrauto

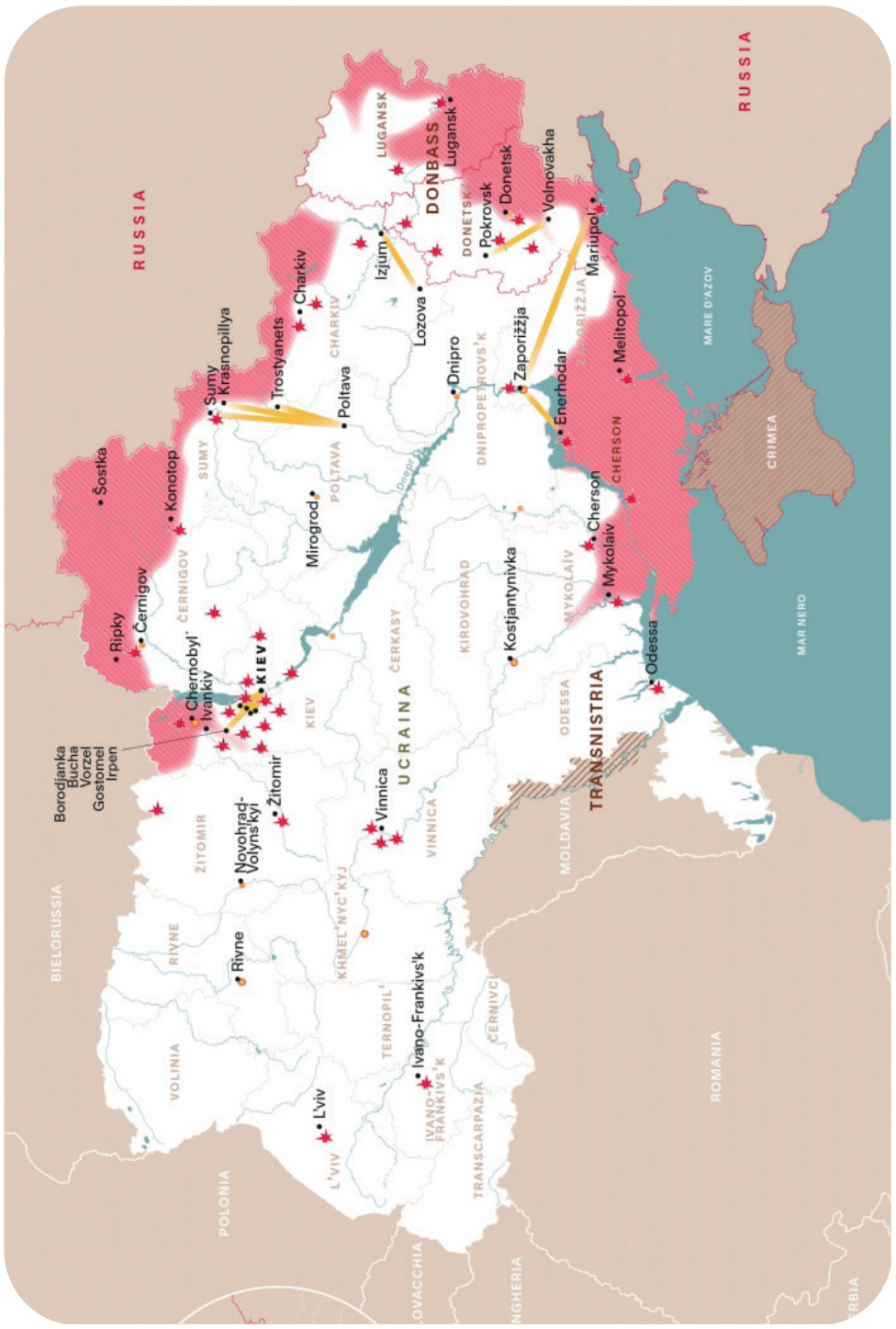
#CARTOGRAPHY #WAYFINDING #WRITING

Luigi Farrauto (1981) has a Degree in Graphic Design (2000-05) with a thesis about wayfinding and holds a PhD in Design from Politecnico di Milano (2010-12), with a thesis focused on cartography. Luigi served as Wayfinding Project Manager for Expo Milano 2015 and has gained valuable experience living and working in various cities, including Amsterdam (as a Wayfinding Designer at Mijksenaar, 2005-07), Boston (as a Visiting Researcher at MIT Senseable City Lab, 2011), and Doha (as a Wayfinding Project Manager for Hamad International Airport, 2015-17), consistently emphasizing the connection between maps and territory. Back in Milan, in 2018, he co-founded with Andrea Novali 100km studio, the first Italian design studio specializing in maps and wayfinding. In 2023, Luigi continued this journey

independently, blending graphic design with geography and travel writing. He has been a visiting lecturer at several Italian design universities, and currently teaches Information Design at ISIA in Urbino. Since 2013, Luigi has been an author for Lonely Planet Italia, has written over a dozen travel guides and two novels, “Senza passare per Baghdad” (Volland, 2011) and “Geografia di un viaggiatore pavido” (Laterza, 2023).

Luigi Farrauto
Co-Founder of 100km studio
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<https://100km.studio/about/>

Image courtesy of 100km studio, Treccani -
Ucraina, 2022





We sincerely thank all the researchers, practitioners and students who joined and participated to the seminar, sharing their thoughts, experiences and expertise. It was a meaningful and inspiring reflection and we sincerely appreciate the manifold ways each contributed to foster a collective dialogue, while illuminating potential ways to 'free the map'. Thank you!

Alice, Isabella & Valentina

The background of the image is a light green topographic map with white contour lines. A faint, light green grid is overlaid on the map. The text is centered and consists of 17 hashtags, each on a new line.

#AFFECT
#BORDERLANDS
#BORDERS
#CARTOGRAPHY
#COLLECTIVE MAPPING
#COMMUNITY PLANNING
#CROSS-BORDER LIVING AREAS
#DIGITAL PRACTICES AND PRESENCES
#HOSPITALITY
#IMAGINARIES
#IN-BETWEEN
#INSTITUTIONS
#LANDSCAPES
#MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE
#NAVIGATION
#ORIENTATION
#RE-MAPPING
#TRACES
#WAYFINDING
#WRITING