

Ferguson, USA: Mapping the Political

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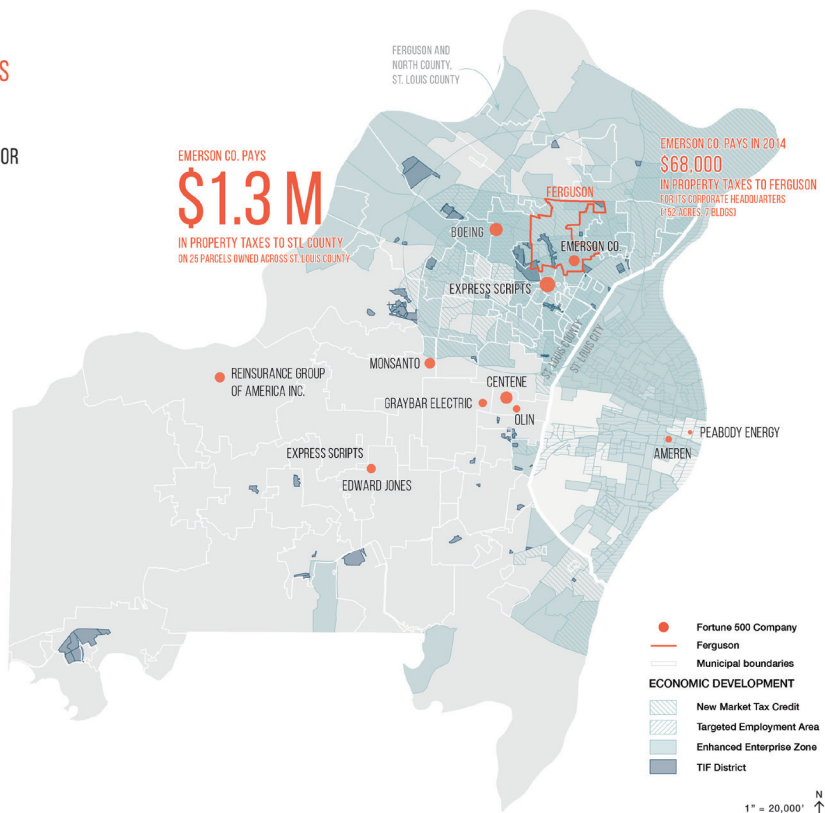
Washington University in St. Louis

In under-served, poor U.S. urban and suburban neighborhoods, years of racialized policy maneuvers and corporate wrangling have clouded architects' prospects of impactfully engaging communities. This project offers another lens on conceptualizing sites complicated by those invisible economic forces. *Ferguson, USA* is part of a mapping project that spatializes the political, together with the formal and processual. It updates inherited conventions of "site analysis," and helps us expand the landscape urbanist notion of a productive "urban surface," as a new pedagogy for more critically engaging place.¹ The pages here present a snapshot of drawings that re-cast the contested suburban landscape of Ferguson, MO through the particularities of the political economy that shape it.²

Ferguson is one of 89 tiny municipalities in fragmented St. Louis County just outside the city of St. Louis, MO. While the world came to know "Ferguson" through the events of 2014—the killing of Michael Brown in his own neighborhood by police and the protests that followed—many may have missed the fact that people in the twenty-five or so surrounding towns also suffer extreme injustices. This project maps the shared geography of what is called North St. Louis County, along with Ferguson proper. And while the title reinforces an idea of this place as a singular, bounded condition, the maps reveal a much more fluid terrain made of legal overlays that slip across municipal lines as they circumscribe special economic, social and other zones. These zones are charted by public and private actors in pursuit of different agendas, at costs to local

10 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES IN ST. LOUIS CORPORATE WEALTH LOCATES IN NORTH ST. LOUIS COUNTY AMID LAYERS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS INTENDED 'TO HELP POOR NEIGHBORHOODS'

COMPANY/RANK	REVENUE/PRIMARY INDUSTRY
Express Scripts Holding (#25)	\$100,064 Million Health Care: Pharmacy & other services
Boeing (HQ in Chicago) (#27)	\$93,392 Million Aerospace and Defense
Centene Corporation (#61)	\$48,572 Million Health Care: Insurance & Managed Care
Emerson Electric (#178)	\$16,301 Million Electrical, Industrial Machinery
Monsanto (#199)	\$14,640 Million Chemicals
Reinsurance Group Of America (#234)	\$12,516 Million Health & Life Insurance
Edward Jones Investments (#329)	\$7,597 Million Finance - Securities
Graybar Electric (#426)	\$6,631 Million Wholesale
Olin Corporation (#448)	\$6,268 Million Chemicals
Ameren (#453)	\$6,177 Million Gas and Electric
Peabody Energy (#491)	\$5,579 Million Energy, Oil Production



Source: Fortune's 500 Companies, <http://fortune.com/fortune500/list?filtered?stateName=Missouri>

Figure 1. Ferguson in corporate context. Image credit: Patty Heyda.

FERGUSON

A FORTUNE 500-COMPANY THREE BLOCKS FROM CANFIELD DRIVE



APPROX. 76,500 EMPLOYEES WORLDWIDE
155 MANUFACTURING LOCATIONS WORLDWIDE (2017)

CEC INCOME (2017)
\$ 12.5 MILLION

HEADQUARTER AVG SALARY
\$ 100,000

"THE AMOUNT OF STEM JOBS IN ST. LOUIS WILL GROW 12 PERCENT BY 2022. BUT THERE'S A SHORTAGE OF SKILLED WORKERS IN THE REGION."

THE PRESIDENT OF EMERSONED MONSER TELLS THE ST. LOUIS BUSINESS JOURNAL

\$81,506

AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY AT EMERSON (2018)

1,300 EMPLOYEES IN ST. LOUIS (2014)
1.7% OF TOTAL EMPLOYEES

ANNUAL REVENUE (2017)
\$15.26 BILLION

HEADQUARTER WORK
HIGHLY SKILLED FINANCIAL
AND/OR MANAGEMENT WORK:
NO MANUFACTURING

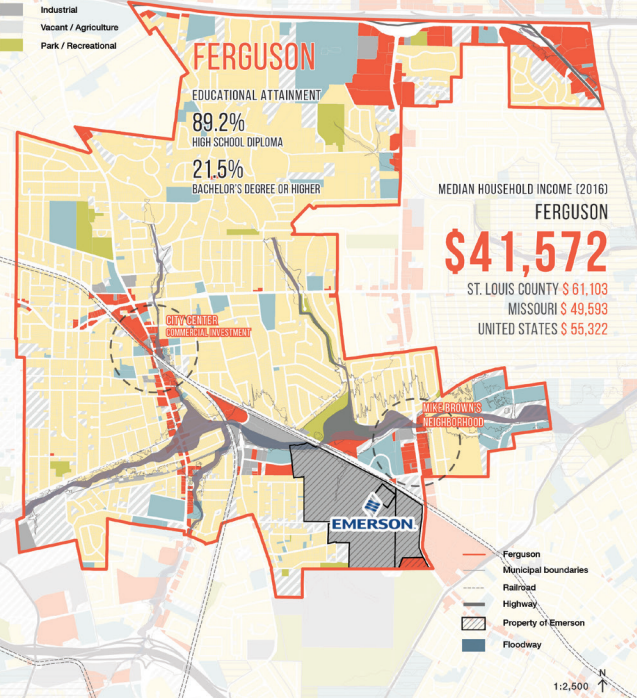
HS <=
HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE

- Valve Technician
- Engineering Lab Technician
- Test Technician
- Production Technician
- Operations Specialist

BA <=
BACHELOR'S DEGREE

- Welding Engineer
- Commodity Engineer Actives
- Process Automation System Engineer
- Digital Customer Experience Director
- Electrical and Instrumentation Engineer
- Technical Training Specialist - HVAC
- Cyber Security Risk Management Specialist
- Product Development Engineer

.....30+ job openings in St. Louis
.....1700+ job openings Worldwide



Sources: St. Louis County GIS; Walter Johnson; Ferguson's Fortune 500 Company (The Atlantic); St. Louis Business Journal

BERKELEY

FORTUNE 500 AND CORPORATE TAX (AND OTHER VALUES)

BERKELEY (YEARLY) REVENUE

NO. 1 - SALES TAX	\$3,278,423
NO. 2 - UTILITY TAX	\$2,578,498
NO. 3 - LICENSE/PERMITS/FINES	\$2,324,963
NO. 4 - PROPERTY TAX	\$1,872,612

"This means Berkeley extracts more revenue from renters seeking to heat their homes in the winter, light them after dark, and talk on their cell phones than it does from those who own the homes themselves.

The vast wealth of the city is locked up in property owned by major corporations, and is scarcely taxed at all."
Walter Johnson, Ferguson's Fortune 500 Company (The Atlantic, 2015)



5 parcels in Berkeley + Airport:
2017 APPRAISED VALUE
\$145.29 M
VS. 2017 ASSESSED VALUE
\$ 42.96 M
29.6% OF APPRAISED VALUES

PROPERTY TAX
\$5.13 M
<4% OF APPRAISED VALUE
<12% OF ASSESSED VALUE

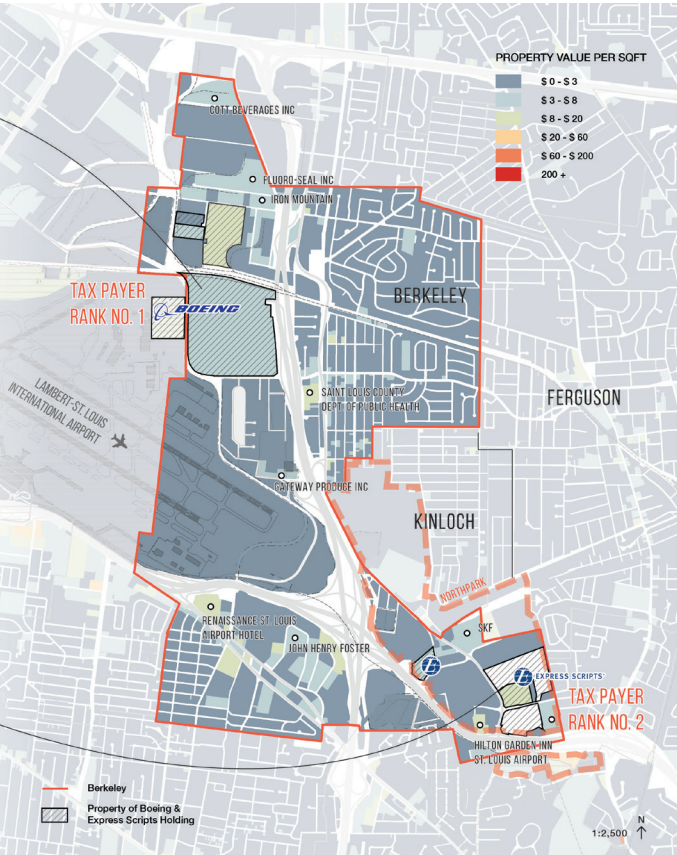
4 Parcels Owned By
The Boeing Company
1 Parcel Owned By
St. Louis County



EXPRESS SCRIPTS®
on the 4 parcels in Berkeley
2017 APPRAISED VALUE
\$63.49 M
VS. 2017 ASSESSED VALUE
\$ 5.69 M
9% OF APPRAISED VALUES

PROPERTY TAX
\$ 634,237.88
<1% OF APPRAISED VALUE
<12% OF ASSESSED VALUE

3 Parcels Owned By
Chapter 10th-St. Louis County
(Consolidation Tax Abatement)
1 Parcel Owned By
Northpark Business Center I LLC



NORTHPARK - SEE PAGE XX

Located within Northpark

Collaboration between McEagle and Clayco:
NorthPark includes land from three municipalities, Berkeley, Ferguson and Kinloch, as well as portions of unincorporated St. Louis County.
"All four governmental entities have worked together in cooperation with NorthPark Partners to create a strong and vibrant public-private partnership which also includes the City of St. Louis, Lambert Airport, the University of Missouri System, and local economic development groups."

Source: NorthPark, St. Louis County GIS
http://www.northparkst.com/

Figures 2 and 3. Relative value metrics in Ferguson, MO and neighboring Berkeley, MO. Image credit: Patty Heyda, Lige Tan, Tuoxin Li, Sheng Yan.

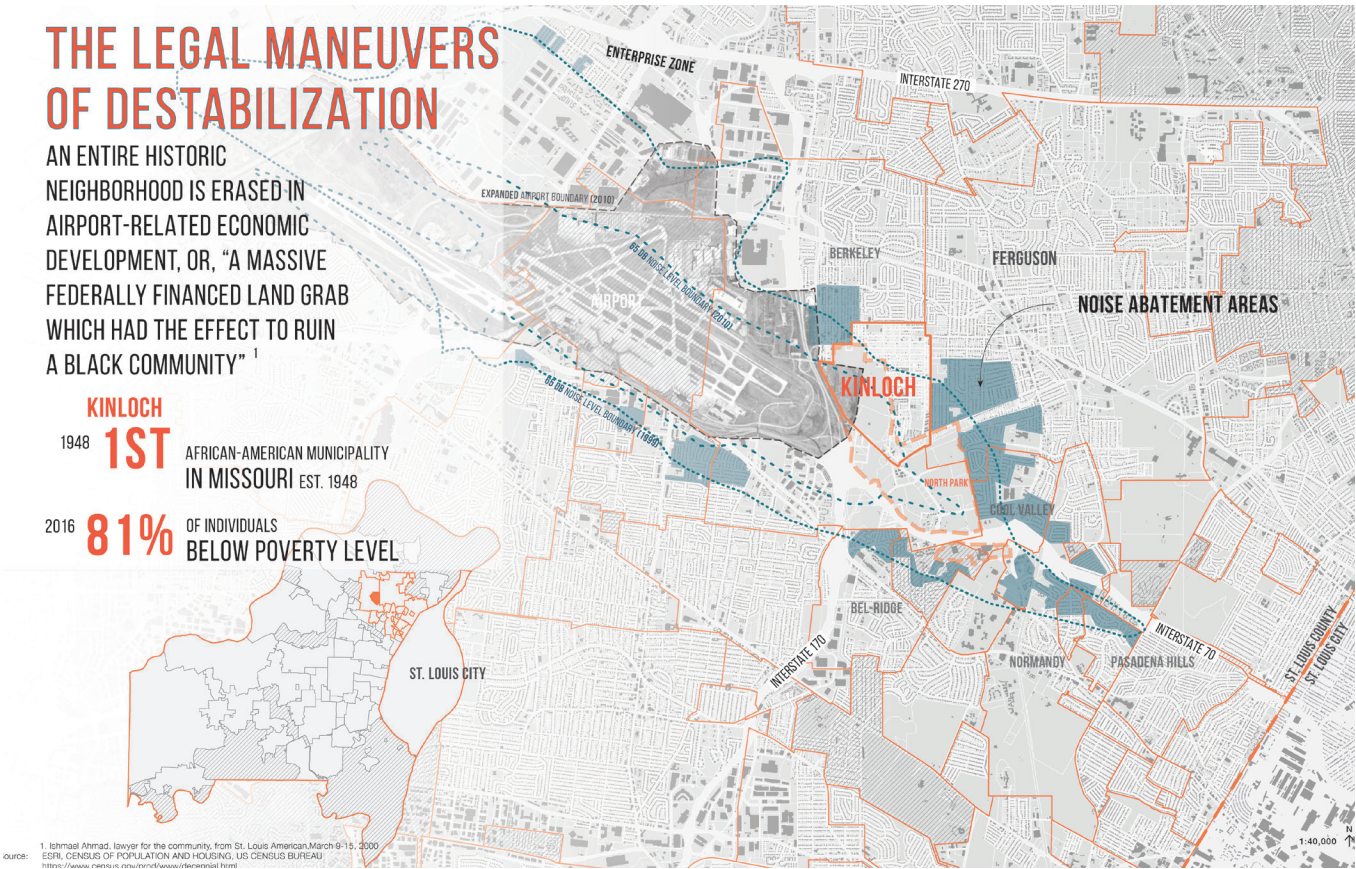


Figure 4. A snapshot of Kinloch, Missouri’s first All-Black city, erased by economic development. Image credit: Patty Heyda, Sheng Yan.

life and needs. Needless to say, as an inventory of the uneven American suburban planning landscape, this project represents all the Fergusons found in metros across the U.S.

Mapping injustice means telling the historical spatial stories of real estate red-lining, political collusions and the other well-known practices of racial exclusion. But it also requires shining light on the geography of everyday offenses that prescribe and preserve privilege in arguably more violent ways, as they embed within the built environment and the political decisions that make and neglect the city. *Ferguson USA* makes visible the particular tax structures that prop up corporate welfare over citizen needs.³ We see how regions inscribe global economic imaginaries on local space, as development enclaves, “opportunity zones” and by other means—and how that legitimates urban erasures of historic Black communities. At a range of scales, we see how an intensely fragmented municipal-economic structure enables policing for profit—and the unconstitutional breaches of legal representation that affords.

Of course, as a typical American first ring, Ferguson also embodies that peculiar blend of physical-logistical suburbanism: The car-centric typologies, the bizarre building details with mixed-up historic references, and the undefined rights-of-ways of the strip-mall set-back, efficient loading zones, hyper-articulated curb-cuts and eroded pedestrian networks.

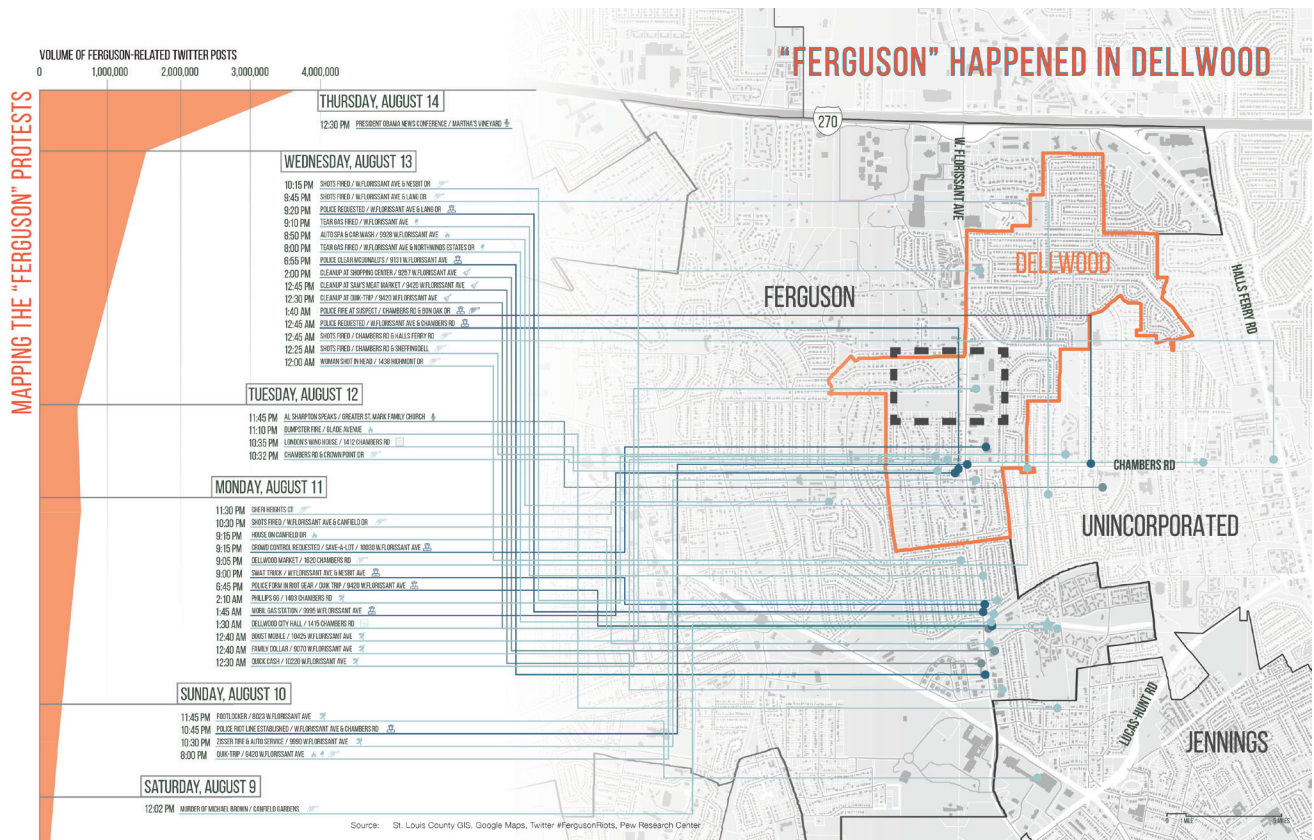
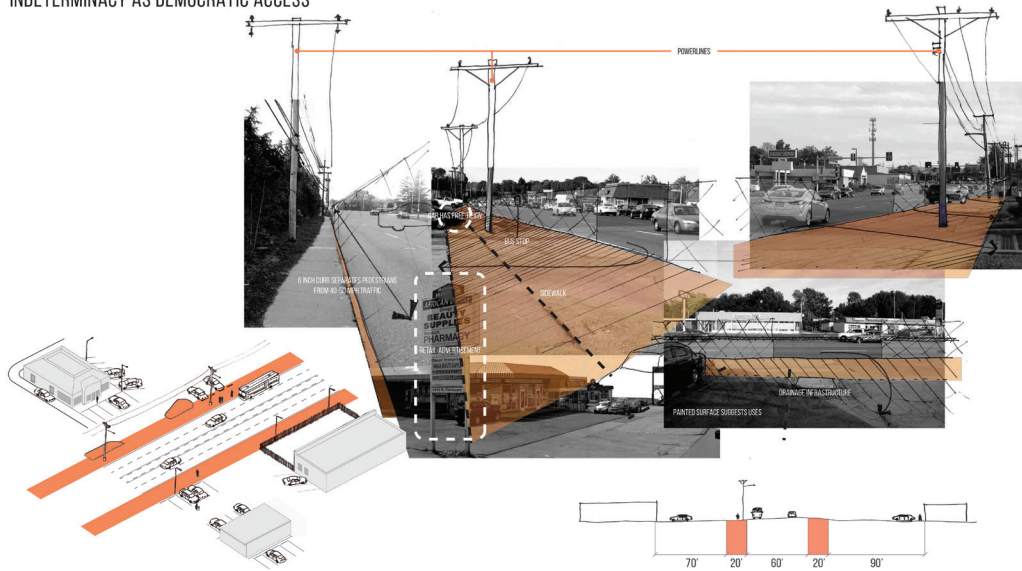
But just as these conditions contribute to dislocation in real material-ecological ways, the blurred context precisely fosters new spaces of political action by enterprising organizers across the indeterminate, flexible field. Maps reveal how ‘Ferguson’ actually happened in Dellwood, the neighboring municipality. As marchers reclaimed an unbounded surface between road and gas stations, McDonalds and other businesses, a latent *political* performativity of the strip was activated.

Beyond merely visualizing data, the maps reveal mis-guided priorities of municipalities strapped for revenue. Against that backdrop, the drawings elevate a marginalized voice in an area of architecture and planning that is otherwise dominated—and unfortunately, sustained—by neoliberal economic development narratives. While many of the maps reveal painful realities, the over-arching goal of the project is not to reproduce a deficit-oriented view of poor suburban space, but to instigate new layered readings of a place much more complex. As a broader set, the collection reasserts the notion that human connections and lived space should in fact be a valued metric for architects’ appraisal. Dimensions of suburban life in Ferguson collectively defy injustice as they re-inscribe relationships, and other features of resistance.

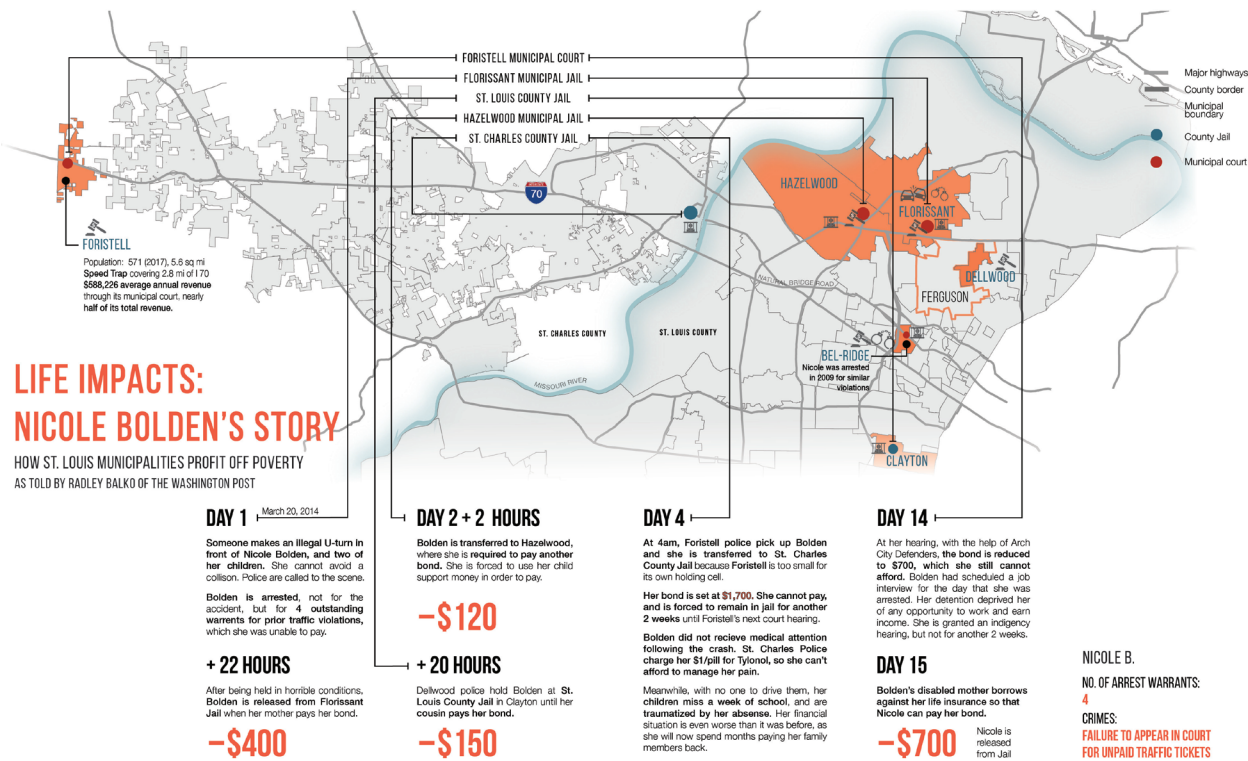
For architects, the summer protest events of 2020 showed us that—six years after Ferguson—the same issues persist.

THE SUBURBAN SURFACE

INDETERMINACY AS DEMOCRATIC ACCESS



Figures 5 and 6. “Ferguson” also happened in Dellwood, MO. Images: Ethan Miller.



Source: St. Louis County GIS, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2014/09/03/how-st-louis-county-missouri-profits-from-poverty/?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main-police-budget](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2014/09/03/how-st-louis-county-missouri-profits-from-poverty/?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main-police-budget#hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main-police-budget), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/12/debtors-prisons-illaga-america-ferguson-missouri-incarcerated>, <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/DebtorComplaint.pdf>

XX

Figure 7. Policing Poverty: The impacts on people. Image: Casey Ryan.

Public/private leaders—and the design professions supporting them—have yet to locate prospects for effectively bringing change where it is needed. Implications of this mean academia too, has not yet prepared students for realities of this complicated racialized world. In light of this, these maps are both an academic and an activist project. What began as a studio design problem has been built and expanded over time into a comprehensive, visual account that will be able to be disseminated locally within the communities it advocates alongside.

The maps draw freely from methodological approaches across the humanistic disciplines and within the design fields: Storytelling and interviews from ethnography; documentation via archival work; and from public records: inventories of law and policy. A journalistic spirit is mixed with cartography, to intentionally juxtapose competing viewpoints, facts and voices via the visual techniques of composite layering from the design tool sets. Information is critically mined, coded and plotted to present new connections that, beyond tracing, unfold new grounds for staging more radical (relevant) design potential.⁴

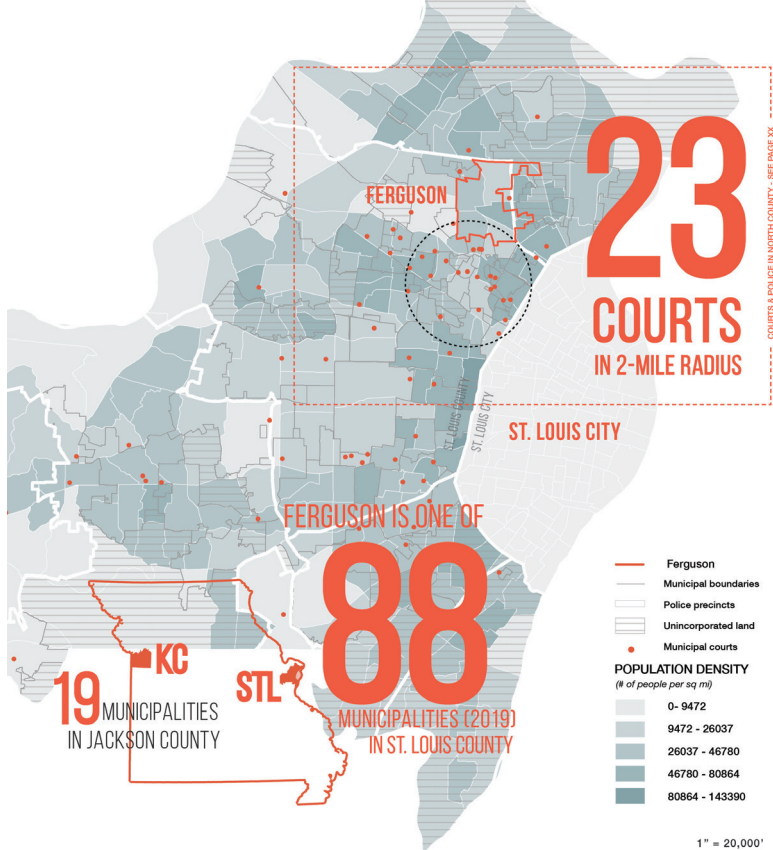
If architects seriously seek agency in the face of the structures of inequality, they must re-center assumptions, starting with

how they “know” sites. *Ferguson, USA* works to destabilize dominant narratives of suburban poverty. Only when we confront the political tensions embedded in these narratives -and within our own profession’s complicity- will we understand how to make them truly constitutive of effective design.

ENDNOTES

1. See Alex Wall, “Programming the Urban Surface,” *Recovering Landscape*, James Corner, ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 232-249.
2. Patty Heyda, *Mobilizing the Middle: Radical Atlas of Ferguson, USA* (Barcelona: Actar, forthcoming).
3. Walter Johnson, “Ferguson’s Fortune 500 Company,” *The Atlantic*, April 26, 2015.
4. James Corner, “The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention,” *Mappings*, Dennis Cosgrove, ed. (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 231-252.

JUDICIAL LANDSCAPE



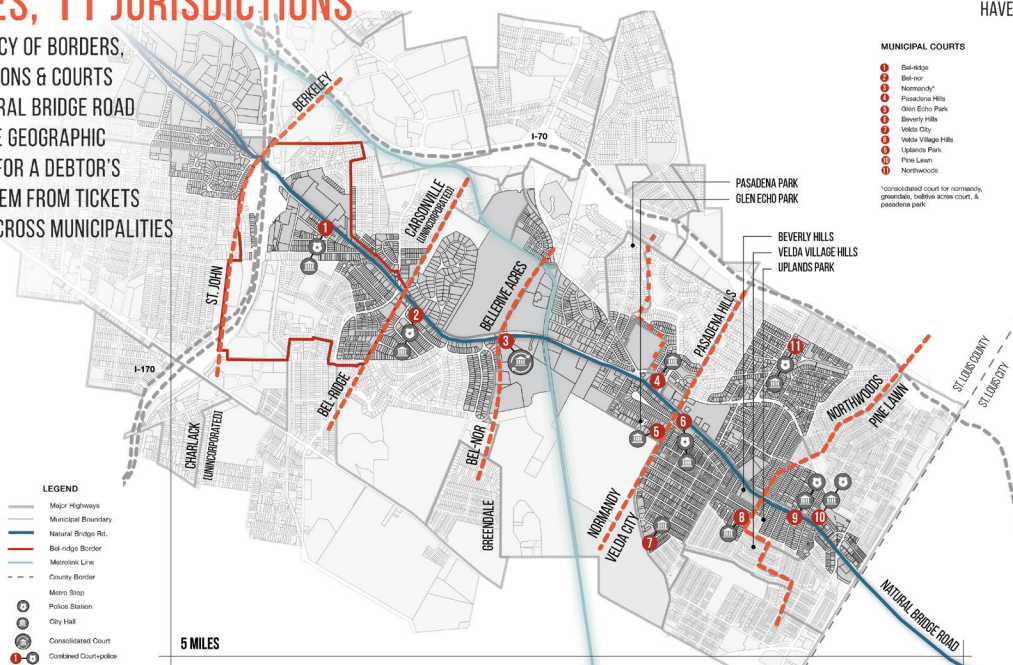
SERVICE OVERLAP | LAWYERS OF NATURAL BRIDGE

TOTAL MUNICIPALITIES SERVED	OFFICIAL	ROLE		
		JUDGE	PROSECUTOR	CITY ATTORNEY
JUDGE IN NORTHWOODS PRIVATE PRACTICE: MORRIS FIRM	RAPHAEL MORRIS	NORTHWOODS		
		PAGE DALE		
PROSECUTOR IN BEL-NOR PRIVATE PRACTICE: CURTIS, HENZ, GARRETT, & O'KEEFE (CHGO)	STEPHANIE KARR		FERGUSON	FERGUSON
			BEL-NOR	EDMUNDSON
			HAZELWOOD	CALVERTON PARK
CITY ATTORNEY IN BEL-NOR PRIVATE PRACTICE: CURTIS, HENZ, GARRETT, & O'KEEFE (CHGO)	KEVIN O'KEEFE			BELLERIVE ACRES
				BEL-NOR
				CLAYTON
				COOL VALLEY
				DES PERES
JUDGE IN NORMANDY PRIVATE PRACTICE: GENERAL	CHARLES KIRKSEY		NORMANDY	
			WELLSTON	
			BELLERIVE ACRES	
				HAZELWOOD
PROSECUTOR IN NORMANDY PRIVATE PRACTICE: CURTIS, HENZ, GARRETT, & O'KEEFE (CHGO)	KEITH CHEUNG		LADUE	NORMANDY
				FRONTENAC
				ST. ANN
CITY ATTORNEY IN BEVERLY HILLS, PINE LAWN, & VELDA VILLAGE HILLS PRIVATE PRACTICE: SMITH & ASSOCIATES	DONNELL SMITH		DELLWOOD	BERKELEY
			BERKELEY	BERKELEY
			GREENDALE	MOLINE ACRES
				MOLINE ACRES
JUDGE IN GLEN ECHO PARK & BEVERLY HILLS PRIVATE PRACTICE: COLUP & MCCARTER	BRIAN DUNLOP		GLEN ECHO PARK	
				VELDA VILLAGE HILLS
PROSECUTOR IN VELDA VILLAGE HILLS PRIVATE PRACTICE: CLARK, CONNOR, FRANKLIN, TOLIN & WILES	STEVEN CLARK		BEVERLY HILLS	
			HANLEY HILLS	VELDA VILLAGE HILLS
			VALLEY PARK	COUNTRY CLUB HILLS
JUDGE IN UPLANDS PARK PRIVATE PRACTICE: GENERAL	PHILIP AYERS		UPLANDS PARK	GREENDALE
			CALVERTON PARK	GREENDALE

REDUNDANT + CONTRADICTORY
LEGAL REPRESENTATION BY THE SAME LAWYERS IN DIFFERENT ROLES ACROSS CITY LINES MEANS PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO A FAIR HEARING

5 MILES, 11 JURISDICTIONS

A REDUNDANCY OF BORDERS, POLICE STATIONS & COURTS ALONG NATURAL BRIDGE ROAD CREATES THE GEOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS FOR A DEBTOR'S PRISON SYSTEM FROM TICKETS AND FINES ACROSS MUNICIPALITIES



Figures 8, 9, 10. Geography of the debtor's prison complex. Images: Casey Ryan.