

Situated visualities, critical cartographies: filmic mapping of public space in metropolitan landscapes

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This contribution examines filmic mapping as a method for interpreting open public spaces in metropolitan landscapes. Informed by HERITAGESCAPES, a research project on Madrid's heritage ecology developed within the Cultural Landscape Research Group (GIPC) at Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, it argues that moving images cultivate a critical visibility essential for contemporary architectural discourse. This approach enables students to register socio-ecological processes, ranging from river corridors to peri-urban landscapes, that remain elusive to static media while being fundamental to the historical layering of metropolitan environments. This context raises a central pedagogical challenge: How can architectural education guide students to capture the elusive, un-mappable temporalities of metropolitan change?

Two pedagogical experiments at the Madrid School of Architecture (ETSAM-UPM) lie at the core of this work: the Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) "Living Landscapes in Madrid" and the "Theory and History of Landscape" course. Both serve as active learning environments where open public spaces are analyzed as complex territorial systems rather than isolated entities. Through critical filmic observation, students engage with the persistence of hydraulic infrastructures and shifting cultural perceptions, integrating historical inquiry into a visual practice that treats the metropolitan environment as a living archive.

Methodologically, filmic mapping extends critical cartography by introducing duration, sequence, and situated attention into the architectural curriculum. This fosters an embodied understanding of these spaces, revealing urban conflicts and processes of re-signification that escape conventional surveys. By examining the filmic mappings produced within these teaching activities, the inquiry frames production and montage as reflective pedagogical practices. Ultimately, it presents filmic mapping as a catalyst for challenging the static hegemony of the architectural gaze, positioning the lens as an active site for theoretical production.