

Mapping and Psychogeography

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Introduction

This paper presents mapping and psychogeography as the background for an artistic experimentation done with mobile technology. In December 2007, with the project Lencois.art.br (www.lencois.art.br), local habitants, especially kids, created an artistic map of urban experimentation of the city Lençóis, in Brazil. Having asked to wander around town with a mobile phone and record (through image and sound) what they wanted, they highlighted different parts of the town drawing a line of their path. The result, and documentation of the practice, is a colored animated drawn map with photos, audios and videos that reflect these kids' experimentations of their own town.

The motivation: The situationist *dérive*

This project was created by the motivation of practicing the Situationist's psychogeography and *dérive* using mobile technology to take notes of it. The idea was to create psychogeography view of Lençóis town. As Guy Debord (1955) states:

Psychogeography could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals...

In the project the participants practice psychogeography through *dérive*, a practice encouraged by the Situationists in the 50s as a way to encounter the urban space and experience it differently from our typically use of the city. As Guy Debord (1958), in "Theory of the *Dérive*" said, "*Dérives* involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll."

The participant of the project wandered around town, alone or in small groups, with this spirit of playfulness and awareness. They stopped their routine to engage

on an unexpected discovery of the city, open to new encounters and visualizations.

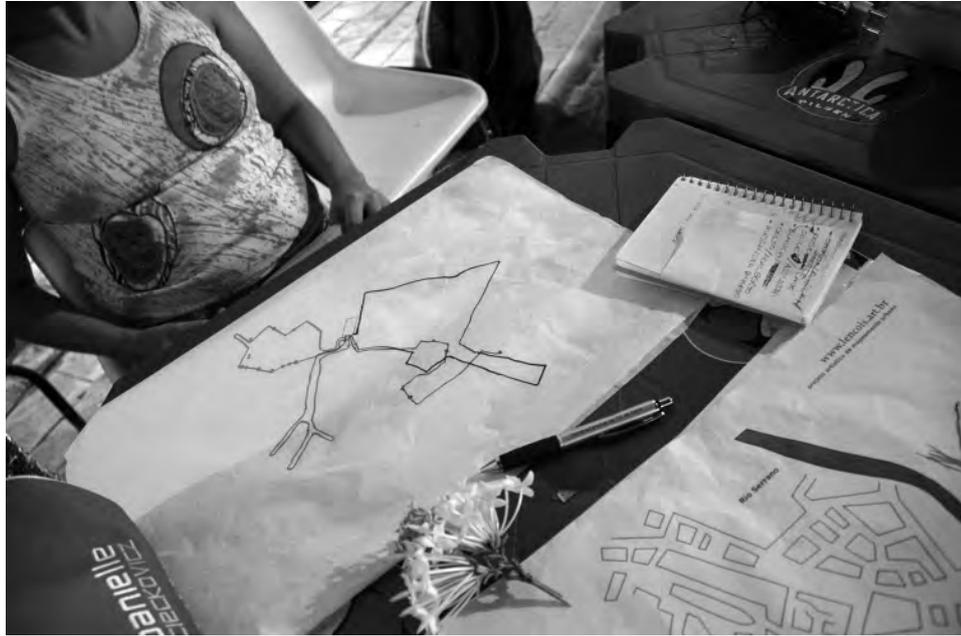
Map(less) location

Lençóis is a small town located in the countryside of Bahia. Different from large cities, it does not have a precise map of its streets available to the public. Even website as GoogleMaps, MapQuest, Yahoo!Local does not have a map of the town. For someone used to living in large cities, a place with no map and no concern for one is unthinkable.

The process

The mapping project was done during Sumidialogia#3.¹ For three days people were invited to go around town experimenting, interpreting and deconstructing it. We have created a stand inside the central marked with the project flyers, some paper, colored pens and a mobile phone. There, we explained the project, asked people to choose a color to draw their path on the map (an A3 print-out with a rough sketch of the city), and gave a mobile phone for them to use to record audio, video, photos or text of their experience. They could send a MMS to the project blog website broadcasting their production, and the material received by MMS was automatically posted on the blog.

Many children showed up to collaborate with the project and the majority of them have never used a mobile phone before. Some after few minutes of explanation felt comfortable with the media, others had difficulty with things such as the directional round button of the mobile phone. In not being an expert of the media, some children made videos thinking they were taking photos, others did not remember to stop the recording and continued on... I can consider these "video photos" as a *détournements* of the mobile production. As Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman (1956) said that "*détournement* is less effective the more it approaches a rational reply." The image distortions created by these children are far from a rational reply; they are mundane expressions of their city experience.



We could see the enthusiasm of people in doing something out of their routine, and also how seriously many took the project. The following day, we met participants' children entering a cyber-cafe with the project flyer. They told us they were going to check their work online. The importance of producing something that actually goes online was also a point for them. For most of them this was the first time that something they have done was published somewhere. They were proud of being "online". As many (Manktelow 2002; Schiano et al. 2004) say "I blog therefore I am", on that day they "were".

Mobile phone

Even though there are more than 100 million mobile phones in Brazil, more than half of that are pre-paid phones with little uses of the camera and recording facilities. The choice of using mobile phone as the recording tool of this experiment is because it is a relatively affordable tool with many features in one device and it can broadcast the material from the field. Paul Levinson (2004), in his book "Cellphone: the story of the world's most mobile medium and how it has transformed everything!" praises mobile phone saying:

The cell phone is currently the epitome of mobility in media because it allows both reception (like the book and the transistor radio) and production (like the Kodak

camera), allows this immediately and long distance (like the transistor radio), and allows this interactively (like no prior mobile medium). (Levinson 2004: 52)

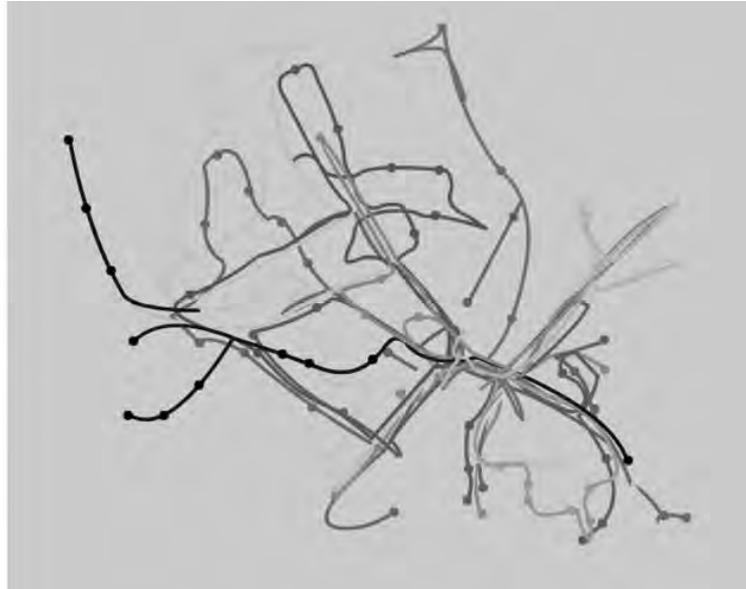
With a mobile phone, these wanderers recorded their paths: photographing, making video, audio and texts of the scenery and experienced emotions. Together with the mobile, they carry a "sort of" paper map where they drew their paths. After that, all the maps were posted, creating the Lençóis mapping based on these people's experiences.

Concluding map

The confusion of colored lines and dots on the light gray background is the result of the mapping experience in Lençóis. The map is a visual representation of a map described by Deleuze and Guattari when theorizing on rhizome.

The map is open and connectable in all its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group or social formation. (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 13)

The *Lencois.art.br* map corresponds to this definition, it was open to anyone to create a line (path) and



connectable points (videos, audios, photos) and it was modified during the process. Accordingly, it increased and modified itself on the way when more people were adding lines.

A map without multiple entrances — a map that denies multiple interpretations — is a map that discourages change, that presents the world as a *fait accompli* or worse, a world without hope.
(Galloway 2005)

Keeping in mind the above statement by Anne Galloway regarding maps, I can say that *Lencois.art.br* is a map that encourage change and hope. The ones that wanted to participate created it openly, and the navigation of the interactive map can lead to multiple interpretations. Concluding, this map created most of all by children can be a practical example of today's map, the *flowing* map.

1 URL: <http://submidialogia.descentro.org>

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