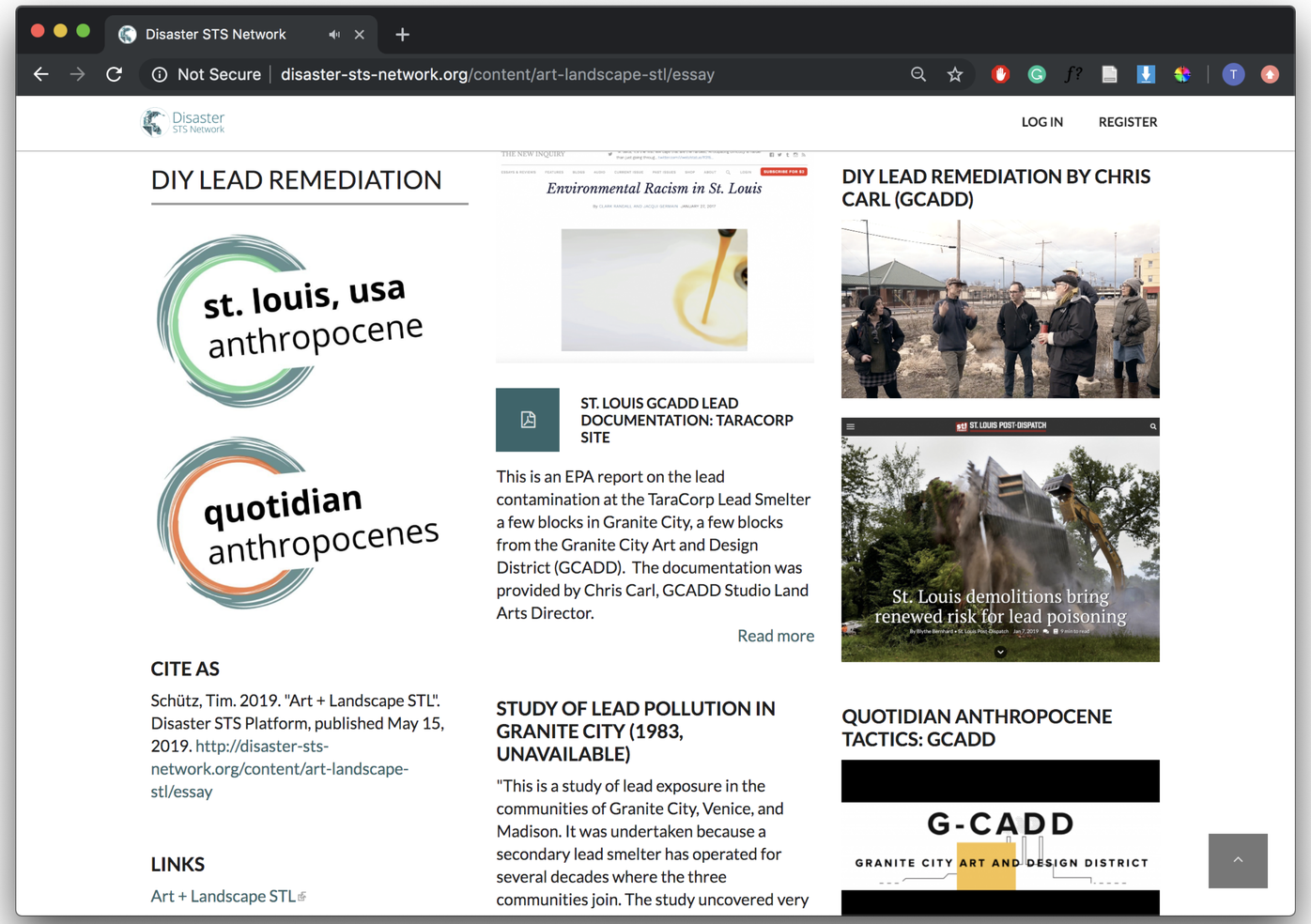
DIY Lead Remediation



Caption

The screenshot here shows how a digital research platform (the Platform for Experimental, Collaborative Ethnography) can be used to understand and begin to address needs for civic data infrastructure. The digital "essay" shown here showcases material gathered on a short field research trip to St. Louis to understand enduring pollution from industrial and Cold War operations. The first focused one the work and data resources collected by Chris Carl, an artist and site manager of the Granite City Art District (G-CADD) just north of St. Louis. The G-CADD site is heavily polluted with lead. Carl collected all the information he could find about lead hotspots and carried out his own "DIY remediation." Much lead contamination remains, both documented and undocumented. Civic data infrastructure is needed to keep up with the documentation collected so far (now stored on Carl's desk and computer) so that these contamination sites aren't forgotten. I built a digital collection of some of this documentationion as a first step toward better civic infrastructure for long term stewardship of GCAD -- in process advancing my (ethnographic) understanding of the kinds of environmental problems and data resources needing infrastructural support. This work was done within a larger project to understand the "Quotidian Anthropocene" and the kinds of knowledge infrastructure and work it calls for. St. Louis is one site in the larger project.

Design Statement

These images work on multiple levels: they show how research materials (recorded discussions, government documents provided by my ethnographic interlocutors, media representations) collected during field research have been curated in a digital platform that supports collaborative analysis of these materials. The collection of material displayed also conveys an ethnographic analysis, pointing to gaps between unavailable and needed civic data infrastructure to address complex environmental problems.

Project Statement

In this photo essay, I explore how different kinds of civic data infrastructure support efforts to improve environmental public health and governance. As an anthropologist, I'm interested in how people design, access, use and think about the value of such infrastructure, especially in effort to address problems that resist representation and public recognition. Civic data infrastructure, in my reading, is infrastructure that enables collaborative effort to advance the public good.

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Schütz, Tim. 2019. "DIY Lead Remediation"

In "Toxic Data Infrastructures." In Visualizing Toxic Subjects, curated by James Adams and Kim Fortun. The Center for Ethnography. May.

https://tinyurl.com/yyzcogw2