U E U

CARTO
GRAPHY

FS 2020

BÁRBARA MAÇÃES COSTA

object (n.)

"tangible thing, something perceived or presented to the senses," from Latin *objectum* "thing put before" (the mind or sight) and *obiectus* "lying before, opposite," past participle of *obicere* "to present, oppose, cast in the way of," from *ob* "in front of, towards, against" + *iacere* "to throw."

object (v.)

"to bring forward in opposition," from Old French *objecter* and directly from Latin *obiectus*, past participle of *obiectare* "to cite as grounds for disapproval, set against, oppose."

environment (n.)

"state of being environed" (*environ* (v.) + *-ment*); "the aggregate of the conditions in which a person or thing lives" (used to render German *Umgebung*).

environ (v.)

(implied in environing), "to surround, encircle, encompass," from Old French *environer* "to surround, enclose, encircle," from *environ* "round about," from *en-* "in" + *viron* "a circle, circuit," also used as an adverb, from *virer* "to turn."

introduction

Sophie Kotter, *Map of Hong Kong*, UE U 2016

the map is fiction / the map is real

Maps are visual tools for thinking about the world at many scales. They shape scientific hypotheses, organize political and military power, limit the boundaries of private property, and reflect cultural ideas about nature and the landscape. To the extent that our world-views inform our perceptions, maps have the power to actually make the territories they represent and construct the subjects that gaze upon them. Throughout Western modernity, cartographic reason has mediated this epistemology preponderantly. Cartesian perspectives lineated the world with respect to a fixed anthropocentric subject position and `God's eye views' surveyed the world from an abstract elevated `nowhere.' Cartography became the enterprise concerned with the analysis and measurement of the *res extensa*, that is, the management of nature as resource and neutral background for architecture. In today's context of ecological crisis, this course aims to promote 'ways of seeing' the land that convey a decentering of this human-architectural sovereignty.

Bárbara Maçães and Charlotte Truwant, *La Rade de Genève,* 2017

situated perspectives

The history of map-making has unfolded along two diverging doctrines: one that sees cartography as *description* and another that sees cartography as *surveying.* This course falls within the former kind, working towards a qualitative approach that focuses on the creation of situated perspectives rather than providing quantitative tools for land measurement and management. This logic follows the etymology of the word, which is based on the Latin *charta*, meaning 'paper, map', and -*graphia*, meaning 'description,' which derives from *graphein*, meaning 'to write, to draw.' Swiss urban theorist André Corboz defines description as something between reading and writing, between analysis and project. He claims that there can be no description of a territory without a fiction of the territory, a positioning that contains a speculative and ethical critique. This is reminiscent of a famous sketch by Le Corbusier that unpacks the 'architectural gaze' as something that bridges 'looking' with 'creating', stating: "*la clef c'est regarder… regarder, observer, voir, imaginer, inventer, creer*". The map-as-description is situated at the heart of this process that turns observation into action.
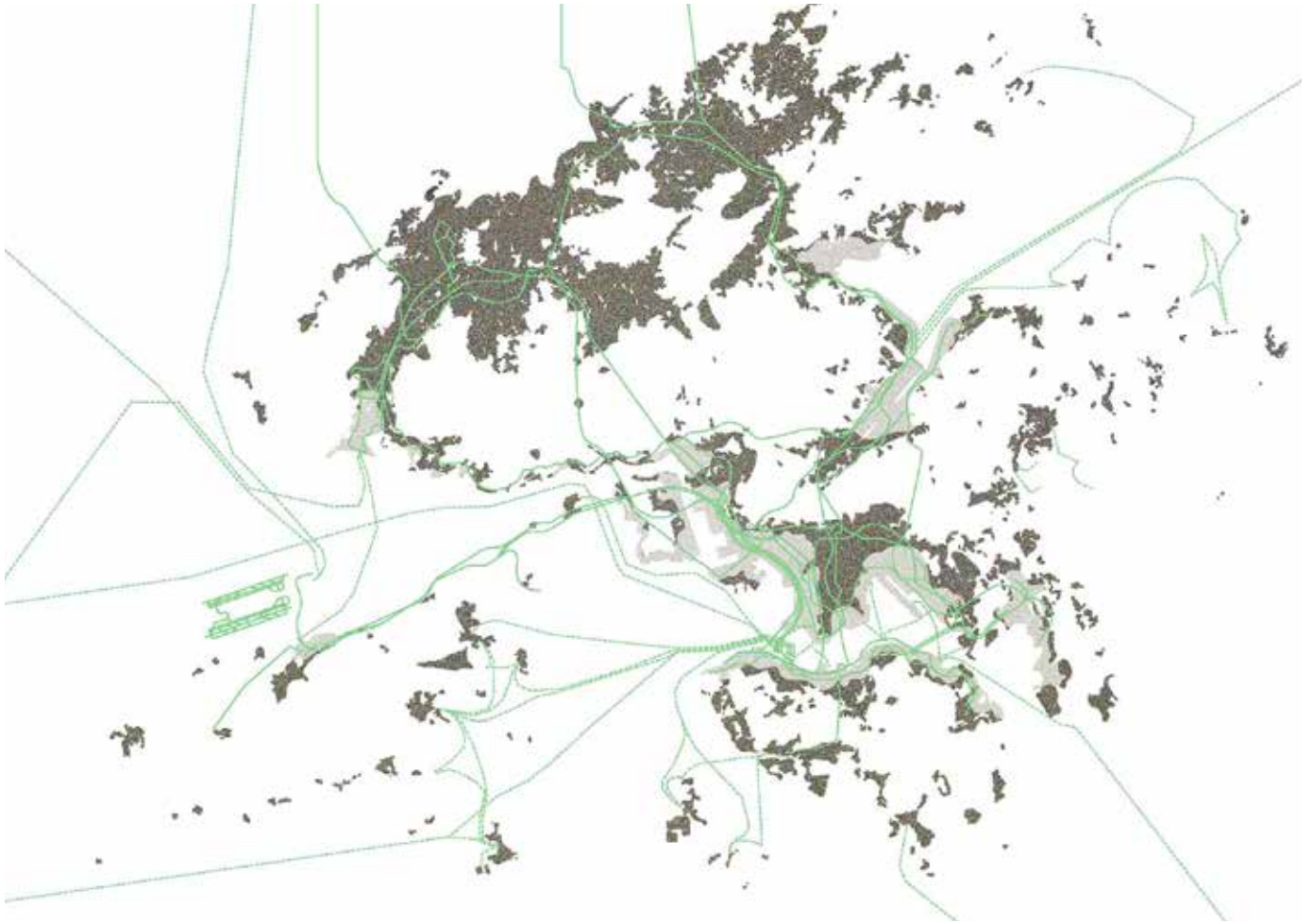
Loren Li & Sophie Kotter, *Map of Hong Kong*, UE U 2016

tangles of layers

In his seminal 1983 essay *Le Territoire Comme Palimpseste*, André Corboz compares the territory to a layered parchment with inscriptions and erasures attributed to both intentional and accidental, natural and human factors. Tracing a narrative out of the ways in which we have represented the territory, he identifies a historical opposition between the map – the God's eye view, ubiquitous, abstract and descriptive – and the landscape – the human perspective that projects an *état d'âme* onto a scenery. The map renders the territory as an object, while the landscape acknowledges it subjectively. The former has the pretence of exactitude, while the latter is relative to each viewer's conscience. Corbóz challenges this opposition by stating that with the advent of satellite imagery and high speed transport, the objective and subjective gaze have merged. In reaction to this, he proposes the *palimpsest* as a metaphor for reading the territory in its depth, both historical and geological. The palimpsest challenges the notion of the territory as surface and its affiliated emphasis on perimeter and propensity for tabula-rasa appropriations. Instead, the territory as palimpsest requires a close reading of its traces and fragments, aimed at interventions that work in a spirit of recycling.
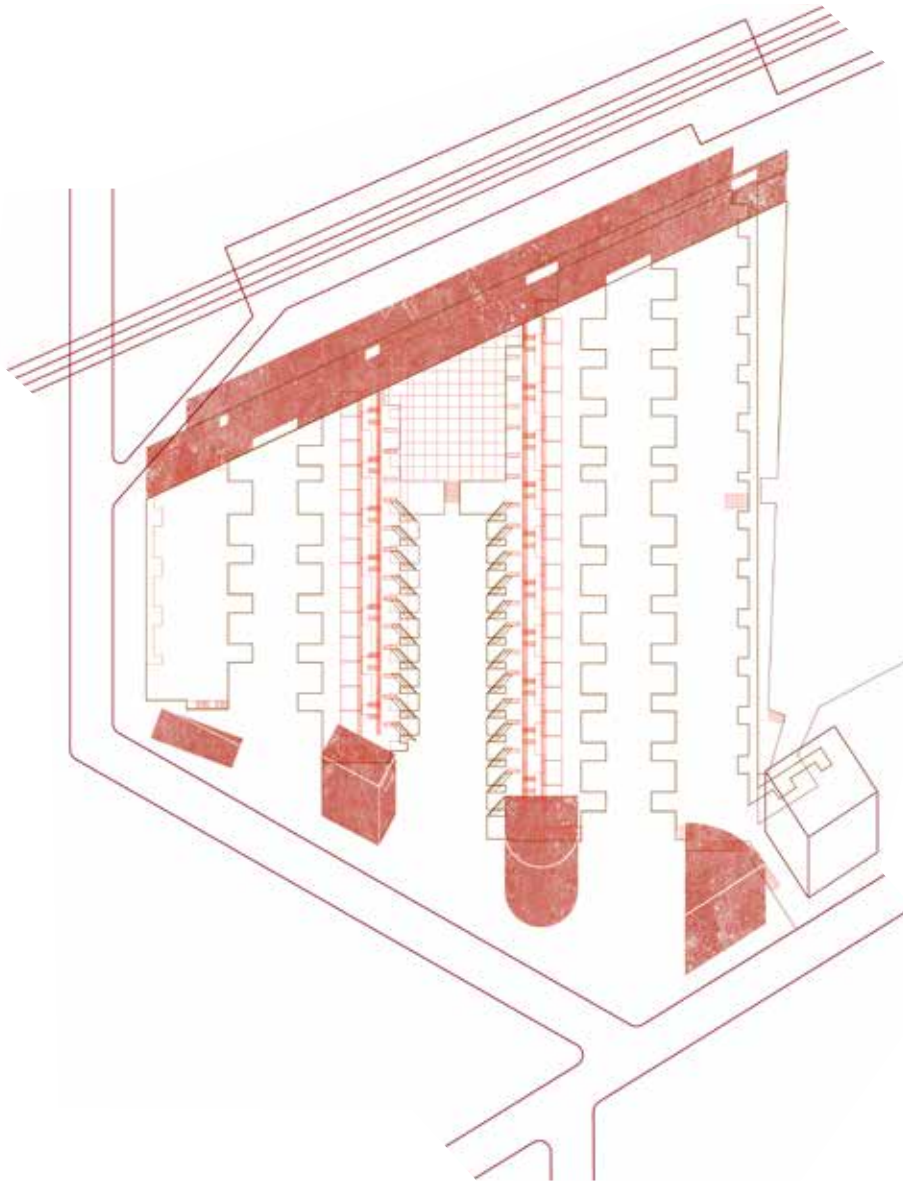
Charlotte Din & Fiona Uka, *Map of Bairro da Bouça*, UE U 2017

environmental objects

The word environment comes from the French *environer*, meaning `to surround, enclose, encircle.' The word object comes from the Latin *objectum*, meaning `thing lying before, opposite' the mind or sight. The environment is the *milieu*, the mid-space, the medium in-between. The object limits a place and occupies a position. To think of architecture as an `environmental object' means to question this opposition and thus disrupt the longstanding trope of architecture as the foreground of nature, the autonomous landmark dominating the land. To map environmental objects is to render visible the entanglements between architecture and its territorial environments, thus reimagining a discipline that amplifies its context, attunes to it and renders it conscious. Hence, this course has the goal to promote cartography as a tool for de-objectifying architecture: to ground buildings (which are often seen as discrete entities) within their larger systems of territorial, ecological and political structures.

assignments

1) drawing

The course opens with simple hand sketching excercises. The first session will be made from landscape photographs projected in the classroom; the second one will focus on real-life objects in an outdoor location. The projected photographs will be very abstract, with reduced perspective and repetitive organic patterns. Students will be asked to draw what they see following a graphical overlaying of layers, each represented in a contrasting technique: paintbrush for large strokes that are meandering and continuous; pen for thin lines that are dense and crisp; sponge and water for complex blots, etc. Hence, elements of the same layer are in dialogue with each other, while different layers relate by juxtaposition. This overlaying will result in a system of graphical structures. The same method should be applied to the outdoor class, and later, to the mapping.

Each student will receive a journal to be used for daily sketching and graphical research. It will need to be handed in for evaluation at the end of the semester. An experimental and inquiring body of research will be valued.
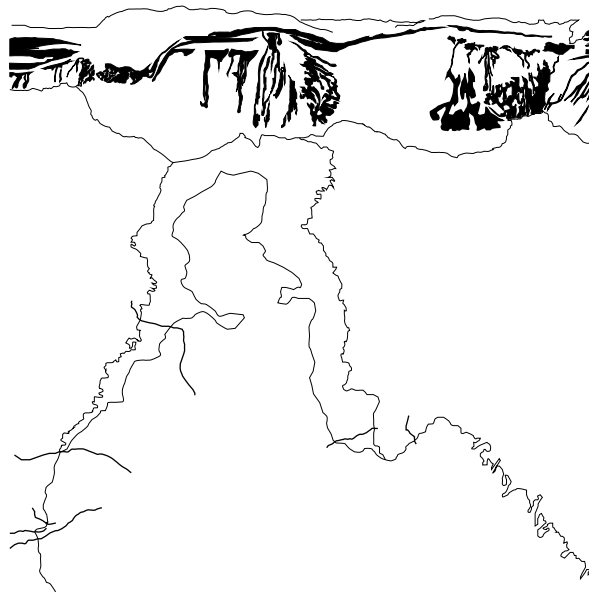
2) tracing

This exercise is an intermediate step that bridges between the hand drawings and the map. As before, students will be shown a pool of abstract photos that depict landscape patterns. Each student will pick one and draw it — this time, through precise digital tracing. This is still a largely conceptual exercise, placed somewhere between an intuitive composition and an informative map, but the goals established in the previous exercise remain valid: to identify layers, ascribe them distinct graphic identities, and overlap them into a palimpsestuous system. By looking closely at natural textures and carefully drawing them, one becomes increasingly aware of landscape forms and structures. One is then able to develop a graphical vocabulary that is complimentary to the cannons of architecture, a language of landscape.
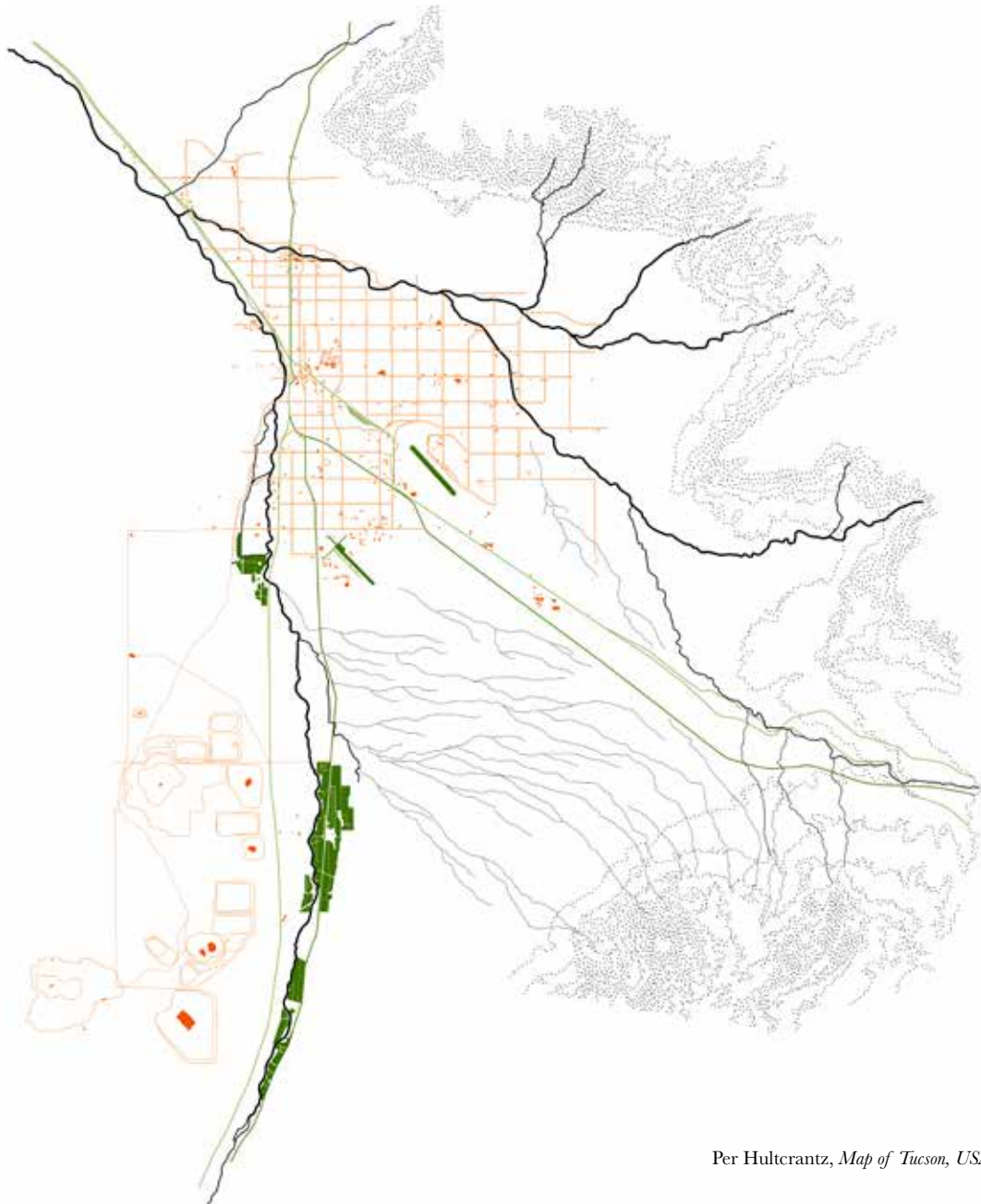
Per Hultcrantz, *Map of Tucson, USA*, UE U 2015

3) mapping

An aerial photo serves as basis from which the map is drawn, using digital tools (AI, PS, Acad) and/or analogue techniques. The choice of site will be selected by the student from a pool of suggested buildings that we characterize as environmental objects because they have a strong, contextualist relationship to landscape. The framing of the site should contain the specific environment in which the object is inserted. Complimentary information about the site will be needed for research, such as texts, photographs, historical maps, etc. Students may chose to add zooms to their maps, or include in their presentation a break-down of the layers that make up their system-map. The map will be assessed as much for graphical clarity as for territorial understanding, two qualities that are, in fact, absolutely entangled. The overlapping of this assignment with the visual journal will be fundamental in the search for a coherent and critical visual language.

method

Example 1: Gilda Gysin, UE U 2015
Site: CoachellaValley, CA, USA
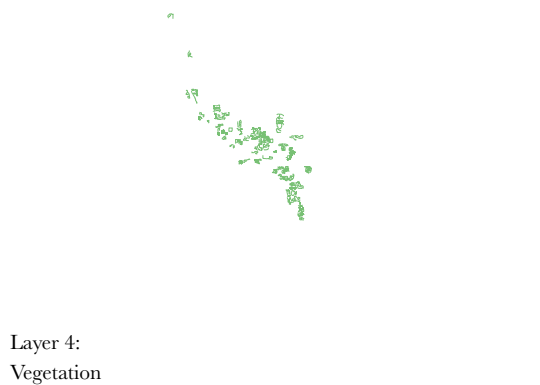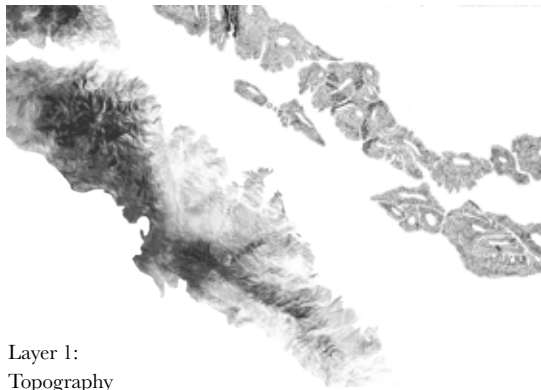Environment: Abstract Landscape in an Asymmetrical Valley

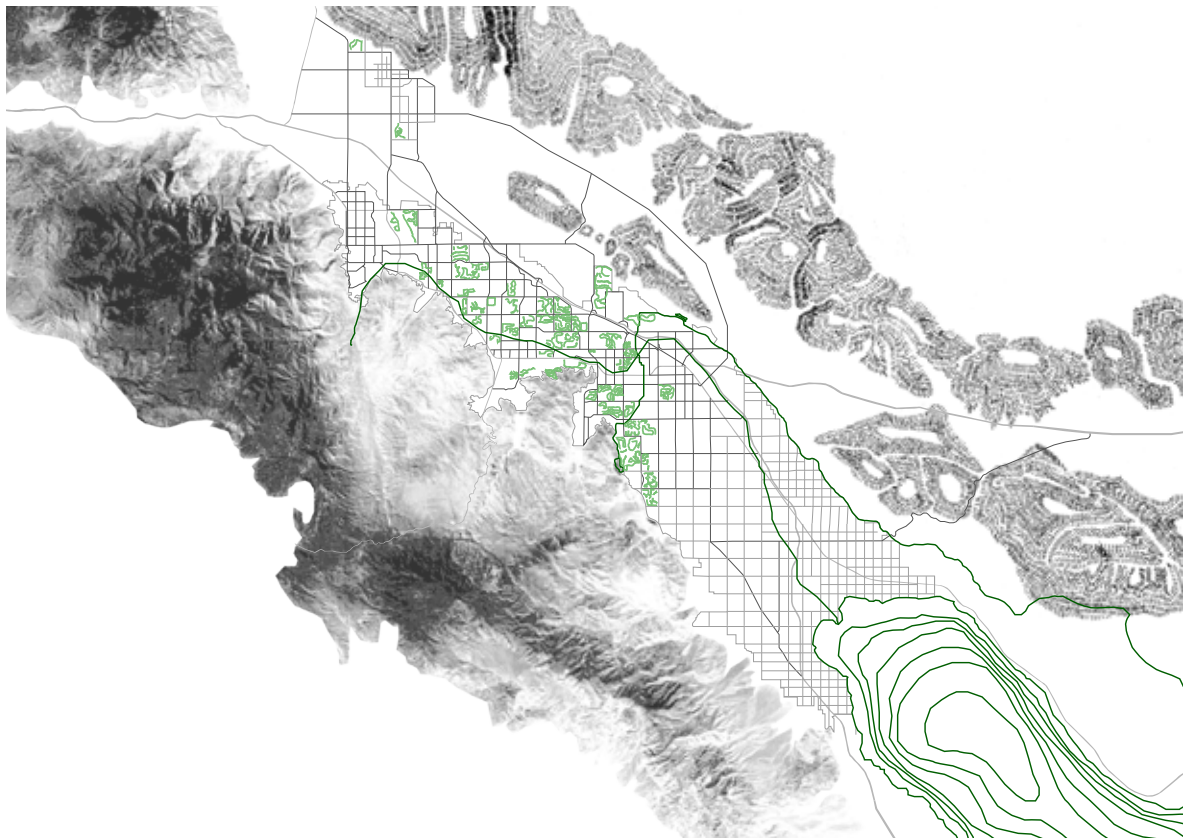## 1) identify <u>site</u> and territorial condition

2) <u>frame</u> site

3) <u>trace</u> layers separately

Layer 1:
Topography

Layer 2:
Infrastructure

Layer 3:
Hydrography

Layer 4:
Vegetation

4) combine layers into a <u>system</u>
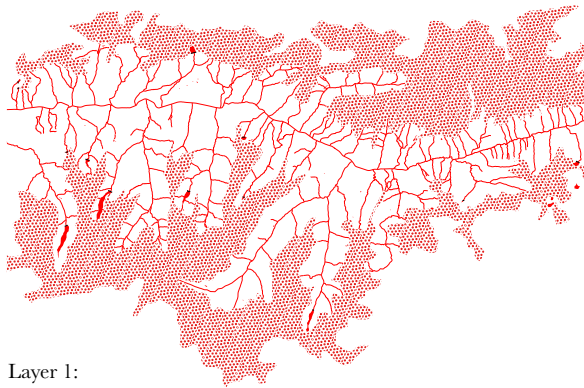
1) identify <u>site</u> and territorial condition

2) <u>frame</u> site

3) <u>trace</u> layers separately

Layer 1:
Hydrography
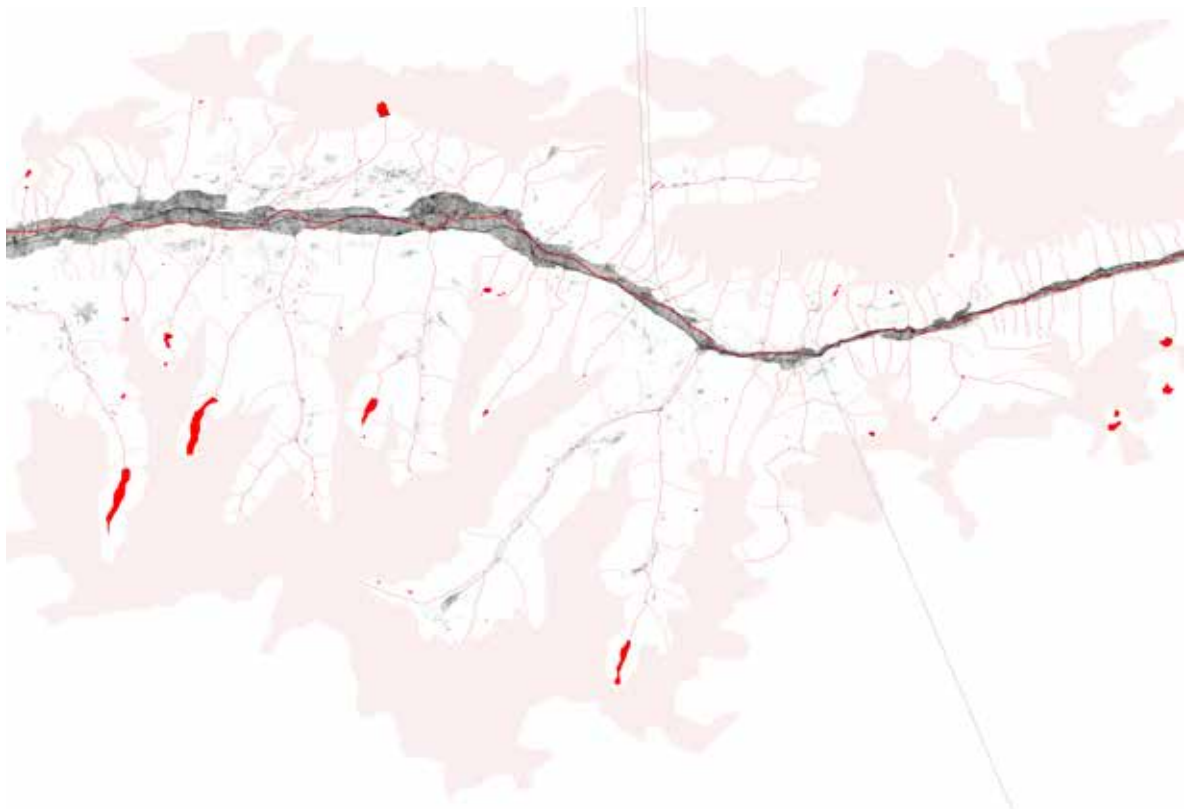

Layer 2:
Infrastructure
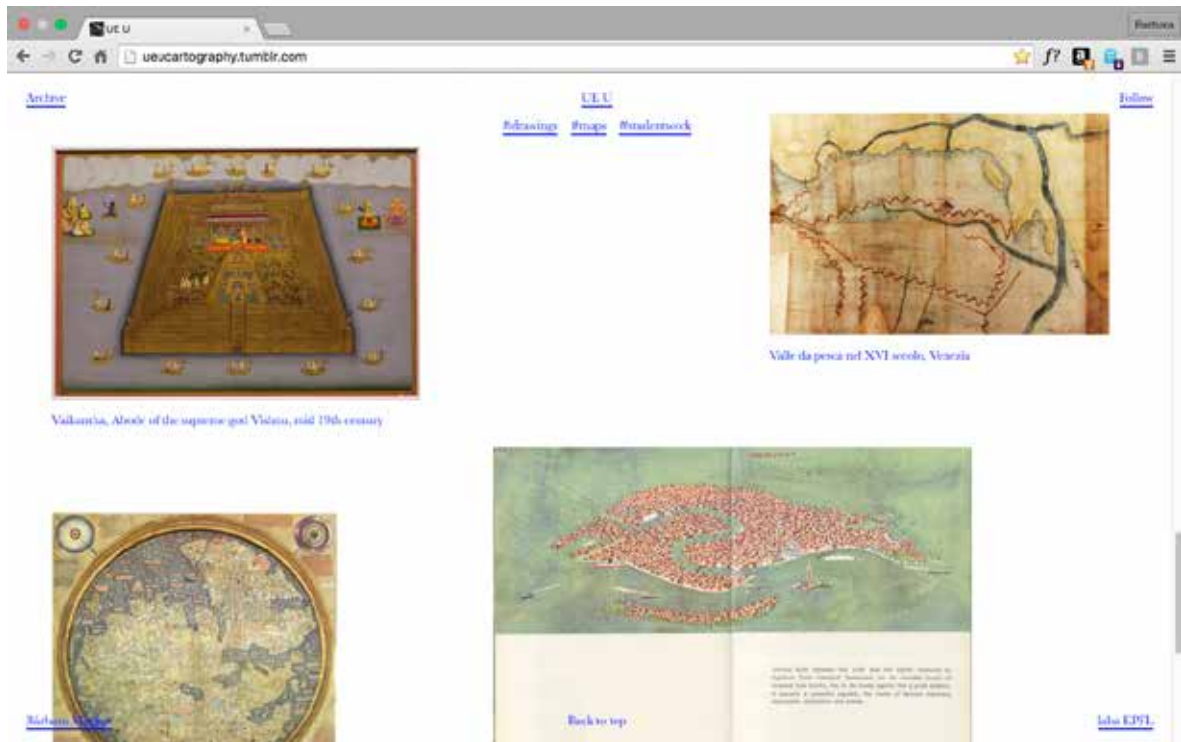

Layer 3:
Topography: valley plain

Layer 4:
Settlement

4) combine layers into a <u>system</u>

contact

ueucartography . tumblr . com

This is the course blog where you will find all previous student work and a pool of cartographic references that will prove useful to your work.

bárbara maçães costa

barbara.costa@epfl.ch