

METHODS ↔ POSITIONS

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Introduction

4

Context and Positioning

9

Critical Case Studies

19

Synthesis

37

Counterapping

38

Reference List

41

Introduction

Maps are projections. They project the surface of the Earth and display useful information like geographic locations and borders. But these projections are not neutral. From the choice of projection method to translate spherical information into a plane and its resulting distortions, to the choice of information to be included, maps are tools of power that have helped shape nations, naturalise borders and territory. Therefore, instead of a representation of reality, maps project the intention of those who create them. They are typically seen as a definitive piece of information, but we often forget that countries are fictions, and every border was once a disputed one. How can mapping, or countermapping, interfere in this power dynamics? Can it show the nuances and reveal new knowledge behind apparently objective data?

The Shipping Forecast map was the starting point of my Unit 2 research, when I delved into the possibilities of mapping, and countermapping. Since I had explored the intersection between exclusive economic zones and the sea

areas, I decided to add an extra layer and research the border disputes in the region since the creation of the Shipping Forecast. By recontextualising the conflicts that played a role in shaping these boundaries, I aimed to show the artificiality of borders and further challenge the map's neutrality. Studying Forensic Architecture's (2025) practice I saw an even stronger correlation between mapping and power. They tell stories of conflicts from the point of view of everyday people instead of governments and institutions. By foregrounding people who are most affected by these dynamics, Forensic Architecture flips the typical power dynamics behind maps.

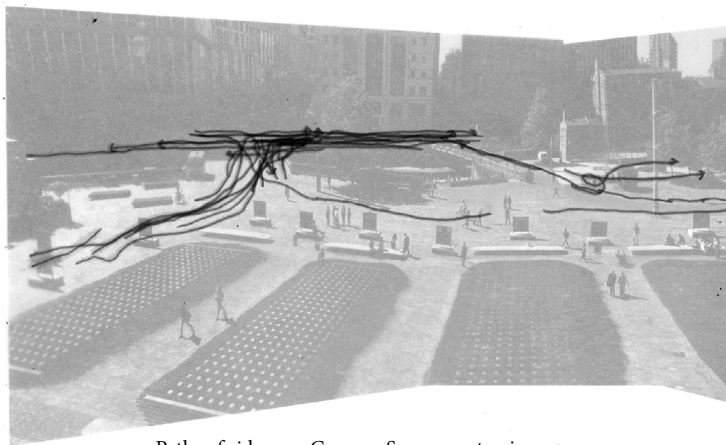
This inspired me to shift from a macro to a micro scale. Consuegra (2025) uses Google Street View to show the presence of food delivery riders, whose work goes unseen in the context of platform capitalism. Analysing his work made me reflect on the stories behind these workers. I created a publication that shows some of the economics behind their work, and mapped what a typical working day may look like. Exploring the amplitude of mapping led me to Knight's (2021) abstract maps. The extreme subjec-

PHONE MOUNT £5.95
THERMO-BOX £32.87
ELECTRIC BIKE £561.17
TOTAL £599.96

HOURLY PAY £8.00
BREAK EVEN
75H
9.37 SHIFTS

tivity present in her work is a clever way to challenge the perceived objectivity of maps. The use of overlaid tracing paper adds the time dimension, suitable for analysing workers who are always moving through space. Furthermore, analogue techniques can act as a reminder of the bodies of delivery riders, whose existence consumers usually relegate to the digital space. This approach inspired my following experiment, when I observed and traced the paths of riders on Granary Square. It allowed me to represent their physical presence in that space and timeframe, by overlaying and animating my material. Creating something from my (literal) point of view instead of secondary research, and doing field work made me feel closer to the subject.

The next step was to conduct interviews. I stumbled upon a rider from my home country Brazil, which led me to an unscripted conversation. He told me details about his work routine, information that I couldn't have known about otherwise. Participant observation became a key field research method for me. Through direct observation and interviews I started collecting relevant information that informed my next



Paths of riders on Granary Square on tracing paper.

iterations. The insight about account renting resulted in a poster directed to Brazilian riders, the photos of their phones inspired the Routes publication, and my field notes were the basis for the messages on the protest signs, protest jacket and protest receipt.

Context and Positioning

Maps attempt to represent reality through the lens of those who created them. Most maps do not show that this reality is a snapshot in a much longer

timeline of events and disputes, during which time only specific groups held the power to map, groups who “were in the business ... of reconstructing the property-history of their new possessions” Anderson (2006, p 196). There are at least three dimensions where one can challenge the map. First, those maps try to represent territory and borders built over time and show the point of view of one of many groups involved in this historical process. Next, one should analyse how history is presented today and what has been left out, altered, and/or put out of context. Finally, what are the biases and intentions of the authorities today? What are they trying to legitimise, and what is their future projection? I am interested in strategies that reveal the biases behind cartography and other official documents, like creating alternatives or interjecting existing ones. Even if they are precise in showing an abstraction of a region’s territorial divisions, they will never be more than that – an abstraction – one of the many possible by one of the many institutions or communities capable of mapping.

Cartography is just one of the many tools employed in building a nation.

Metahaven (2010) shows that crests, coins and flags, among others, act as metaphors for states and have come to justify them. Furthermore, maps embed another national symbol, the country’s shape. This intertwined symbology offers rich possibilities for visual explorations, and alongside methods like deconstruction, distortion, and resampling, it can be used to subvert the structural processes behind the creation of nation-states, evidencing the power of semiotics as a tool of graphic communication design. The symbols that legitimise power exist within standards, which improve efficiency and ease of communication and exchange in and between societies. However, this simplification process typical of capitalism tends to erase the complexity of minorities. Lee (2022) shows that because different societal groups have unique cultures and conventions, the choice of standards can be violent. They are forced upon the dominated groups, reducing plurality, and erasing knowledge. Historical research has been part of my practice and is one way to try to reveal forgotten practices. Using research through making allows me to explore the multiple forms knowledge can take.

Maps are ubiquitous and normalised as truthful and objective representations of reality. Cartography is an area of knowledge that has existed since ancient times. Because cartography is a scientific field, map users usually do not question it or consider its biases. Craig-Martin's (2014) subversion of maps is a radical approach to revealing hidden information, an important part of my practice. It can take many forms, and his specific approach of replacing the names of places defies the concept of nation as something given, unquestionable. Mapping can maintain the status quo and reinforce positions of power, but it can also be an act of resistance. By mapping Bounce, New Orleans's signature music version of Hip-hop, Cadogan, G. (2013) elevates the voices of the city's marginalised communities. Graphic communication design can be used to reverse power imbalances. When I shift from the continental to the local scale, I reflect on where I belong, how I relate to the Brazilian community in London, and what their stories are. By incorporating art from homeless people, Norman (2008) presents a rich and plural narrative about and by this marginalised societal group that motivates me to

include more voices from delivery riders in my work. The glossary that structures the book offers a selection of ideas, and it is a way to frame the subject and articulate the author's position. This collection makes me imagine concepts or symbols that could be relevant to my research, and how to communicate them. Perhaps reveal to a larger audience something that every rider has to go through in order to work, like creating an account or hiring insurance. This could take the form of a user guide or an instructional video, and use a serious or humorous tone.

So far I've used photography in a mere functional way, as a backdrop for my maps or to illustrate my geographical point of view when I was drawing them. My critique during this brief lies in social issues like the precarious conditions faced by workers under platform capitalism, the over dependence on digital services and the impact they have on local business and communities. Wolf (2010) used Google Street View as source material, and was possibly an inspiration for Consuegra (2025), but photography offers many more possibilities to investigate these themes. Wolf's Life in

cities (2009) series exposes the harsh conditions endured by everyday people in urban life. They are reminders of what can be achieved through this medium and, in my case, in combination with personal narrative and countermapping methods.

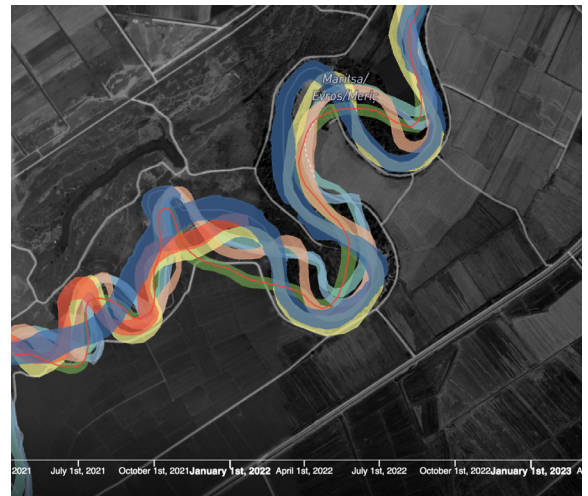
After seeing Consuegra's (2025) work, I decided to investigate how mapping could reveal information about the work of delivery riders. The Debord's Theory of the *dérive* (2006) could offer some insight on ways to explore this topic in the real world, as opposed to the virtual environment used in my reference. After reading the text, I became much more aware of the presence of these workers, as if I was in a constant state of an informal-*dérive*. One day cycling to campus, I caught myself behind one delivery rider and took photos and filmed him. This event gave me the idea to cycle around, covering a specific area or more freely, in search of them and capture more footage. I didn't test this method out, since sitting on Granary Square and registering the routes on tracing paper seemed more promising. This approach is similar to what Debord (2006) describes as "being a static-*dérive*". Like the *dérive*,

Perec's (1997) method of investigating is based on discovering new information by comprehensive observation of space, architecture and behaviour, but in a more static way, much like my own exploration during this brief. Unlike noted in both theories, I had a predetermined subject. I would notice details other than their routes, like the brand stamped on their large backpacks, if they were on a cycle or a motorbike and some behavioural traits. Are they in a hurry? Or lost? I always noticed the direction they were going, but only started putting it on paper midway into the exercise. I see two ways of expanding my work through Perec's lens. I could reflect in retrospect on the material I have, including some pictures. Or I can go back, observe and annotate other aspects of each worker, like what they are wearing or if they changed gears. Or I could sit outside Granary Square and closer to where the majority of drivers were going in order to see where they might ride next. Another way to expand on my work is perhaps to more thoroughly observe the surroundings. Can they reveal new information relevant to my theme? For instance, how many restaurants are there at Granary Square

and why didn't I see any delivery riders coming from any of them?

Forensic Architecture's (2025) work has reassured me of the relevance of showing disputes over borders as a way to challenge the map's neutrality. By putting the map in a historical context, I aimed to reveal that what we see on a map wasn't always there but artificially created. It also introduced me to countercartography, which I had previously thought of loosely as unmapping, that is, deconstructing the map and using form to reveal the nuances behind neatly defined borders. Dominant power structures dictate what is mapped, and maps reinforce them. The fact that borders are designed is made evident in Forensic Architecture's project when they juxtapose artificial and natural borders.

When I created the maps of delivery riders on Granary Square, I noticed how people inhabit the same space in very different ways. Riders were always moving — except for one or two who stopped briefly to check their phones — while other people sat around eating, drinking, and enjoying the sun and the water fountains. People were in the



The evolution of the natural border vs the fixed artificial border. Forensic Architecture (2025).

same physical location, but in different social spaces. I saw a link with maps as I saw these social borders between them. Additionally the time dimension of the maps I created made me want to explore what time means for delivery riders in the context of platform capitalism. The conversation with Paim (2025) made me realise the need to be more specific about my research. At that point I wanted to keep researching delivery riders, which was too broad. Which riders? Brazilian, migrants, or any rider? What do I want to

know about them? Am I only interested in their work, or also where they came from and how was life before London? How and where will I get this information? Through interviews, secondary sources, or both? What do I want to do with this information? What is my audience?

Paim presented me to some of Tuhiwai Smith's (2022) ideas about field research. Being from outside, there's a tendency to portray the community as exotic. Similarly, I need to avoid victimising the workers. Because of my political views, I'm inclined to look at this picture through the lens of class struggle, which is not a problem in and of itself, but I must be aware of the risks that may come from my preconceived opinions. I do want delivery riders to benefit from my work somehow, and avoid exploitative research that only takes from social groups and gives nothing in return. That's why at this stage I was trying to make something with and for the riders, who ideally would act like collaborators and audience. Like most riders I am a migrant, but unlike them I came here to study, which combined with the researcher role creates a clear power imbalance. This is

something I need to address if I want to get honest answers and build genuine collaborations.

After our dialogue I decided to embrace the ethnographic approach with participant observation methods. The following interviews I conducted all revolved around delivery work, but from that emerged information about other topics, such as their education background, English skills, and other work they did or aspired to do. I also asked some of them about which media they used for keeping informed, as I wanted to use something relevant to them, but I realised my research was at an early stage for such questions. My goal is to use field work to gain a better understanding of their reality, let that inform my next steps, and look for collaboration opportunities.

Critical Case Studies

Consuegra (2025) describes himself as a multidisciplinary designer, and started his career doing the designs for his record label, since he couldn't afford to hire a professional designer. Being self-taught



Consuegra (2025) uses Google Street View to show the presence of food delivery riders.

is evident in his colourful low-fi and playful mix of visual languages. Among the myriad of styles present in his body of work there are aspects of materiality and metalanguage, like exposing graphic user interface elements as an integral part of the pieces or using circuit boards present inside DJ controllers for party posters. Consuegra's explorations don't start at the composition stage. He also makes inventive use of image capture devices such as x-ray machines, webcams and trail cams as part of his design process.

I'm inspired by the iterative, experimental, hands-on approach Consuegra brings to his projects and the use of contextually relevant visual elements. And like in Knight's (2021) work, his pieces often engage first for their beauty, but require effort to be understood. In Knight's maps, it was the abstraction and subjectivity that required the viewer to make this extra effort. In Consuegra's work, it is the deliberate noisy aesthetics or unconventional information hierarchy that makes the reader hunt for key information that is presented with the same level of importance as a piece of found text in a collage. The behind the scenes ethos lives in his pieces through

the choice of materials and user interface elements, and in the way he communicates them alongside his creative process. Furthermore, he shows not only finished designs, but also experiments while openly admitting not knowing what they mean. That poses a relevant question to graphic communication designers: should a body of work be composed only of key projects? Or also include everything in between that has led to them?

The wandering around Google Street View in New York has similarities to Debord's *dérive* (2006) as it is subject to the city's "psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones". But the deliberate search for delivery riders, as opposed to "let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there" moves this exercise further away from the original theory. The method employed by Consuegra is a virtual equivalent of photography, with the distinct grainy texture of low resolution digital cameras, whether the source images came from old cell phone cameras or using more recent

technology that later got compressed by Google and edited in Photoshop. Either way, the quality of the images are part of the story the designer is telling not only in this piece but across his entire body of work, which can be placed, according to Steyerl (2012, p. 43), in the wider discourse "of carbon-copied pamphlets, cine-train agit-prop films, underground video magazines and other nonconformist materials, which aesthetically often used poor materials." When I found Community riders, I was drawn in by the subject, due to my interest in the broader thematics of labour, and by the method, so I experimented with the same virtual photography on my early iterations. Even bringing in more information like cost of gear and hourly pay, it still felt too distant of an approach to study delivery riders, with whom most customers' interactions are already mediated by the mini computer that is the smartphone.

Knight (2021) presents methodologies that refute western normative knowledge as the only valid way to produce scientific truth. The author presents mapping as a sensorial activity capable of capturing specific states of complex and mutable

environments from one's perspective. Distributed as both paperback and free PDF, the work makes use of open access publishing, which is a form of questioning dominant commercial modes of distribution. The protocols discussed in the book record that which is not usually present or presented in traditional research findings, like sensations. The resulting maps can be abstract in their visual representation, that is, their form may not be easily associated with a concrete aspect of what it represents.

Although inspired by this philosophy, I did also use the conventional tracing method of representing a path, but by doing it by hand, by shifting my gaze between my subject and my medium, and sometimes operating simultaneously in observation and drawing modes, I implemented imprecision and subjectivity to the process. Furthermore, layering the maps and the printed picture of Granary Square brings the chaos and temporal dimension present in inefficient mapping methods. This form of presentation expands the single-path map and allows for multiple meanings and interpretations, like the square being a transitory place for delivery workers,

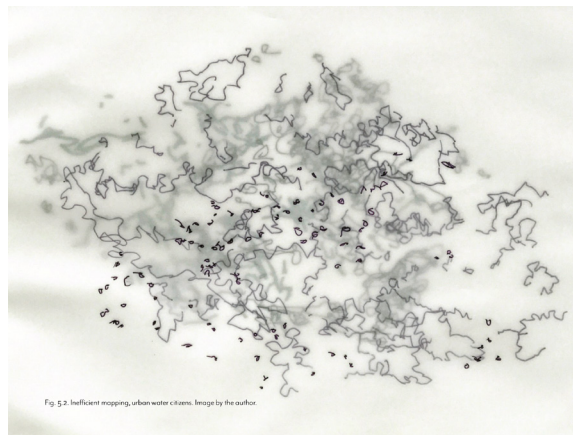


Fig. 5.2. Inefficient mapping, urban water cisterns, bridge by the author.

The extreme subjectivity present on Knight's (2021) work is a clever way to challenge the perceived objectivity of maps.

in contrast to the recreational function enjoyed by tourists and other privileged people. When coupled with stories from delivery riders who suffer from exhausting working hours, the maps offer a way into the complexities of labour, class and social relations. Inefficiency is an honest label that recognises from the start the limitations of research. My mapping method during this brief has been extremely limited and subjective. By sitting in different spots at Granary Square, I had to constantly make choices about which direction to look and where to sit. As Knight (2021, p. 75) puts it,



“Researchers become political once they see themselves as a modest witness to the world, and that they can only partially record what can be seen, and that what is seen is only ever a partial account of the whole thing”. My vision was also limited by obstacles and the busy crowd of sunny afternoons. Besides the limitations of collecting data, I am also faced with my own limitations as a design student barely familiar with ethnographic research methods. My goal was not to register and present the presence of every single rider that passed by Granary Square during the hours I was there. That would be the case, or the claim, for other systems based on supposedly neutral traditional western cartography. In contrast, I have embraced the inefficiency of my method and used it to convey sensations and, hopefully immersive feelings, always considering my perspective as the starting point.

When I first saw Night’s work, I put it aside. At first glance, it seemed too abstract and distant from my practice, but after more thoughtful consideration, and knowing that abstraction is a key factor in any form of mapping, I realised I was too tied to a representational view of mapping. While reading *Inefficient*

Mockup of poster directed to Brazilian riders on the right.

Mapping, I realised I should not attempt to create work that is easily and immediately understood by everyone, which is impossible to achieve. Accepting that is part of the process of defining my audience and dismissing the assumption that Graphic Communication Design can be universal.

Vienna based State of Matter is an artist duo composed of Fabio Hofer and Ana Mikadze, who research the work of delivery riders in the city from a unique position, since Fabio is a rider himself, while also considering the broader context of platform capitalism. State of Matter's *We wish you a safe ride* (2024), happened as part of the Wienwoche Arts Festival, when volunteers were called to work as delivery riders. This gave the workers paid time off to connect and socialise with other workers, and attend workshops on themes like labour rights, healthcare, and collective organising. The event took place at the Riders Collective's headquarters, which also featured open-access bike repair workshops, and a walking tour of the invisible food delivery infrastructures of Vienna. State of Matter also curated the exhibition *Between*

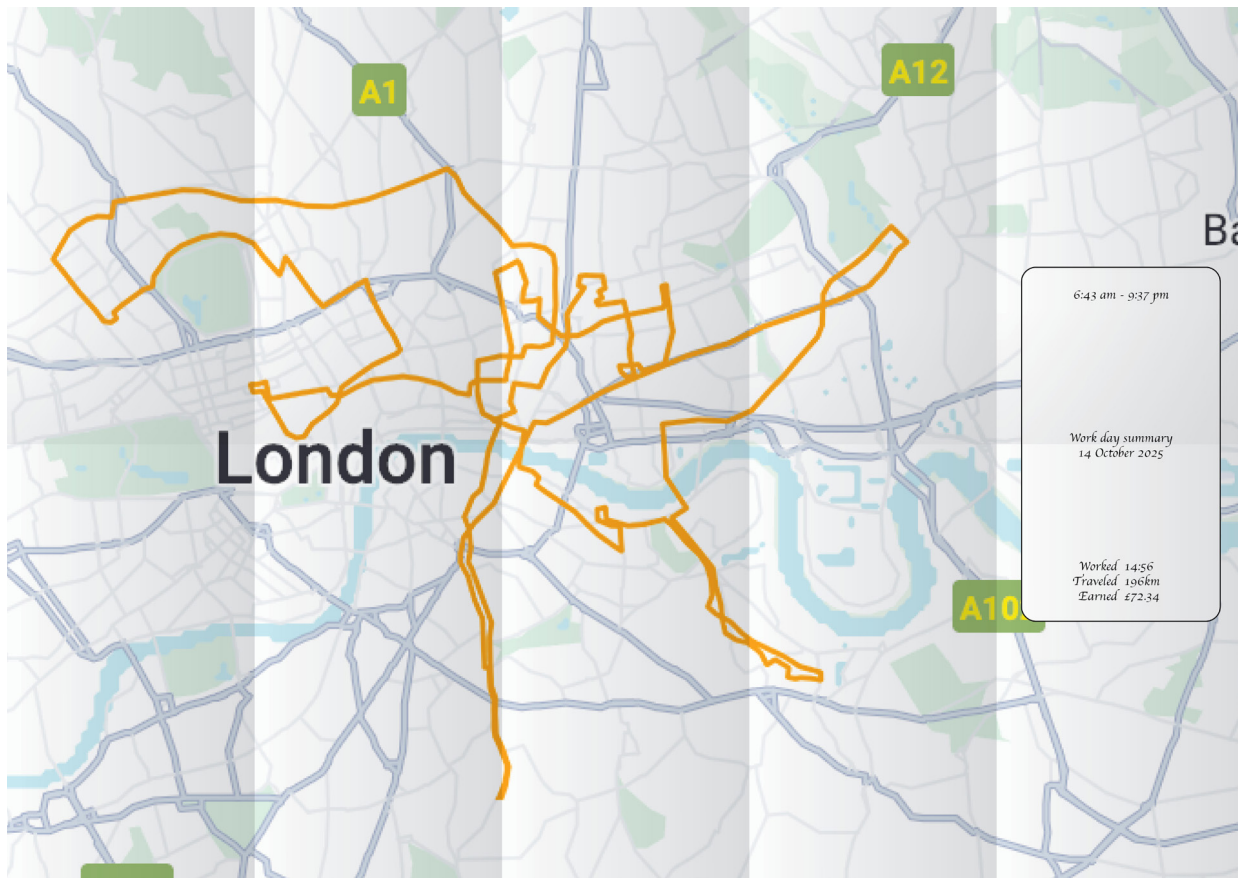
Receipt comparing the earnings of a rider with Deliveroo's CEO



pick-up and drop-off (2025) at the Wien Museum, which featured video portraits of riders telling their stories, alongside objects, maps and other visuals showing what it's like to work as a food delivery rider in Vienna.

Our practices intersect in the critique of couriers' working conditions, specially migrants. They manifest this position, for instance, in the videos presenting the We wish you a safe ride project, posted in German, Arabic and English. The videos, one of them being narrated by Ana, a migrant herself, acknowledge that this group is particularly vulnerable in the context of the gig economy for having fewer rights, and the urgent need to make a living, which forces them to accept precarious working conditions. Ana and Fabio's background is evident in their workshop practice. Fabio's expertise as a bike mechanic and food delivery rider allows him to teach participants how to maintain and repair their bikes, and to educate volunteers on the delivery job before they hit the streets. And the duo's artistic and performative practice allowed them to run backpack customisation and to enact the food delivery work during onboarding sessions for volunteers.

Both State of Matter's and my work aim to raise awareness of the conditions of delivery riders exploited by companies in the platform capitalism context. My Fck Deliveroo poster for example is meant to serve as a medium for Brazilians to find rider accounts for rent. It is the only way to work for the platforms if you are a migrant with no work visa, or can't afford the long time it takes for delivery companies to approve an application. It is written in abbreviated Portuguese so police officers don't understand it, and features plenty of white space for people to share their phone numbers. I also created visuals for a jacket screenprinted with common delivery riders' demands, and a print receipt with absurd statistics relating to workers' earnings, both of which intended for a direct communication with customers on the act of delivery. In other iterations I explored ways I could work with delivery riders to tell their stories to a wider audience, like protest signs or publications. The zine Routes will show the working day of a real rider with screenshots of every order, a map of their route, and other visual records or their routine. The price of the publication will represent a 10% tip for one day of



The zine Routes will show the working day of a real rider.
The price of the publication will represent a 10% tip.

deliveries, and the profits will be shared between the rider and the IWGB union. The money could be used for sponsoring memberships for more riders, spreading the union's reach and supporting workers' collective struggles.

While having similar goals, State of Matter and I have differed in the means employed to reach them, in their case workshops and exhibitions, but most notably in the way they subvert the role of the audience. The duo deeply engages them in the process, making the audience an essential part of the project. They are not mere viewers, nor participants, but assume the role of collaborators. Another difference is the plurality Ana and Fabio have achieved in their practice, including activities that might not be considered art or design in a traditional sense, like providing hangout opportunities for delivery riders, which relates to the broader discourse of leisure and socialising time for gig economy workers.

Another way our practices diverge is in the research and creation process. The methods I've used so far, interviews and secondary research in books, and news articles, came before the making. First I would try and find what are the workers'

demands, and then I would explore forms of expressing those. Ana and Fábio, aided by his experience as a food delivery rider, intertwined research, creation, and performance by providing an environment for riders to engage in dialogue and develop the means for improving their situation themselves. They have acted as facilitators who fostered relations that could be the starting point for collective organisation. But that will only be the case if the projects go on after the arts festival and the museum exhibition. At this point, State of Matter's legacy is unclear.

Companies like Uber, Deliveroo and Just Eat came up with clever ways of using technology to connect businesses, couriers and customers. Usually it starts with favorable conditions that attract restaurants and clients before the need for ever-increasing margins comes up, which comes at the expense of the most vulnerable link in this chain, delivery riders. Years after their launch, delivery companies have created an environment where they seem essential, but food delivery has been around for many decades. Reflecting on the roles traditionally performed by graphic designers, I see it's not unusual for us to develop projects and research

by ourselves until we have a polished outcome worthy of the public eye, and only then present it to our audience. By then, the crystalised design may not allow for easy change and adjustments. But what happens when other groups are included from the beginning? Pater (2021) shows examples of collectives that act outside of capitalism, valuing solidarity and community building over profit. In the context of food delivery, potential projects should include local businesses, local residents and delivery workers from the beginning. Anyone who is for fair wages for workers and against the excessive power of platforms. Restaurants who can't afford to use delivery apps because of the high rates would benefit from growing their client base. Couriers would earn more money per delivery, and have more power to address other demands. Customers would get better prices, since the money that goes to the platforms would be distributed between stakeholders. And everyone would benefit from being part of a community. Customers and couriers could eventually get to know each other after a few deliveries, or through socialising and collective organising events. The community decides

what to do with money. Maybe set aside a fund to pay riders who can't work due to illness or injuries. Even people outside the community would benefit from the reduced environmental impact of local deliveries. Can this approach lead to an alternative system, at least locally, that empowers collective organising against delivery platforms?

Synthesis

My research up to this point was heavily dependent on collaboration with riders. I talked to many, but never had the chance to do in-depth interviews. The ones I met on the street were understandably in a hurry, which is a testament to the extenuating hours they had to work to make ends meet. I managed to text a few of them later and tried to arrange meetings, but none replied. I'm also in contact with IWGB. Collaborating with the union is a way to centre the collective struggle. Furthermore, future projects would benefit from their experience and network. Despite the importance of partnering with workers, individually or through a union, it is a lengthy process.

It takes time to build the trust necessary for people to be willing to collaborate. I will continue this effort while exploring opportunities of working individually.

My audience is the app user, one-third of the tripod that holds the food delivery business model — alongside restaurants and riders — and arguably the most powerful group. The end customer can choose between different competitor apps, while restaurants have to raise their prices or reduce their margins when using the services, and riders earn less and less. It's easy to be seduced by the convenience of platform capitalism, and not consider the bigger picture, but users should be aware of what happens behind the app, or outside their door.

Countermapping

Like countermapping allows for people to challenge dominant narratives, countermapping reveals the structures that lie beyond the mobile screen. The scroll is a gesture for navigating within a digital app, but also one of the forms of paper. In ancient times and today on flexography and thermal printers, scrolls of paper

MANDEEP no other job opportunities

IAN mental health impact

HUSSAIN low wages

PAULO extenuating hours

ETHAN died in a cycling accident

REECE low wages

IAN assaulted on the job

STEVEN low waiting times

KERRY unpredictable pay

DJAMILA extenuating hours

EBEN low wages

RUTH assaulted on the job

BAZ injured on the job

Impact of delivery work on real riders I interviewed or read about on news articles.

are used for instance in receipt printing. Receipts are a key part of the interface between delivery workers and clients, a material interface where the user interacts with the delivery rider in-person instead of the app. The last iteration I'm working on as I finish writing is a scroll of receipt paper with real rider's first names — to preserve their identity — next to a few words that summarise the impact delivery work has had on them, based on news articles and past and future interviews I conduct. I hope having a short question to ask will allow me to gather a growing volume of data.

This project will certainly evolve during Unit 3 as I explore its content and distribution. The prints could be handed directly to customers, or be part of an exhibition where the printer sits and prints continuously. The printer could be shown on a live feed as a comment on the digital-physical duality. A great enough number of prints could be used as part of larger manifestations. Content now is limited to my own research on the impact of the work, but it's possible to research demands instead, or use an open approach that includes all sorts of stories I find. Alternatively, riders could have the

power to participate directly by inputting their words, prompted by a theme or not. There's potential to bring extraordinary stories to light, or a large volume of everyday testimonies that makes the presence of delivery riders more and more visible. Such an open tool is also subject to unpredictable uses, as "designers may sometimes be creating such tools and spaces: not so much designing their content, as making room for others to invent a new use" Metahaven (2014, p. 77). Whatever the outcome, it should be a continuous project. By creating a platform for their stories, I hope to use the paper scroll to reveal what's behind the app scroll.

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