

A Map on the World of Professional Identity. Visual Narration for Education and Care Workers [†]

Paola Zonca and Emanuela Guarcello *

Department of Philosophy and Education Sciences, University of Turin, 10124 Torino, Italy;
paola.zonca@unito.it

* Correspondence: emanuela.guarcello@unito.it; Tel.: +39-3470711203

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Abstract: The essay explores some aspects of visual narration, an important topic in the human sciences and very used especially in some areas of work. At first, the paper explore some epistemological references related to visual narration and, particularly, to geographic maps and cartography finalized to reflect about personal e professional identity in care and education fields. Later, the essay delves into some practical applications about the construction of professional identities geographic map and the context of care and educational operators' training.

Keywords: image; visual narration; maps; professional identity

1. Introduction (Emanuela Guarcello)

The contribution falls within the scope of research which studies and tests training courses with adults [1–3], promoting forms of reflexive interaction also via narration in pictures [4–6]. It can provide an interesting opportunity with a view to the training of professional educators and carers [7], with particular regard to the possibility of expanding the vision of their personal work experience, revealing at a glance some of the main areas of action and how they relate with the way in which they operate [8]. The image also makes it possible to go beyond the initial overview, imagining, composing and recomposing new interpretations, reflections and hypothetical actions, triggered by assonance or dissonance in relation to visual stimulation.

The possible ways of using images include a form of visual expression made up of geographic maps, a specific frame within which to place this contribution. As sustained by Dewey [9], geography is the discipline which, more than any other, increases the faculty to perceive spatial connections, enriches and promotes “the most direct and personal contacts in life, providing their context, background and perspective” (p. 265).

2. Cartography on Professions: Motivation and Objectives of the Study (Paola Zonca)

Geography can be considered as a form of knowledge and representation of the world and is a discipline with a specific attitude towards the production of visual representations within the scope of its investigative practice. The studies that entwine geography and visual research highlight that images are part of the construction of knowledge and that visual representations, therefore, deeply condition the relationship with the world [10]. If we add to this the consideration by Mirzoeff [11], according to which culture cannot be defined in linguistic terms alone, because “the world-in-text has been replaced by the world-in-pictures”, we understand the utility of predicting the exploration of professional identity through the cartographic language.

The use of geographic maps to present spheres of action, necessary skills and trajectories of commitment has the advantage of being immediate, while guaranteeing a general overview [12].

Berger remembers that we need to see before we speak, in the sense that children see and recognise things before that are able to talk [12] (p. 9); moreover, sight provokes an effect of synthesis, activating the involvement of the other senses, and consequently the visual message stimulates the imagination, triggering memories and expectations [13].

Proposing a professional cartography enhances dynamicity and the possibilities of continuing integrations and updates constantly required in the liquid world [14–16], without neglecting the fact that those who look at the map are not passive agents, but active subjects who can look away or pay attention to a specific point. As Calvino reminds us “the first need to establish places on a map was linked to a journey: it was a reminder of the sequence of steps of an itinerary” [17] (p. 21). When we set out on a journey, just like when we read a map, past, present and future merge together and the inner dimension and context entwine: “there’s a mental space with which we read the real, environment, proxemic, social and geographic space” [18] (p. VIII).

A further element in favour of the use of maps is provided by the consideration according to which it would seem that, nowadays, “the movement in space—at least in the traditional sense—is no longer indispensable for knowledge, learning and experience” [19] (p. 106), as it has often been replaced by screens and keyboards. Consequently, it is a good idea to offer professionals a device which presents the advantages of “protected” learning, but which at the same time, involves them personally (e.g., in choosing the path, defining the places still unexplored and proposing the redesign of certain spaces).

In this sense, a famous example of a map is the Atlas of the inner world [20], published for the first time in the Netherlands. The Atlas shows an imaginary island which has been divided into different “places of the soul”. Despite being a dated instrument, it has only been used in training in recent years, in order to tell its own story, drawing inspiration from the specific theme of the map (chosen specifically to analyse a specific environment) and from the places featured on it [21–23]. However, it has not been elaborated from the viewpoint of the formation of professional identity and does not, therefore, seem fully adequate to said purpose. If, on the other hand, we envisage geographic mapping from the viewpoint of the profession in which we operate (or, in the case of students who are still training, in which they are going to operate), it helps in a more aware preparation of the journey to be travelled in the pursuit of our profession. In fact, it can draw attention to light and shade, and obstacles, highlighting dangers and threats or, on the contrary, discovering and sharing unexplored oases, deposits and resources.

We intend, therefore, to analyse the sense and function of the geographic mapping of the professional identity of educational operators and carers, and plan a map, outlining the methods of use within narrative training courses. From the reading of and reflection on the maps proposed in the educational environment, operators can mature a sort of mental attitude towards travelling “rational” itineraries and the ability to immerse themselves in complex landscapes in which to exercise, together with other explorers/operators, containing reflexivity [24].

3. Materials and Methods. The Art of Mapping: ‘Telling’ Outer and Inner Space (Paola Zonca)

Man is the only species capable of cartographically portraying the environment he lives in: from the time when mankind, about 40,000 years ago, began engraving graffiti on rocks, maps have been created as a way of projecting ourselves into the environment and, at the same time, a sign of his existence, as well as a tool for orientation [25]. Even today, maps maintain a double meaning: tools for localisation or navigation, which supply information on the neighbouring territories and, at the same time, the expression of a conception of these places. Therefore, the maps respond to a dual need: more prevision to allow safe travelling and movement from one place to another, quickly and efficiently, but also to be a representation of the world. In relation to this last aspect, Patrizia Faccioli [26] sustains that the act of creating an image—and in our case, we can say that the same goes for a map—is a selective act and an interpretation of reality, representing a vision of the world of the subject who conceived it.

Furthermore, the vision of maps triggers participative processes not only in those who prepare them, but also in those who use them. Using a map that can be interpreted as a passage from the role

of spectator to that of player who has to become part of that map and endure a sort of paradox, clearly illustrated by Olson [27]: “Like all successful maps it orients the viewer in the building. But in a deep sense that usually goes unnoticed, the caption is anomalous. I don’t need a map to tell me where I am; I know where I am, “I am here, right where I stand”. The map, so to speak, contradicts me, insisting that I am at the point indicated by the arrow. The map undertakes to lift me from my firm stance on the floor and transpose me into this geometry of lines and angles. Maps are perhaps the most conspicuous means for putting our-selves and the world on paper. We have not paid sufficient attention to the fact that our representation have a way of telling us, dictating to us, what and where we are. We are nowhere until our location is identified on the map if we really want to know where we are shall have to confront the map; it will tell us where we are. As if we didn’t already know” (p. XIII).

In fact, maps contradict us to a certain extent, but are an obligated passage to help us understand where we are, fully entering our environment: shifting from a habitual vision which becomes three-dimensional, yet partial, because it allows us only to grasp the elements closest to us. An arrow on a map obliges us to see “the surface of the ground as seen from an extra-terrestrial eye” [17] (p. 21). This shift, or disorientation if you like, forces us to move away from the context in which we are immersed and to recompose an overview which shows itineraries, distances, resources and even empty spaces. According to Dewey [9], in fact, maps bring together a combination of isolated elements (the course of a river, the height of a mountain, the structure of a city, the borders of a region, the capital of a country, the difficulties of a terrain) which take on a coherent significance within it. And in the same way that the traveller discovers, observing the map and seeing the place where he is from above, with its passages, structures, points of interest of which he was unaware or unable to imagine so close by, the professional, taking a step back from the position in which he is at that precise moment, discovers the world he inhabits, thanks to the opportunity to see different aspects that can sometimes be perceived in a fragmented way, recomposed in a single image.

The historical development of “the art of mapping” [12] (p. 187), alongside the recreation of realistic or likely spaces, has witnessed a vast production aimed at the spatial expression of sentiments using intersubjective mapping practices that have made it possible to mitigate some of the fiercest attacks aimed at classic cartography, accused of reductionism and simplification of reality, being a “hegemonic and authoritarian” tool. “Emotional”, “imaginary” mapping uses graphic space to recreate inner worlds, described as though they were authentic geographic maps, a simultaneous expression of artistic, cartographic forms and of social and political emancipation.

A historical, classic example is represented by the *Carte de Tendre di Scudery* (1654), a narrative “tour de force” [12] (p. 203) which portrays an imaginary topography of love. Geographic maps of imaginary places originally concentrated on the mapping of the spaces of sexuality and of sexual differences, also touching—albeit marginally—on the relationship between intimate spaces and gastronomy (*Carte de l’isle Clerine en Barbaril*, XVII sec.). The emotional maps, both originally and in subsequent and more recent expressions, do not portray the inner space through images only, but also reveal a particular space of writing which associates the place with its own short and metaphoric description (e.g.: “lake of indifference”, “dangerous sea”, ...). In this sense, the art of mapping, via the “spatial translation of the sequences of affections” [12] (p. 210), expresses and promotes the narrative imagination and offers multiple opportunities, including:

- possibility for inter-professional confrontation (on points of view and interpretative models), collective learning [28], reflection [29,30] on professional identity, critical analysis in professional action, adopting research practices (in terms of paths, trajectories, targets and observations);
- creation of non-linear, personalised paths which represent the vision that the operator has of himself, and of his complex and systematic transformation;
- recent reflections suggest integration of the art of mapping with visual opportunities which, as well as expanding the complexity of the vision, can provide an opportunity to work not only on a “classic” level (map on paper), but also in IT format, thanks to the use of elaboration and post-production technologies on the material mapped using online programs [31];

- the mapping of imaginary places allows the analysis of self-knowledge and own identity: “the impact of maps on personal identity is even more pronounced in emotional cartography, of which the *Carte de Tendre* is the summary: using narrative forms, cartography has redesigned the very *space* of the subject” [12] (p. 212).

“Geographic” Forms to Narrate Professional Identity (Emanuela Guarcello)

In relation to the specific interconnection between the art of mapping and promotion of professional identity, literature was reviewed by consulting databases Medline/Pubmed, Cinahl, Scopus, Psychinfo, Eric, Education Source with reference to the documents published between 2008 and 2017, which revealed references to previous studies. The research was carried out in May–July 2017, with particular regard especially to the following keywords: geography AND education, geography AND “professional identity”, paying attention to analyse the spheres connected to emotional/social/immaginative geography.

In short, the study generated the following results: 265 contributions emerged, 19 of which more closely related to the use of geography, maps and cartography for reflection on the themes of personal or professional identity, broken down into three main areas for which we are going to analyse some of the main bibliographic sources. The first sphere refers to the thought of Hargreaves [32], on emotional geography “the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationship that help create, configure and colour the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves, our world and each other” (p. 1061). The author studies the “spatial” relationships of proximity/distance in the school system, between teachers and students or parents, based on the experience of the professionals. The nature of these relationships connects with the identity that teachers have as professionals, in that the relational-educational distance/proximity perceived and actuated “stages” the idea that they have of themselves and of their work; at the same time, the awareness of these dynamics can contribute to transforming their professional identity when they feel that it is inadequate. These studies led to researches in the schools in different parts of the world [33], with interviews aimed at teachers, subsequently translated by researchers into graphic terms of proximity/distance perceived by teachers with respect to colleagues, students of parents, based on the emotions experienced in the relationship. The visual representation of distances between the relationships was presented not in cartographic form (as proposed in this document), but using linear diagrams, similar to conceptual maps.

The second study area regards the use of maps to analyse the aspects of personal identity [34], with particular reference to adolescents and young people in schools. Students are asked to create maps that portray the highlights of their life journey (including any problems), using the collage technique, for example. The map is then displayed at group level, offering an opportunity for individual and collective reflection, finally becoming the subject of a text aimed at understanding the aspects under which the journey has offered interesting elements for the construction of their personal identity.

The third study area analyses the narrative function of cartography, both in the literary sphere (“internal map” represented within stories), and in the personal sphere, to reflect on problematic conditions and personal identity, or on group and collective situations [31]. With reference to the personal/group aspect, cartographic construction, while representing a static vision, is conceived “always in the process of beginning” (p. 104) because the main element of its use is not only its creation but also the observation of the representation and its discussion, in an ongoing game of agreement and disagreement in relation to that presented graphically.

The picture that emerges from the three areas of study and experimentation, outlines the presence of a limited amount of literature on the link between geography/cartography/mapping and identity. The literature selected shows empirical studies and analyses of effectiveness with respect to the use of the geographic dimension to reflect on construction and transformation of professional identity, especially for those working in schools. None of the studies however presents tangible experimentations relating to the use of real geographic maps to work with operators and university students on their professional identity, although theoretic studies and reviews of literature highlight

interesting links between mapping, narration and reflection on personal history, with particular potential for transformation and learning.

4. Results and Discussion: Hypotheses of Intervention and Methods of Application (Emanuela Guarcello)

On the basis of the analysis performed, we decided to investigate an aspect validated at theoretic level, but without completed applicative evidence: the design and creation of a specific map of the world of professional identity of educational operators and carers, and the proposal of a training course using this visual narration tool. The latter can contribute to the development of “capacitation” [35], offering certain conditions necessary to the subject in order to promote his/her human and professional potential [36,37]. The map was created after analysing the educational skills of the professionals working in assistance and caring, divided between the main macro areas [24,36–41]:

1. Technical or procedural and instrumental skills: knowledge (theoretical and practical) aimed at the organisation and management of the educational and care intervention;
2. Self-awareness: critical thinking and reflexivity, management of emotions, learning how to learn, management of uncertainty and complexity, sensitivity, innate humanity, previous experiences, motivation to professional choice;
3. Interpersonal relations with the tram and people: management of the setting, interdependence and team working, networking between services, tolerance of frustration, ambivalence and ambiguity, effective communication, conflict management and management of diversity, transparency, congruence, authenticity (exemplarity), listening and attention, welcoming, understanding people’s needs, empathy, reciprocity and transfert, silence, active liabilities, authority, respect and non-interference, promotion of independence;
4. Intentionality: planning, problem solving, decision making, creativity, openness to change in a particular direction (aim), orientation towards the future and pedagogical hope, observation/investigation/research in relation to the present, analysis of past experiences, risk taking and management of unexpected events.

The macro areas outlined are not exclusive and do not fully describe every possible aspect of skill of the educational and caring professions, aiming only to trace a first image (Figure 1) that can be graphically translated in terms of urban geography and can be more expendable in subsequent phases of analysis and research.



Figure 1. Professional identity’s map: an overview on the described macro areas.

The visual representation created shows an imaginary urban space, to be explored and discovered, revealing the human dimension of the educational and caring professions, as well as the possession of the profession, meaning the possibility to build, control and transform the professional habitat and make it a habitus, a second “skin” to be worn with increasing naturalness and expertise. The urban space represented contains, in the central area, the “urban identity center” (connected to the self-awareness macro area); on the left the “relationship setting” (connected to the interpersonal relationship macro area); on the right the “multi-center theory & practice” (connected to the procedural and instrumental skills’ macro area); down the “intentionality city district” (connected to the intentionality macro area).

As example, two more detailed images (Figures 2 and 3) are shown below (all the images are visible at the link indicated in Supplementary Materials).



Figure 2. A zoom on “urban identity center”.



Figure 3. A zoom on “intentionality city district”.

With this map, we intend to propose the creation of training courses for students and professionals, to work on the construction and consolidation of professional identity. The proposal

was inspired by training experiences that had already been experimented with operators and students in the caring professions, from 2015 to the present, using the Atlas of the inner world [20]. According to the results of the analysis of these experiences [42,43], the training course which uses the map of professional identity designed specifically for the purpose can cope with groups of about 15 people, led by a trainer, and can analyse, over a series of sessions, the different macro areas that represent the professional identity. Moreover, following a first phase of analysis and reflection on the map proposed, it is possible for participants to create their own personal map, which represents their own professional world—or part of it—in a new way. The training course can be arranged into an initial welcome phase, followed by a brief theoretic look at the meaning and function of maps with respect to the work on professional experiences. Then it is a good idea to propose a personal reflection by looking at the map and identifying the places that represent the personal professional identity, those with regard to which a sense of agreement is perceived, those considered absent or present but never considered before. The individual phase is followed by a group confrontation and a plenary discussion [28,44,45]. The impact of the training course proposed can be measured, in line with the interpretative research approach [46], with the aid of a final questionnaire with open questions aimed at understanding the effects of the training course in relation to professional practice, both at the end of the course and during follow-up 6–8 months after the end of the course.

5. Conclusions: Narrability of Cartographic Images (Emanuela Guarcello)

The formation of educational professionals and carers using visual narration in the form of maps can provide a valid opportunity to reflect on personal professional identity and to promote necessary changes with a view to gaining better self-awareness, and awareness of experiences and the skills [47,48] at stake in the operational activity. Furthermore, the construction of cartographic tools on the professional identity of the different teaching and caring professions represents an interesting element of innovation within the educational panorama through visual narration, as it can become a pilot opportunity to narration with respect to the transversal skills, in order to promote development, cope with fragility, and expend complexity and depth. This first elaboration will make it possible to conceive more specific maps, outlining them according to the professional profile towards which the training is aimed.

This is made possible thanks to the narrability of the “geographic” image: being in a situation, as though suspended between the real and the possible, soliciting questions that expand the imagination and vision, grasping the overview, details and additional places in which to “live” the profession. This process leads to the rediscovery of the meaning of the professional activity, starting with a script (the map) but going beyond it to create a new inner image with a deep level of meaning. The map becomes a “narrative space” for dialogue and confrontation, within which the individual can “see”, create and recreate his human and professional identity, making choices on how to act/think in relation to the educational or caring profession (inevitably influenced also by the dimension of the narration).

The narrative process of cartographic images is also a collective work of sharing, through which, starting with comparison on the map proposed, it is possible to discuss the meaning the each individual attributes to professional action (represented in graphic form) to reach greater operational coherence, and therefore strengthening the interpersonal links within the team. This allows the experimentation of what Marianella Sclavi [49] calls the variational investigation, on the basis of which it is possible to understand that personal vision is not the only vision possible, with everyone working together to build a shared sense of what they see.

In this way, the map represents an interesting opportunity to enact an individual observation and a group dialogue, aimed at promoting the ability to compose and re-compose the personal stance in relation to what we see, to change point of view and to become aware of the mechanisms behind perception, understanding that everyone has an active role to play in the reading and construction of the working environment. This makes it possible to constructively, creatively and responsibly combine criticalities and professional resources (evident or discovered via affinity or difference with respect to what is shown on the map), sharing the reflexive itineraries followed to build a personal

vision of the profession, paying particular attention to potential and openings of hope with a view to continually improving personal professional action.

Supplementary Materials: The following are available online at <https://blootes.deviantart.com/art/Professional-identity-s-map-isometric-703438290>. Figure S1: Professional identity's map. The visual tools are realized mainly by the software Gimp. The wall reference are written to the previous link.

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