Identity / Self / Collective / Mapping
Location: Studio Classroom and Outside of Class
Duration: Week-long

Description: We are all a part of multiple networks, assemblages of individual and collective identities. As we begin the semester, let's take time to examine our identities, networks, research interests, and how they might impact our trajectory for the next two years. In an in-class exercise, work in teams to map out the relationships between your studio, and the MFA DT student and faculty base. Eventually you will expand this map to include ever larger entities such as AMT, Parsons, the New School University, and ultimately other important peer organizations and groups around the world. Be sure to document the several iterations this map goes through, and be conscious of how a final mapping such as this one would need to be presented in order to retain coherence and sense so that an audience might be able to follow the thought process you employed to reach your design.

In the second part of this assignment (to be done individually and outside of class) you will redesign a social network. Think about how your collective mapping of identities might be encoded in your network. You do not necessarily have to port your collective map to your social network.

Part I: Collective
1) Break into Groups (these will be assigned at random)
2) Create a mapping of each individual as well as the connections between individuals within the group. It is okay to include personal information, but pay special attention to areas of inquiry and topics of interest for each person.
3) Extend this map to include the studio, the entire MFADT class and faculty, Parsons, AMT, and the New School. This may require some research on the part of your group. What do you know, and what do you not yet know? How would you go about acquiring the information you need? Incorporate these flows into the map.

Guiding Questions for Part I:
1) What are the various methods you use to acquire information? What are their advantages and disadvantages. How does form of inquiry affect the information you receive?
2) What are different ways in which you can represent complex data, the known and unknown? Using the data you collect in class, what kinds of systems of meaning are possible?
3) What degree of resolution is necessary to convey important information? How do you prioritize information based on the group identity established? How are these nuances represented in in your map?

Part II: Individual
Re-imagine the social network. How would you design a social networking system? Consider the shortcomings of Facebook and the differences between Facebook and Google+. What are some

of the features or idiosyncrasies of human connection that are impossible to capture in both networks? What would an alternative, or even just highly personal (to you) social network site look like? What would you propose to counter the ever encroaching standardization of social relations that these platforms present?

Guiding Questions for Part II:
1) How much are we constrained by "menu-driven identities" when we represent ourselves in the digital world? How do you get beyond a pre-set?
2) In a large data set, what do you choose to emphasis in order to create systems of meaning? How do certain features shape our mental model of who we are and how we relate to others?

Reading:
- "You are Not a Gadget" excerpt by Jaron Lanier
- "Escaping Flatland" Edward Tufte
- "The Power of Representation" Donald Norman
- Donald Norman, "Natural Interfaces are not Natural" - link http://bit.ly/coSxQi
- Fred Vogelstein, The Great Wall of Facebook: http://bit.ly/8jH47Z
- Jeffrey Rosen: "The Web Means the End of Forgetting", http://nyti.ms/atnScD