Okkupy Google Maps:
grassroot activists & cartographic expression

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THE POWER OF MAPS

Nowadays, maps are everywhere, and everybody is able to produce maps. Not so long ago, maps belonged to the domain of but a few experts. They held in hands an instrument of power of such importance that many governments declared cartography a federal responsibility, and restricted map production and/or distribution by others. India – being the most prominent example of contemporary restrictions of the access to maps in a democratic country – until today limits the purchase and use of maps to its citizens, and prohibits the export of any map with a scale larger than 1:250000 (cf. Srikantia 2000, Krishnayya 2006). Also in Europe the maps made by national map agencies are still the only ones considered authoritative.

Considering this public importance of cartography, one might be surprised to find that the science "cartography" is quite a young one, after all. First cartographic practice can be observed from at latest the 12th century (cf. Wood 2010:21ff), Enlightenment gives cartography a tremendous boost, and brings prosperity to national cartographic institutes throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th century. All the same, cartography as a scientific discipline formed only in the early 20th century (cf. Eckert, 1921); it takes until the 1950ies for the map to be regarded a "scientific [...], functional object" (Robinson 1952:19), and cartography to become a *true* science – true in a very deterministic positivist way of thinking. "Map" is an objective representation of "reality", limited only by the skills of the mapmaker.

Soon, the (in-)famous *map communication model* (ᴍᴄᴍ; cf. Board 1967, Koláčny 1969) adds a behaviouristic perspective: the cartographic process is merely a number of reactions to external stimuli, which could be carried out better or worse. The "primary cartographic model" in the cartographer's head is being translated into a "secondary model" (the map), which is interpreted by the map reader who forms the "tertiary model" in his head. We are talking perception here, no sign of conception yet, neither of power being exalted by means of maps.

Power, eventually, becomes an issue when in the 1980ies critical cartographers enter the stage: It is especially J. Brian Harley, who steps away from seeing maps as "scientifically exact". He realises the immense influence of society, politics and personal circumstances on mapping and map making. His central concept are the "inner and outer voice" struggling inside a cartographer's head (cf. Harley 1989). Harley draws on the works of Jacques Derrida and of Michel Foucault; but fails to adopt their concept of power: it remains a top-down external pressure. Harley also implicitly still assumes the theoretical possibility of creating a perfect representation of an objective reality.

Finally, as Critical Cartography gains more and more attention, elaborate concepts of power, reality and society are introduced in the 1990ies (cf. e.g. Wood 1993). Along with similar developments in social geography, constructivist approaches are developed, and "map" seen as a discursive product and process. "Map" is considered (a special kind of) text, and *mapping* close to *speech-act*. Similar to utterances, also cartographic expression has to be seen embedded in context, and may not be reduced to its "literal" meaning (cf. Harley 1989, Schlottmann 2005, Crampton 2001, Gryl 2009). Schlottmann (2005:120) then draws on John Searle's "Background of Meaning" (1980) and considers the literal meaning relative to a *Background* of variable implicit knowledge, ranging from a trans-subjectively available "deep" Background, to an individual network of emotions, situation and context. Most authors also adopt a concept of power close to Foucault's, which considers power to be (almost always inequally) distributed amongst *all* interaction partners.

What we take from here for the further elaborations: Everybody experiences a different reality. Consequently, maps cannot be "objective", but always depict the map producers' and map readers' "world view" – "meaning is *read* into the map" (Edney, 2005, emphasis original). At the same time, not everyone has the same power over maps, and the cartographic discourse remains a constant battle for definition power. Refer to Table 1 for a summary of the conceptual development of "map".

"map"	implications	examples
objective representation of a real world	true, "natural"	"everyone except those few whose job is to think about and make maps" (Edney, 1996:186)
Multi-stage model of a real world	Scientifically exact, as accurate as possible, constrained by the communicative and/or imaginative shortcomings of cartographer, map and map reader	"Map Communication Model" (e.g. Board, 1967; Koláčný 1969) *still in common use throughout academic cartography*
Medium to deliberately communicate forged information	Misused by "evil-doers"	First emerged during/after ww ii, describing Propaganda maps – as a counterexample for the new "scientific" cartography (Robinson, 1952); later adopted to a wider range of "malevolent, naïve, or sloppily expedient authors" (Monmonier, 1996);
Representation of a real world, influenced by social, political and personal situation	Exterior "power" (from above), outer vs. inner voice of the cartographer	Harley (e.g. 1989) Schlichtmann (2008)
Representation of socially constructed realities	Entire content is constituted from the "world-view" of the map author and/or in the discourse of mapping, map making and spatial communication	Wood (e.g. 1993) Gryl (2009)

Table 1: contemporary concepts of "map" (Fink 2011:10)

A PEOPLE'S CARTOGRAPHY

The advent of computers changed cartography completely. The whole of it? Not quite … a small part still continues to stay the same: cartography remains an expert domain until well into the 2000s. Yes, there is openly accessible data, and websites offer basic maps, but their use is not entirely trivial.

Google brings maps into our everyday lives, when they introduce Google Maps and Google Earth. Their users can simultaneously become producers and create simple maps and map overlays. In the meantime, unnoticed by the general public, Wikipedia, flickr and many more *Web 2.0* services go spatial: *geotags* enhance encyclopaedic articles and add context to photos, short messages and blog posts; explicitly spatial services such as *Foursquare* and *PleaseRobMe.com* pop up.

Finally, *OpenStreetMap* (osm) really democratises mapmaking itself: volunteers contribute to a map, and a comprehensive data base of topographic information, which is created from scratch and free of any copyright claims. Volunteered Geographic Information (vgi) later is also discovered by more traditional cartographic actors (cf. e.g. Goodchild 2007), and until today remains a buzzword much talked about within the community.

Opening up cartographic ways of expression to a wider public changes many aspects of a cartographic discourse. We want to concentrate on two issues: First, a significantly greater number of actors are involved in the negotiation processes of how space is (re-)presented (and consequently re-produced). Second, in the cartographic discourse, power, while formerly concentrated, has now been distributed more equally.

Especially with osm many questions arise from this perspective: Do locals make better maps? Can involving cartographic laypeople distort the meaning of maps? Is it inevitable that the intrinsic anarchic nature of osm favours the reproduction of main stream interpretations at the expense of already marginalised meanings? And, finally – "Doesn't anybody think about the children?" – will this mean the end of professional cartographers?

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

"Le droit à la ville" is the title of a programmatic text of Henri Lefebvre (1968). He envisions a utopian society where nobody is deprived of their "right to the city" – and describes the shortcomings of a capitalist city with its socio-economic segregation, marginalisation processes, and alienation phenomena. The core claim demands a "right to non-exclusion" from the city, which is first and foremost a "right of access to urban life" ("droit à la vie urbaine", Lefebvre 1968:120) – which stands in contrast with the commodified "right to nature" of a tourism society (ibid.) Lefebvre calls for a collective re-occupation and re-shaping of urban spaces by marginalised groups. It is at the same time the physical-material space as well as the interacting social space of relations, meanings, and practices, which is addressed. Two core dimensions of this claim are "le droit à la centralité" – access to the places of society, infrastructure, and knowledge – and "le droit à la différence" – with the city as a place of getting together, dialogue, and exchange. Ultimately, Lefebvre does not only pronounce the particular re-appropriation of urban spaces and places, but also provides the political tools to influence future developments. (cf. the excellent and very accessible summaries by Isensee, 2013, and Holm, 2011).

Especially since the late 1990ies, numerous protest groups around the world have taken up Lefebvre's ideas and his call for the "right to the city". Interestingly enough, the neoliberal city of today poses very similar challenges to its residents as the fordist city contemporary to Lefebvre. Holm (2011:91) notes that the popularity of "right to the city" with protest movements might stem from its ambiguity: "It is not possible to reduce the 'right to city' to a invidual legal claim. Instead it is societal utopia and collective demand at the same time. It sketches ideas of a better world and provides inspiration for social movements" (ibid., translation mine).

A marxist scholar himself, David Harvey draws on Lefebvre's ideas throughout his œuvre. In a recent essay, he reassesses "The Right to the City" in the light of the (post-)postmodern neocapitalist city (Harvey, 2008). He especially condemns how exclusive its society has become: "Increasingly, we see the right to the city falling into the hands of private or quasi-private interests. [...] The right to the city, as it is now constituted, is too narrowly confined, restricted in most cases to a small political and economic elite who are in a position to shape cities more and more after their own desires." (p. 38) Harvey stresses the multi-scale nature of urban space, and calls for "a global struggle" (p. 39), at the scale he sees urbanisation processes taking place.

In the meantime, social movements remain rather local phenomena.

MAPS AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS

Hamburg is a city which always had the air of freedom and cosmopolitanism: once a great port bringing in exotic fruits, foreign spices, and other colonial goods, and the place for young men to go to start an exciting life sailing the world's seven seas. The city still has its worldly and open-minded flair – but it is now connected to its creative and artist community. Hamburg's city management hopped onto the *creative city* train a while ago, and pursues strategies which are closely connected to the ideas of Richard Florida's *Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). Fostering an image of a "creative city" benefits the creative and artists, no doubt. But, as for instance Twickel (2010) reports, they often feel being used: They are tolerated because they lend a creative atmosphere and a hip touch to neighbourhoods, but often are driven out once a quarter's status is enhanced, and housing is upgraded to meet the big money's taste: "Künstler rein, Arme raus. Kultur als Standortfaktor" ("Artists in, poor out. Culture as locational factor"; Twickel 2010:50). Not hard to guess: the "creative city" Hamburg has a very active landscape of social movements, a more prominent one of them being the "Recht auf Stadt" network (cf. Recht auf Stadt s.a).

In 2009 a traditional working class neighbourhood from the late 19th century – the last few buildings of its kind amid modern high risers in the prestigious city centre – was to be deprived of its cultural heritage status and be demolished to make space for an upmarket housing project. A group of people organised a small festival of arts, music and culture in the abandoned buildings of the "Gängeviertel". While it is not quite clear when the actual tipping point occured, the event – originally meant as a last sign of resistance against the neoliberal exploitation – turned into a squatting social movement. Into an ultimately very successful movement. Fast forward to 2013: in October, the city of Hamburg started to renovate the neighbourhood, in strong cooperation with the *Komm in die Gänge* movement, and in a socially responsible way (cf. Komm in die Gänge, s.a.)

The movement also used maps to convey their message. Especially an aerial image produced by the regional public TV station (Fig. 1) illustrates the message clearly: The last small and quaint remainder of the typical Hamburg of 1900 is already squeezed by the surrounding modern high rise office and apartment buildings – you simply have to feel sympathy, don't you? Similar designs are used on many occasions. The seemingly objective nature of maps and aerial photos is also employed to subtly transfer the same meaning, for instance in flyers for

solidarity events for the movement (cf. Fig. 2). Worth noting is also, how space is constructed by the activists not only with maps and words, but also with quite explicitly spatial forms of artistic communication: Fig. 3 shows anaglyph (3D) photographs published on the movements website.

Figure 1: Aerial photo of the Gängeviertel, as used by the regional television station in reports on the social movement. NDR (s.a.).

Figure 2: Invitation to a solidarity event in the Gängeviertel. Hoplt (2009).
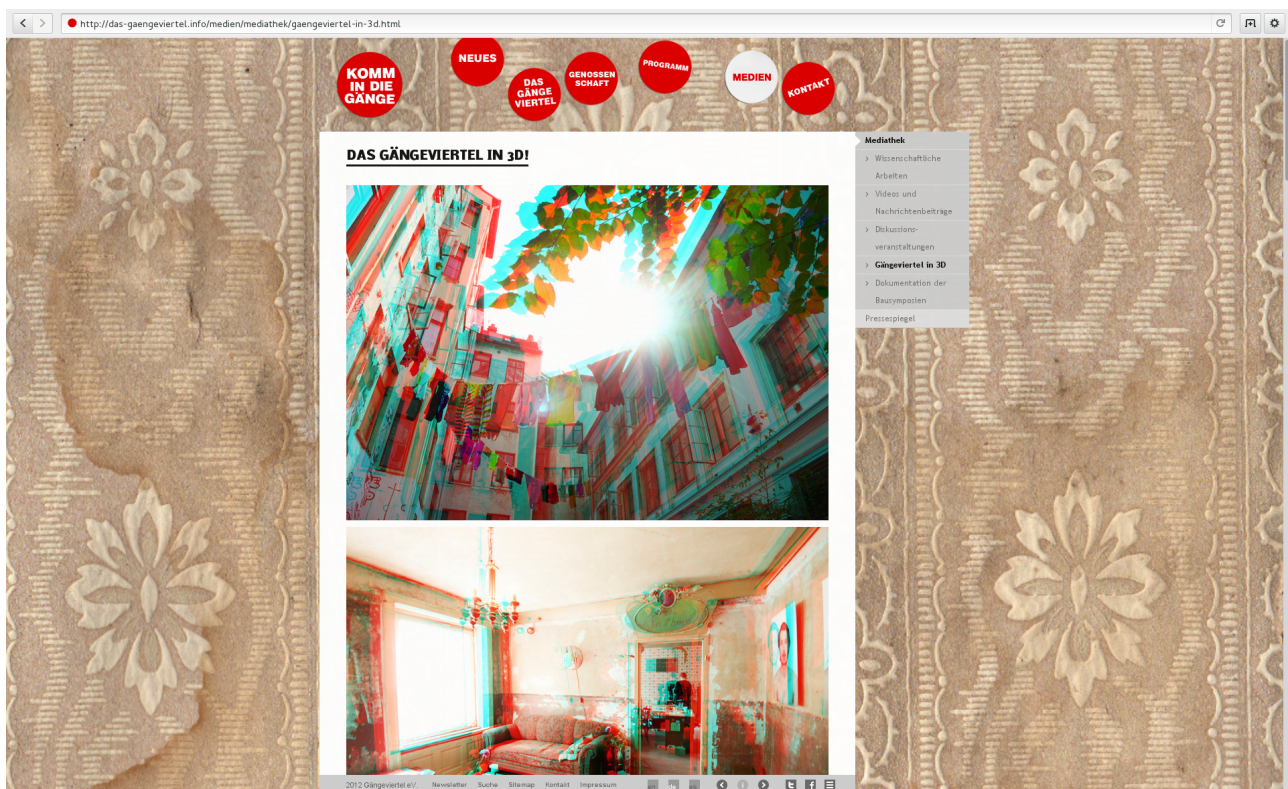

Figure 3: Screenshot of the Komm in die Gänge movements website: anaglyph photos explicitly manifest space. (http://das-gaengeviertel.info/medien/mediathek/gaengeviertel-in-3d.html)

Clearly, the *Komm in die Gänge* movement, is quite successful in constructing a space of value, historic relevance, and collective heritage. This is in strong contrast to the image which investors and city management originally tried to establish: that of a deprived, run-down relict of a poor past. Ultimately, the movement is successful, and the quarter is being renovated in its historical state. Nonetheless, mingled feelings persist with the authors: will the renovated old building substance again become an upmarket estate? Has the creative community once again served as a stepping stone for neoliberal city developments, as a compliant tool to create exclusive spaces?

A similar feeling must have struck the politically active creative community in Madrid in 2008. With Soho and its development in mind, an investors' group "bought a whole neighbourhood", i.e. the majority of business premises ("Triball 'compra' un barrio", headline in the news paper *Cinco Días*, cf. Casamayân, 2008). Especially awkward was how openly the consortium admitted that letting artists use some of the premises until the buy-out completed had to goal of up-valuing the neighbourhood, which formerly was characterised by drug abuse and prostitution (cf. Campaña anti-triBall 2008a). A social movement formed, but ultimately could not convince the residents of the *barrio* that the investors' efforts were not solely altruistic (cf. ibid., and Feinberg 2013). The economic crisis stopped the development, a social cleansing of the quarter was effectuated anyway. The most visible impact is a formerly "park-like" square, which was completely paved and deprived of any amenities like benches, or trees giving shadow. The social movement also made extensive use of maps (cf. Fig. 4), which is why we mention its example here, although research on this development is still under way and will be the subject of a separate contribution.

Figure 4: Flyer of the Campaña anti-triBall*, using maps.*
Campaña anti-triBall (2008b).

The final example case is set in Sevilla. During the workshop this contribution is a report of, a member of a local protest movement was interviewed (May 2, 2013). The movement opposed the erection of a tower in the immediate vicinity of the historical city centre, parts of which are classified as a UNESCO world heritage site. The interviewee, actively involved in the protest movements, recounts the beginning:

> So the great bank of Andalusia [note: the Banca Cívica] was [...] formed in
> 2004 – if I'm not mistaken – out of several smaller banks ...
> "we have a great bank here in Andalusia, so we need a place for it, and it
> has to be as great as the bank is", you know, "and as great as we are".
>
> This of course was totally stupid, because in comparison with other
> Spanish banks [...] it is small. Actually it was a savings bank at the
> beginning [...] the idea came up: why not build a tower – it's a symbol of
> banks, a symbol of capitalism.   (Ernesto)

But it is not the symbolism of capitalism which is the major concern of the activists. The tower is to be built in a declared recreation and protective zone, near the river banks, and just on the rim of the historical city centre. The land is property of one branch bank of the Banca Cìvica, and authorities are very obliging with its rededication.

We were protesting against the tower itself [...] we built up a citizen platform against it, and we were people from many backgrounds – I was here mainly involved with ecological movements, also have friends of related movements, and landscape preservers [...]

We had plenty of arguments against it: ecological irritation, landscape conservation. We had plenty of arguments. (Ernesto)

The website of the movement lists a number of well thought-through arguments against the tower: the expected negative impact on the city's landscape, and its cultural heritage; the unfortunate location it was built at, and the traffic impact it would thus create; it's symbol for excessive economic and urban speculation; its opposition against the proven and tested Mediterranean city model; that as a co-operative association the bank could not ethically justify to spend money on a project which the majority of the population opposed.(cf. Plataforma Ciudadana ¡Túmbala! Contra la Torre Cajasol 2011)

Apart from the website, the protest group ran a street campaign to inform their fellow citizens. Soon, the information campaign employed maps as a more accessible way of communicating the impacts of the building:

And one way of fighting against it was to draw maps. If you say: "Hey, there's going to be a tower of 180 meters" ... "So what?" They couldn't see the impact of the tower. Not economically but also not in the landscape. [...]

I think it [the maps] totally was a central role, because it was ... when they saw "where was this place?" – I haven't said that, but it is on the border of the city centre, this is a national heritage zone – when they saw it was in that exact point [...] near the city's historical core – they were: "Hey, how are they going to put it there?" Because yes – they were building a new place in that district, but the [...] district is very large, soo ... [...]

The maps were key, crucial. (Ernesto)

The group collected around 4000 supporters' signatures, and sent them to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre with a petition to put the Sevillan world heritage sites onto the list of heritage in danger. The argumentation behind it followed the UNESCO's view of landscape, which is defined as bi-directional: also the view from a monument site is part of its landscape.

Ultimately, the petitions were put down by the annually meeting UNESCO world heritage committee, where Spain's representatives could convince their fellow members. As of mid-2013, the construction is nearly finished. The activists feel defeated, but see their case confirmed: "We were in the [UNESCO] committee for three consecutive years ... [sighs]" (Ernesto).

CONCLUSION

The discussed examples of protest movements are quite different in their settings, their manifestation, and their outcomes. What they do have in common, is a creative usage of maps, and other cartographic representations. However, while the movement in Sevilla consciously employed maps, and believes they significantly underlined their arguments, the groups in Madrid and in Hamburg only partly and by chance resorted to maps, and their impact is not yet assessed. This essay stands rather at the beginning of a longer research project on the usage of maps by political movements. It only discusses the current progress, and will most likely be followed up by further contributions.

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