

Aesthetic maps: What we might learn from map users

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Abstract

Several definitions aim to describe the components, concepts and aspects of aesthetic maps. While the discussion is mostly conducted by mapping professionals and researchers, one may wonder how naïve map users would define an aesthetic map. In two recent studies undergraduate geography students were invited to answer a short questionnaire in which they defined an aesthetic map, highlighted the essential components of an aesthetic map, and identified their most aesthetic map along with the reasons why they liked that particular map. Favorite aesthetic maps ranged widely from reference to thematic to imaginary maps. Results indicate the emerging importance of and possible aesthetic paradigm shift towards mobile and other interactive, web-based spatial representations. Naïve aesthetic map definitions could provide an important insight into current and future aesthetic map trends.