



Review of No Dig, No Fly, No Go: How Maps Restrict and Control, by Mark Monmonier

Citation

Bol, Peter K. 2011. Review of No Dig, No Fly, No Go: How Maps Restrict and Control, by Mark Monmonier. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41(4): 620-621.

Published Version

doi:10.1162/JINH_r_00159

Permanent link

<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:8822351>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

No Dig, No Fly, No Go: How Maps Restrict and Control. By Mark Monmonier (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2010) 241 pp. \$18.00

Monmonier writes engagingly and authoritatively about maps and mapping. His most widely known work, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago, 1991), written with Harm J. de Blij, explored the ways in which representations of phenomena with spatial attributes can be either purposefully or unwittingly misleading. He bills *No Dig, No Fly, No Go* as a study of “prohibitive mapping,” which he dates as coming to prominence after 1900 and sees as marking a shift from the map as tool of discovery to the map as a complex instrument of social management. Telling anecdotes and technological clarity inform chapters about diverse aspects of property borders, administrative and political boundaries, zoning, and locating.

From a historian’s perspective, the important story in this book is not about modes of prohibitive mapping so much as about boundary making. Maps can be assertions, propositions, representations of agreements, and records of findings, but not all maps are concerned with positing boundaries. Monmonier writes, however, “Any map with boundary lines...is fundamentally a restrictive map,” and “the primary symbol on most prohibitive maps is the boundary line” (2). Rather than supposing that “maps restrict and control,” Monmonier might have said that boundaries are outcomes, created through a negotiation about the control of space between competing interests in many cases or through the imposition of unilateral power in others, which are most easily understood today when presented cartographically. People began to trust cartographical representations more than written narratives relatively recently, largely because of the

spread of mathematical cartography in the nineteenth century, although ancient maps of property boundaries have been found in Rome and in China. As a study of boundary making activities, *No Dig, No Fly, No Go* is a valuable contribution to the examination of the human processes by which claims about the definition of, and control of, space are put into effect.

Maps are social constructions with an amazing persuasive power, given how infrequently they justify their claims to authority. They also can have consequences even when the situation that they claim to represent is no longer valid: For example, wetlands change, but builders sometimes have to follow an out-of-date map. But what this book repeatedly emphasizes is how inconstant and variable boundaries are in practice. A clear property line can be trumped by historical easements and encroachments. Borders defined through multilateral agreement are valid until one party has the power to redraw them. Zoning boards repeatedly accommodate private interests. Politicians manipulate boundaries for partisan advantage. Maps may appear to have authority to restrict and control, but as Monmonier shows with his examples, in practice they are provisional representations of the ongoing competition to control space.

Peter K. Bol

Harvard University