

TURNING LEFT AND TURNING RIGHT

Louisa Bufardeci

As part of her post-doctoral research project Mapping Sydney: Experimental Cartography and the Imagined City (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 2009), Australian academic Naomi Stead invited six artists and designers to each produce a new map of the city. The one reproduced here is Louisa Bufardeci's Turning Left and Turning Right, which continues the psychogeographic trajectory of the Situationist Internationale but with a local, political twist.

In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition of this project, Stead explains:

'Bufardeci proposes an algorithm for a journey around Sydney, one that turns left or right following shifts in the political orientation of the elected Australian government since 1901. This itinerary can be undertaken at any scale, from local streets and neighborhoods, to the vast sprawl of the extended city as a whole. It is thus a directed journey, but not one that moves towards a particular destination – emphasis lies on the movement itself. Bufardeci's work is thus in part a list of instructions – about the pattern and order in which one should change orientation systematically, retracing the history of Australian politics and political ideology. If this might be seen as the performative aspect of the work, that which projects outward from the paper and into live action in the city, then the map itself offers the trace of one possible trajectory, following the city's major roads, negotiating through a city figured here as a highly colored field. This field is made up of disparate sections, intended in Bufardeci's words to "highlight the inordinate varieties of political 'divisions' in the community and to illustrate the roads/paths as indistinct spaces where all divisions can potentially move smoothly together, or collide". Roads and paths are thus revealed as interstitial spaces of political negotiation and possibility. "Left" and "right" here become more than metaphors of political orientation, they become directions in a radically literal spatialization of Australian political history, where the map functions as a minimalist kind of choreographic score, only fully enacted during the act of moving through the city. The fact that Bufardeci used Google Maps as the source material for her map, and specifically for the division of Sydney into sectors, is also significant. She is the contributor who is most physically distant from Sydney, being currently based in Connecticut. She is also the least intimately familiar with the city, having visited it only for "a total of about twelve days" in her life. But from the beginning, this very distance, this tangential relationship, seemed to offer fascinating possibilities for showing how the city could be mapped when remembered and imagined from afar. Such reveries can now so easily call upon global digital media tools

like Google Maps. In this context, the specificity of place, and of political history in that place, take on whole new aspect.'

The map delineates a journey without defined destination, a territorial guide without concrete information. Yet by superimposing an abstract conceptual form on a given urban condition, the city is made fresh and surprising for Sydneysider and newcomer alike. Stead's ambition was to produce 'counter-tourist maps' and this map indeed dissociates itself from the all-pervasive 'tourist gaze', inducing a new, unexpected experience of the city.

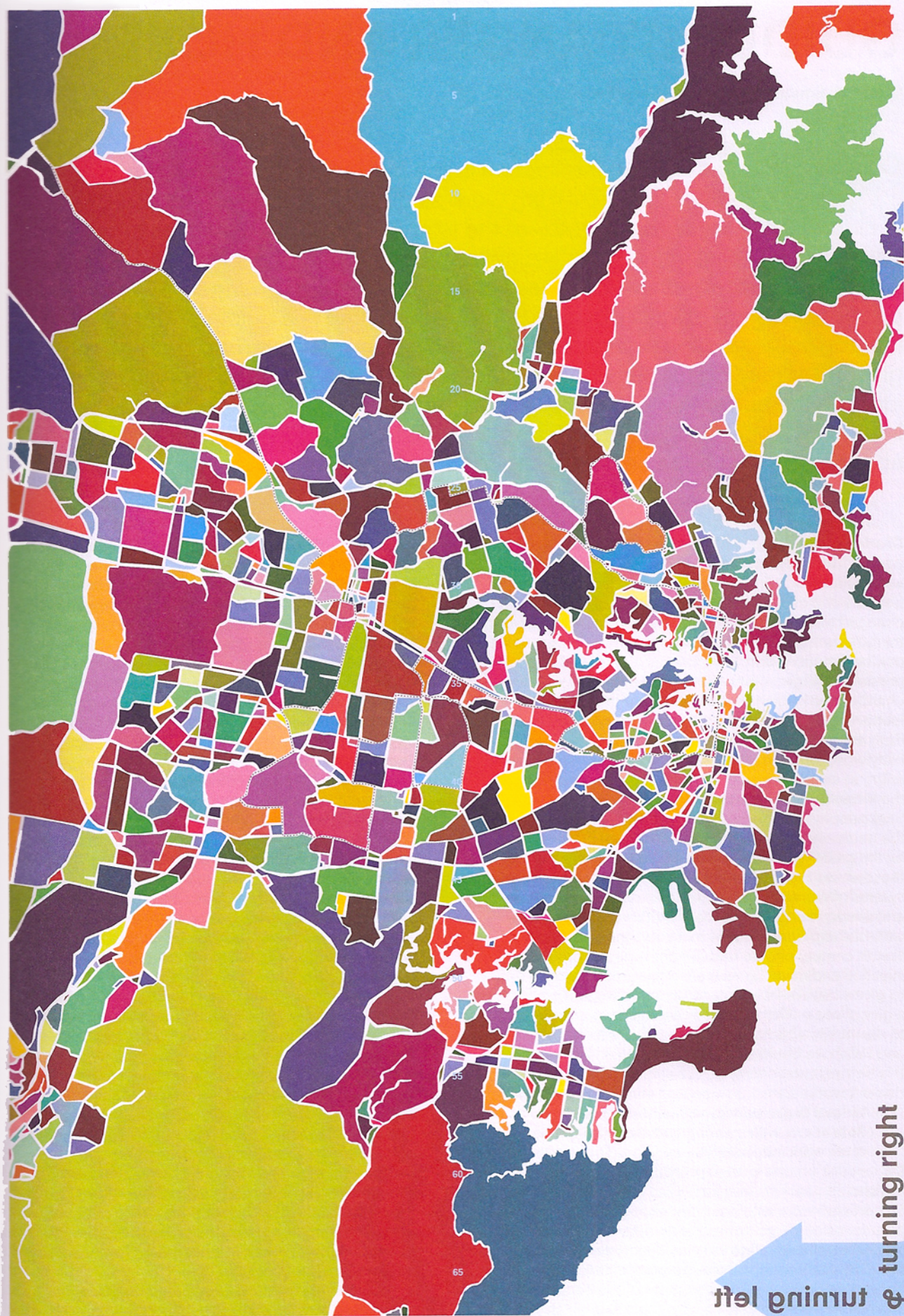
To follow the turns in
political direction of the
Australian government
since 1901:

start anywhere

turn right
turn right
turn left
turn right
turn right
turn left
turn right
turn left
turn right
turn left
turn left
turn right
turn right
turn left

turn right
turn right
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turn right
turn right
turn right
turn right
turn left
turn left
turn left
turn right
turn left

— — — — sample path



turning left & turning right