

# PERIPATO TELEMATIKOS

**Greg Giannis**

Peripato Telematikos explores walking performances as a means to (re)present our environs, challenging what we know about the places/spaces we inhabit and our relationship with them, and provides a means by which audiences can engage with these performances in real time.

All texts are available online at <http://www.peripato.net> I have included the cartography text for this paper.

## Cartography

New technologies have the ability to create highly accurate representations of our physical surroundings but they also present us with the opportunity to express location outside of standardised forms and re-instill subjective articulations of space. Harvey quoted in (Ota 2008)

This project creates subjective mappings through collective and individual staged walks. The mappings are generated in real-time and consist entirely of media that the walker submits through their mobile recording device. As the intent is to create mappings, I was interested to know the cartographic discipline's current thinking on mapping and it seemed remiss to not take this into consideration. The research revealed a crisis in this discipline. The open access to satellite imagery merged with electronic databases is superseding conventional maps.

In his recent chronicle, *The Mapmakers*, John Noble Wilford notes that digital technology has brought about a revolution in the way maps are created and used that is without precedent since the Renaissance. [... M]apping technology has split the interface from the database, a split comparable to the liberating effect photography had on the development of painting. Before the advent of aerial photography, satellite tracking and computerized data-gathering, a map was expected to represent its territory with comprehensive accuracy. Freed of that responsibility, cartographers can manipulate their data into any number of visual representations - an act so potent it has attracted the attention of other disciplines. As Harley remarked, 'Maps are too important to be left to cartographers alone' (Abrams and Hall 2006) p 12.

Mapping has attracted the attention of the art world, which has been a fertile ground for experimentation with maps, and this has come to the attention of the cartographic discipline. There is so much activity in this area that Woods has remarked:

[T]here is a cresting wave, and it awaits skilled surfers (Cosgrove 2006)

This is a quote from a 2006 special issues of *Cartographic Perspectives* (the journal of the North American Cartographic Information Society) on art and maps. The special issue gives a good summary of the current intersections of art and maps and notes its prevalence, but itself also signifies the importance of the work being conducted in these intersecting fields. At the end of this section, I provide examples of artists working with maps.

The art world's response addresses some of the contemporary concerns surrounding maps and their use. The cartographic community itself, as mentioned previously, is leading a call for experimentation in the visual forms of maps, given that it is now freed of the responsibility to represent space with accuracy. Furthermore, the cartographic community is acknowledging the inherent subjectivity of maps and, given that accurate representation of space is now accomplished by satellite imagery, is looking to rein-still subjective articulations of space. Historically maps purported to be objective, but their subjectivity is now well understood, and they have served to support imperialist expansion and other forms of control.

As an instance of the 'microphysics of power', the imposition of rational order upon space is 'the minuscule and ubiquitously reproduced move of 'gridding' (quadriller) a visible space in such a way as to make its occupants available for observation and 'information' de Certeau quoted in (Stott 2005)

In response to this controlling view of the world from above, mappings are being constructed from the perspective of the person on the street. This raises the possibility of mappings that are created by many, from a multiplicity of viewpoints, and not by a single, overarching authority. This controlling view from above has been facilitated by the striation of the earth's surface using a grid of lines of longitude and latitude, an inseparable component of maps. This grid is encapsulated in the contemporary world by the GPS system, referred to by some commentators as the 'Imperial grid' (Holmes 2004). In *Parables for the Virtual*, Massumi argues that if one reduces the systems of meaning to positions on a grid, one denies the very variation and transition inherent to those systems of meaning. The GPS system is one of many technologies that have radically changed contemporary western society, allowing anyone to pin point their position, or the position of others, on the earth's surface with considerable accuracy. But modern technologies raise other issues for mapmakers. We live in a world characterised by 'speed, fluidity and ephemerality of contemporary means of transport, communication and media technologies' (Stott 2005). How are these factors to be accounted for in maps of the contemporary world? How can a map incorporate time? How can we free ourselves from the imperial grid?

---

## CONCERNS OF CARTOGRAPHIC DISCIPLINE.

---

As mentioned previously, the cartographic discipline is in crisis. Its role in providing accurate maps has been superseded by satellite imagery combined with online databases. Their response has been to encourage a subjective, socially inclusive cartography, to bring to the fore that which has thus far been omitted from maps, to encourage experimentation with map forms given their emancipation from having to provide accurate representations, and to explore possibilities for mapping to represent a fluid, ephemeral, dynamic world; what static representations are unable to do. As noted by Lippard, this response is not entirely new, and perhaps those that led this call in the sixties, did so in anticipation of the current problems with cartography.

The mapmaking process can also bring together disparate elements in a community. In the sixties, geographer William Bunge proposed a 'Society for Human Exploration' that would map from different human viewpoints, including children's. [...] Local people would lead expeditions to create 'oughtness maps,' whose goals were to change rather than merely map the world. (Lippard 1997) p79

This opens the way for maps to articulate a subjectivity missing from maps from the:

time of the Renaissance as new objectivity and functionality began to enter map making techniques leading to the standard of map we have today — 'maps stripped of all elements of fantasy and religious

belief, as well as any sign of the experiences involved in their production had become abstract and strictly functional systems for the factual ordering of phenomena in space.' (Ota 2008) p361-362

In contrast to the maps we have today, this project's mappings are totally constructed of the experiences involved in their production (i.e. staged walks), and make no attempt to factually order space. I proposed a subverting of the map, by creating a (re)presentation from the view point of ground level; a montage of media fragments. This builds on de Certeau's proposal that place is defined by urban planning but transformed into a space through the act of walking:

space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. [...] In short, space is a practised place. (de Certeau 1984) p117

The mappings are constructed totally by media that the walker submits through their mobile recording device. Not the 'voyeur' who is 'at a distance' and thus 'a solar Eye, looking down like a god' who 'must disentangle himself from the murky intertwining of daily behaviours and make himself alien to them'. (de Certeau 1984) p92-93 The walker makes no pretence to mapping a totality, objectivity, or ordering space. Her intervention is one that is very localised and amongst the 'murky intertwining of daily behaviours.' This raises the possibility for mappings to articulate knowledge that isn't solely about ordering space, but a multiplicity of concerns. For example:

MILK [a project by Ieva Auzina and Esther Polak traced the path of milk from its origins in the udder of a cow in rural Latvia to a cheese vendor in the Netherlands] suggests a powerful vision of how locative technologies could allow one to more fully understand how products are commodified and distributed through the actions of global trade, thereby making visible the networked society. ... [W]hen tied to a materialist vision, the recent turn to maps is among the strongest critiques of globalization available to us. Recognizing this, philosopher Alain Badiou referred to the maps of power drawn by artist Mark Lombardi as 'the creation of a new possibility of art and a new vision of the world. (Tuters and Varnelis 2006).

Here we have two very divergent manifestations of mapping. MILK provides a glimpse of the networked society through tracing the path of a basic food product, whilst the maps drawn by Lombardi visualise the networks of power, corporations and the military.

Perhaps the biggest of all challenges is to map '[t]he complexities of the contemporary world – those of financial markets, information networks, social relations, etc. – [that] are said to be 'unfigurable', opaque and unrepresentable.' The map 'must account for the speed, fluidity and ephemerality of contemporary means of transport, communication and media technologies.' (Stott 2005) How can a map be dynamic? Any representation that is static is fixed in time, and represents a snapshot of its subject at a particular point in time. In order to incorporate time, the medium itself must have this faculty. Paper is out of the question (for the moment at least) whereas networked media such as the Internet is the most suitable candidate.

The mappings produced for this project are accessed on the Internet. The constituent components are stored in an online database, and are extracted from the database and presented in ZUI, whenever a mapping is viewed. As is the case with satellite maps, the interface is split from the database. The interface serves all mappings, each differentiated by the constituent components that together comprise that mapping. The constituent components are added to the database over time, and can continue to be

so indefinitely. Unlike static representations these mapping can change over time, opening up the possibility to represent the 'unrepresentable' complexities of the contemporary world.

As mentioned previously, this project's mappings are implemented in such a way as to allow unrestricted manipulation of the constituent components so that the mappings are mutable. All uploaded elements are available for further manipulation. Their position (x, y and z-planes) in the interface is variable. Visitors to the site are able to move these elements and create associations between elements and group others. As a result, the mappings are not fixed in time or spatially. All the constituent components can be added over time and subsequently moved in relation to one another, further complicating the idea of a 'map', but coming closer to the Deleuzian notion of a map:

Make a map, not a tracing.... What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce... it constructs.... The map is open and connectable in all of 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. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987) p12

The tracing that Deleuze refers to is what we have come to know as the base map. It represents extant knowledge and therefore proposes nothing new, simply a reiteration of existing ideas. The base map has also been dispensed with in this project's mappings. If we are to accept that current mappings represent a Cartesian and static notion of space (Sant 2006) p 99 then to simply take an existing map and overlay it with subjective content only reinforces this. We are still dealing with the same base map, with all its inherent problems, the only difference being that it is now annotated with subjective information:

Current collaborative mapping projects using locative media technologies have often overlooked the conventions of the base map as a site for reinvention. Although these projects are ambitious in their aim to propose alternative organizations of urban space through the way it is digitally mapped, they remain bounded by datasets that reinforce a Cartesian and static notion of urban space.

[...]

Although many collaborative mapping projects undermine their own base maps by layering them with collectively defined concepts of space; including participants' emotions, itineraries and memories, these annotations are inextricably linked to the predefined foundations of the map they overlay. (Sant 2006) p 99-100

In some instances, the mappings serve to embed media into place. Subsequent visitors to these sites, with the correct equipment, are then able to retrieve the media left by the mappers:

Geograffiti (CN/UK) and GeoNotes (SE) ... seek not to document or interpret the environment but to embellish it with digital graffiti or virtual tagging as expressive mark. (Hemment 2004)

This has obvious applications for audio-guided tours, which is already widespread. Outside of the media art world, artists work with maps in ways that are less reliant on the base map, many dispensing with it altogether. Casey's Earth Mapping gives many examples.

Aside from reinforcing a Cartesian and static notion of space, the base map, with its reliance on the grid, can be seen to be reinforcing a static notion of thought:

When we think of space as 'extensive,' as being measurable, divisible, and composed of points plotting possible positions that objects may occupy, we are stopping the world in thought. We are thinking away its dynamic unity, the continuity of its movements. We are looking at only one dimension of reality. (Massumi 2002) p 6

For Massumi, this reliance on the grid represents a far greater problem as it stifles the potential for change and looks at the world in a way that restricts possibilities.

---

## ART AND MAPPING

---

Artists are harking back to the premodern, subjective map that 'concentrated on geographical meanings' and offered 'as full an impression as possible of the lived texture of the local landscape'. (Lippard 1997) p 81

Jameson concludes that 'the political form of postmodernism, if there is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial scale.'

[...]

There would be virtually no end to a list of every artist, literary critic, critical theorist, art historian, sociologist, or philosopher who globally or locally 'maps out' the contemporary cultural landscape. (Bosteels 1996, p 110)

- Earth Mapping (Casey 2005)
- Guillermo Gomez-Peña - placed South America at the top of a map (Lippard 1997) p 80
- Peter Fend - worked with Petersen projection (Lippard 1997) p 80
- Peter Dykhuis - exhibition of 'world views' during G7 summit in Halifax, world maps published by each of the G7 countries placed side-by-side. 'Seeing them all side-by-side, the differences between maps are striking. Aspects of their design and choice of colour seem to embody national stereotypes - the Japanese map looking understated, with light, cool colours, while the Italian map is bold and funky, with wildly curvaceous lettering. Each of these superpowers locates itself towards the centre of the world, and relegates the rest of the world more or less to the margins.' (Lippard 1997) p 80
- 'Florence Ladd asked a group of urban African American youths in California to draw maps of their neighborhood and received widely diverse interpretations.' (Lippard 1997) p 80
- 'Stanley ("this way") Brouwn - exhibited scribbled pencil maps made by people in Amsterdam from whom he asked directions to a well-known landmark.' (Lippard 1997) p 80.
- 'Working with only a biro and a camera, and with no knowledge of the area, Hugh Davies representing Analogue Art Map spent the 2006 Conflux Festival seeking hand drawn maps from locals in the Brooklyn NY area. These maps gave directions to sources of food, water and rest as well as to possible points of

interest. As each map begins where the last ended, the maps link together to form a linear journey or narrative told by multiple authors.' (Davies 2006)

- 'Six Contemporary Artists Who Use Maps in Their Work' (www.artjunction.org 2009)
- Uncharted Territory: Subjective Mapping by Artists and Cartographers (www.saulgallery.com 2004)
- 'Gnomon was an eight-foot-high, two-thousand-pound self-propelled sculpture that used GPS to identify the location where it was supposed to be.' (Wilson 2008) p 292 As the GPS location information is not stable this sculpture continuously moved about the gallery space, bumping into walls as it tried to fix its location.
- Catalogue of 218 Map artists (Cosgrove 2006) p61-67

### **References and Notes:**

ABRAMS & HALL (2006) *Else/where Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Design Institute.*

BOSTEELS (1996) *A Misreading of Maps, In BARKER (Ed.) Signs of Change: premodern -> modern -> post-modern. NY, State University of New York Press.*

CASEY (2005) *Earth-mapping: artists reshaping landscape. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.*

COSGROVE (2006) *Art and Mapping: An Introduction, cartographic perspectives, vol. 53, no. Winter 2006, p. 1.*

DE CERTEAU (1984) *The practice of everyday life (RENDALL, S., Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press.*

DELEUZE & GUATTARI (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus - Capitalism and Schizophrenia (MASSUMI, B., Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.*

HEMMENT (2004) *Locative Arts. <http://www.loca.org.uk> (retrieved: 08/06/2008).*

HOLMES (2004) *Drifting Through the Grid: Psychogeography and Imperial Infrastructure. springerin.*

LIPPARD (1997) *The lure of the local New York: New Press.*

MASSUMI (2002) *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation. Durham & London: Duke University Press.*

OTA (2008) *Innaccurate Coordinates. The 14th ISEA. Singapore.*

SANT (2006) *Redefining the Basemap, intelligent agent 06.02.*

STOTT (2005) *Next on the Left, or: 'What Good is a Map if you Know the Way?'. NODE.London.*

TUTERS & VARNELIS (2006) *Beyond Locative Media.*