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DIAGRAMMATIC MAPS AS CRITICAL DEVICES FOR HYPERLOCALIZABILITY

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Abstract

This article discusses the emergence of a sense of hyperlocalizability related to the "mapping fever" triggered by the accessibility of cartographic databases and the popularization of geolocation features. Without denying the importance of these resources, it is important to heed to what they imply in terms of atrophy of imagination, by suggesting an essentially descriptive use of space and applications that address only the efficiency of routes. In contrast, this article presents the project *Você não está aqui - UR Not Here* - (Beiguelman and Velazquez, 2012), a device that creates cities and produces new spatial senses by means of delocation strategies.

Keywords: maps, locative media, mobility.

Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future. Instead of being made of natural materials, such as marble, granite, plastic, chrome, and electric light. They are not built for the ages, but rather against the ages. (...) Both past and future are placed into an objective present. (...) Time

becomes a place minus motion. If time is a place, then innumerable places are possible. Rather than saying, "What time is it?" we should say, "Where is the time?"

(Smithson, 1966)

Maps have been ways to register visual space since antiquity. They take to the limit the ambiguities of the term 'representation' emphasized by Carlo Ginzburg. On the one hand, he writes: "'representation' takes the place of represented reality and, therefore, evokes absence." On the other hand, it "also makes visible represented reality and, therefore, suggests presence" (Ginzburg, 2001, pp.85).

This tension between presence and absence is part of the history of cartography and the preponderance of one over the other reveals the ways in which we understand our symbolic position in the world and illuminates considerably the understanding of cartography as analogy (interpretation) or decal (description) of space.

In today's world, we live, to paraphrase Derrida, a real "mapping fever," facilitated by the accessibility of cartographic databases, such as those available via Google Maps, and the popularity of geolocation features, distributed among cell phones and social networks.

Far from wanting to challenge the usefulness of these resources, here we wish to discuss critically the symbolic implications of this sudden epidemic of mapping and geolocating everything and everyone, anytime and from anywhere. At the time of launch of the "My Location" feature, Google (Google Official Blog, 2011) systematized the "state of the art" of the situation in its blog:

"Where am I?" and "What's around me?" are two questions that cartographers, and Google Maps, strive to answer. With Google Maps' "My Location" feature, which shows your location as a blue dot, you can see where you are on the map to avoid walking the wrong direction on city streets, or to get your bearings if you're hiking an unfamiliar trail. Google Maps also displays additional details, such as places, landmarks and geographical features, to give you context about what's nearby. And now, Google Maps for Android enables you to figure out where you are and see where you might want to go when you're indoors.

A few sentences were enough to pigeonhole the entire Situationist legacy and its important deliberation on Drift (Jacques, 2003) and, along with it, countless poets and philosophers, who in recent centuries have rethought and recommended the

poetry of Baudelaire's *flaneur*. It is important, therefore, to examine whether these practices are leading us to an essentially descriptive approach to space under the concept of representation as presence; a kind of visual construction that comes close to the scenario depicted by Jorge Luis Borges in "About rigor in science" (1996, pp.225):

In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied an entire city, and the map of the Empire a whole province. Over time, these Unwarranted Maps were not enough and the Colleges of Cartographers came up with a Map of the Empire that had the size of the Empire and coincided with it point by point. Less Dedicated to the Study of Cartography, succeeding generations have decided that this dilated map was useless and, not without impiety, handed it over to the Inclement Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West there remain shattered Ruins of the Map inhabited by Animals and Beggars; throughout the Country there is no other relic of the Geographic Disciplines.

This brief account, which Borges attributes to Suarez de Miranda in a text written in 1658, insinuates the dangers of atrophy of the imaginary that accompanies the explosion of locative media. Its critical potential has been widely discussed in numerous articles by André Lemos (2010). Its tracking and functionality capacity and potential to promote consumption, however, are not negligible. After all, we are talking about equipment defined by the combination of networks with high-speed Internet access (3G and 4G technologies), video transmission and reception, use of VOIP, and participation in social networks. All this together with services related to locative media.

This combination is precisely what makes browsing the Internet via ground phone lines so different from that via cell phone lines, and explains why advertisers are so excited about the culture of mobility. From apps installed on the device, designed to facilitate and improve their users' lives, not only is it possible to know where the holder of the device is, but also to have this information shared and integrated to databases, and pointing to what is in the vicinity.

In objective advertising terms, this allows, for instance, consumers carrying a smartphone (i.e., with access to the Internet, GPS, etc.), logged on social networks such as Facebook and the like, where several of their tastes and habits are stored, walking past a store, to get a digital discount coupon on their cell phones. In this context, urban microscreens come to behave as extensions of our bodies connected in physical space, and introduce new variables in systems of tracking and invasion of privacy (Beiguelman, 2011, pp.251).

By having their use massively coupled to a one-dimensional approach that associates a place to a person/group and an image – as it happens, in large scale, in social networks such as Facebook and Instagram – or to a specific piece of information – as is the case of Foursquare –, maps are stripped of their diagrammatic character in the sense that Deleuze (1988, pp.44) gives to the concept:

The diagram is no longer the register, auditory or visual; it is the map, cartography, co-extensive to the whole social field. It is an abstract device. By being defined through functions and shapeless matters, it ignores any form distinction between content and expression, between a discursive formation and form, between content and expression, between a discursive formation and a non-discursive formation. It is a virtually dumb and blind device, by means of which, however, we can see and talk.

In contrast to an essentially descriptive use of maps and cartography, the project UR Not Here - (Beiguelman and Velazquez, 2012), was elaborated a device to create cities that confronts the excessively locating discourses of socialization and consumption devices. It constitutes an interactive art installation that sets the challenge of inventing a new geography, affective and shifting, in nomadic maps of transient territories.



External view of UR Not Here, at Itaú Cultural, São Paulo

The project discusses the landscape at the time of image production mediated by mobile devices, cell phone apps, and all sorts of geolocation and tagging features.

To this end, it endows the “man sans camera” age with a cinematic experience in which the public is invited to build cities (or reorganize the paths taken by artists in different places) from a database.



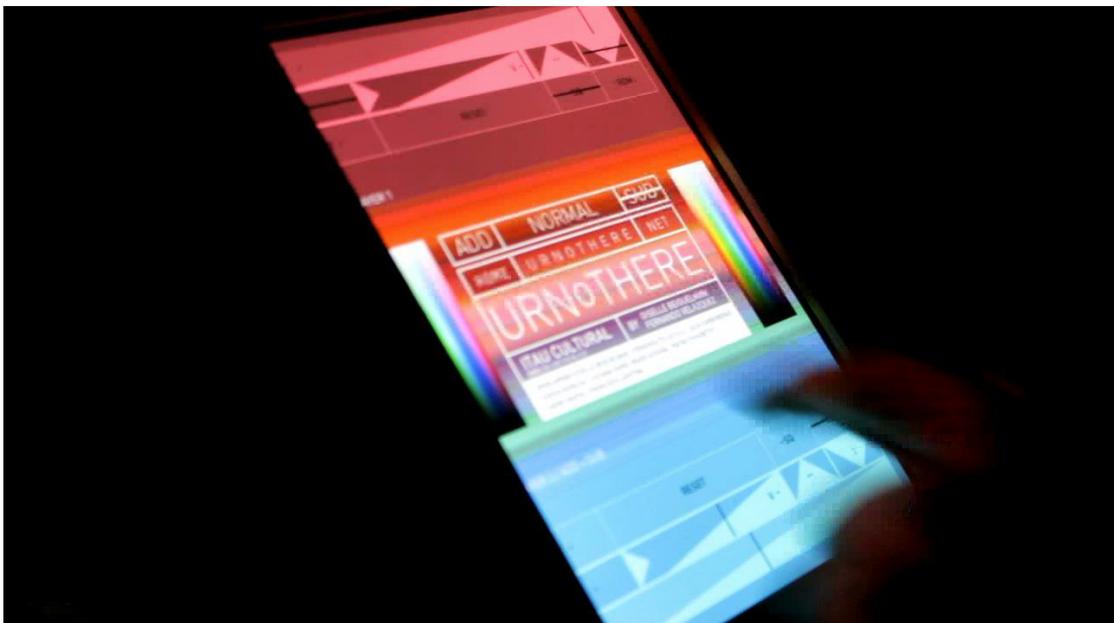
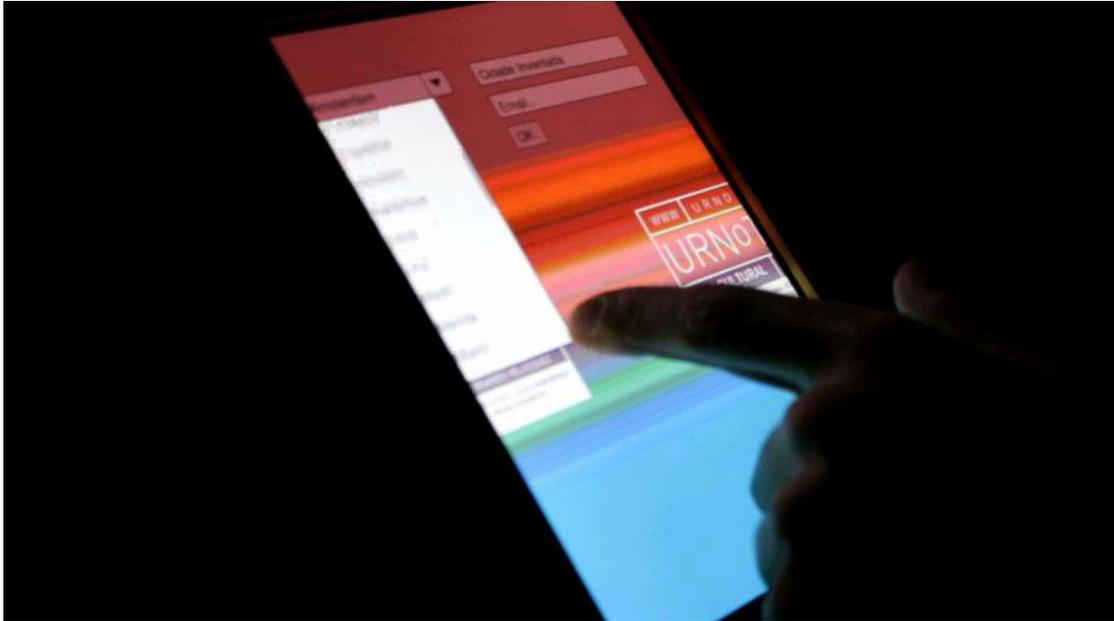
Example of images stored at the *UR Not Here* database

The landscape is viewed on a 360° device that monitors the movement of visitors and deconstructs the incessant position marking that the GPS culture has enforced.



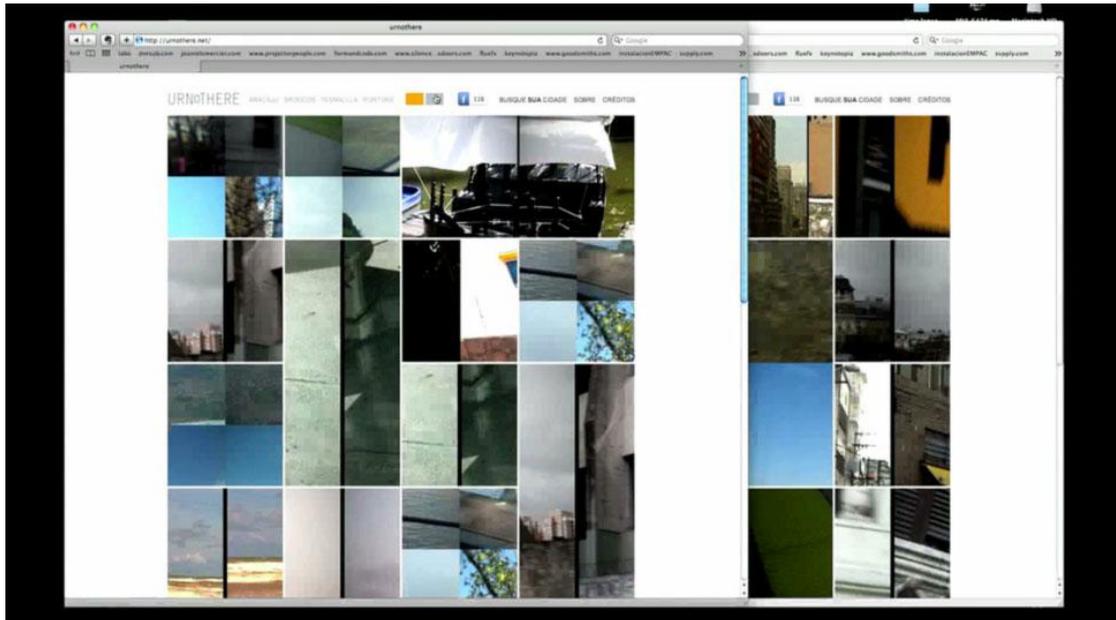
Internal view of *UR Not Here* installation

The public is invited to view and/or create cities, from the choice of images captured by artists in over 40 cities worldwide, on multitouch interfaces (iPads). Visitors create and modify landscapes by applying graphical, sound, and motion effects.



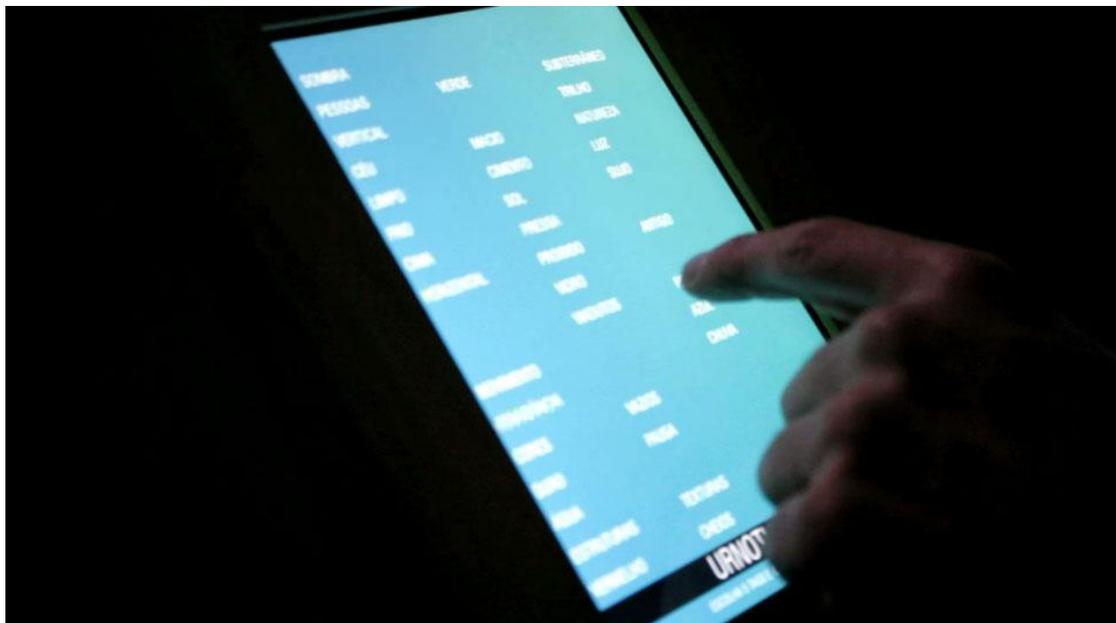
iPad interface for creation of cities and manipulation of landscapes by the installation visitors

The cities created in the exhibition room by visitors also appear in real time on the Internet, where they can be viewed remotely. This visualization, however, does not deliver a video with a beginning, middle, and end.



Diagrammatic maps generated in real time by the audience through the use of the project database

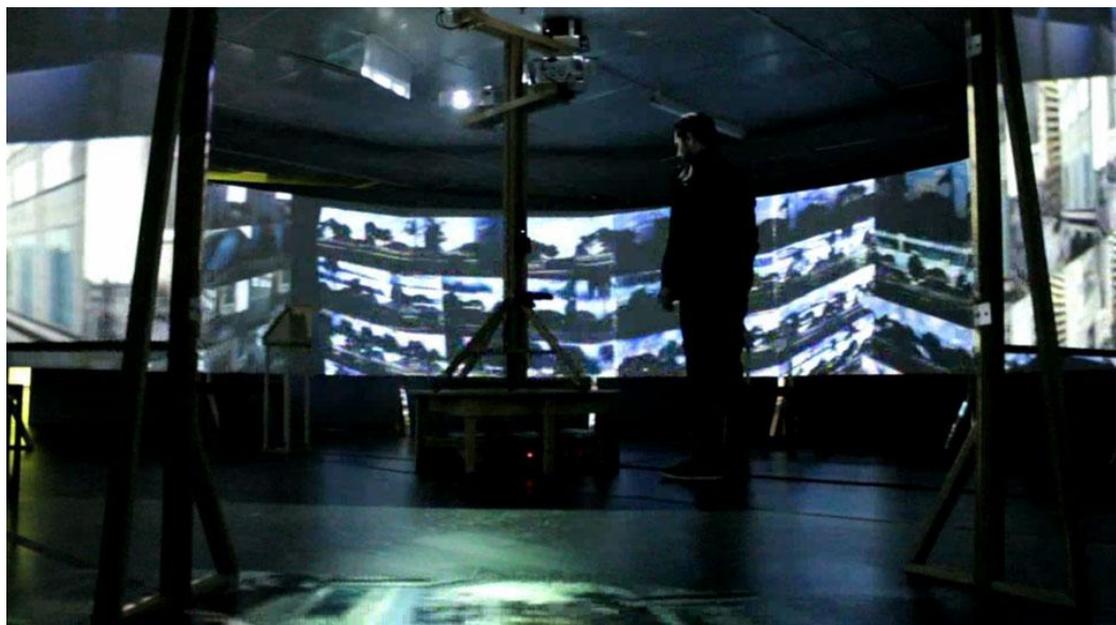
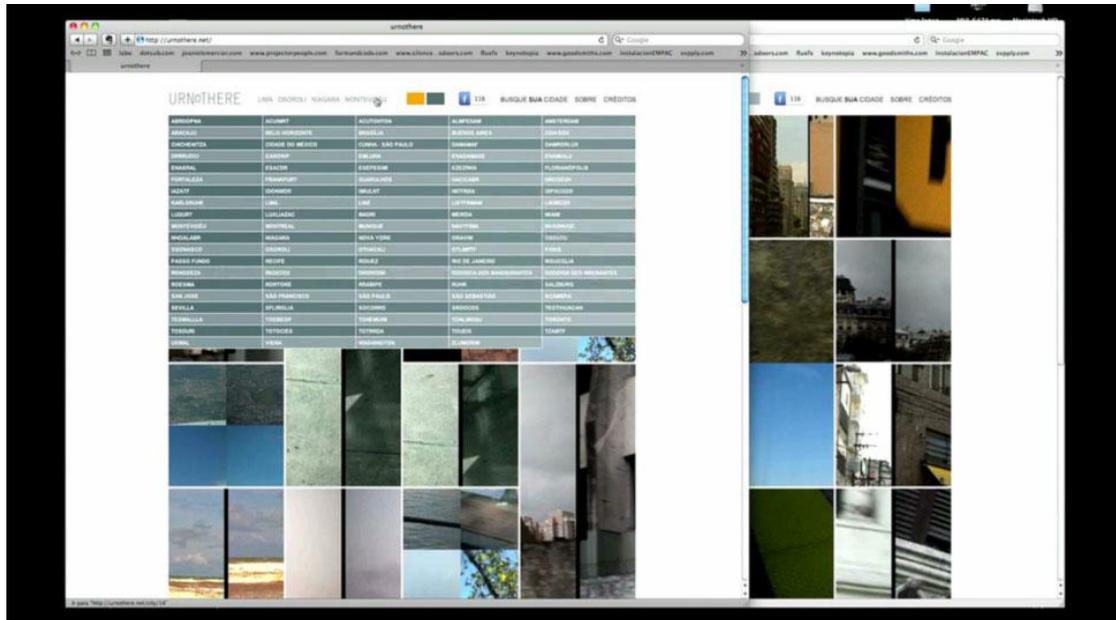
It only recovers tags (keywords) chosen in the exhibition setting and cities associated to it. It reconstructs, by means of constant rearrangements, imaginary city landscapes produced at the exhibition.



Interface for the selection of tags, which give access to the image databank of UR Not Here installation

Each created city, however, has a unique name and is its creator's nontransferable "property." One simply enters one's e-mail address registered

when one's city was invented to locate it. It will appear in mosaic format and will be reordered at every page load. All stored cities, real and imaginary, are listed alphabetically on the site's index of cities.



Above, the web site showing the menu of cities created by the participants of the project. Below, The "Flowscope" (in the center of the picture), a "delocation" compass, which moves the projectors in the exhibition space

As part of the installation, a large electronic eye (a custom Kinect) sets in motion the "flowscope," our delocation compass, which makes the projectors move in circles in the exhibition space and discard any possibility of observation from a fixed point.



A visitor interacts with UR Not Here installation using the iPad interface resources for cities creation and landscape manipulation

This thus breaks down the logic of complicity with the melancholy Borgean character that sought to draw such perfect maps, reaching the scale of one to one, abolishing every possibility of representation and, ultimately, imagination. In breaking with this logic, there emerge creative possibilities that create other systems of meaning. They are guided by transitory maps of dynamic territories, which presuppose, without doubt, other representations of mobility as experience; beyond the descriptive banality of UR not Here.

Video

<http://vimeo.com/gbeiguelman/urnothere>

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