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Database Visualizations, Mapping and Cartography

Genealogy of Space. Visual
Representation for Knowledge in Art

Art and technology awareness is used in new media as a strategy since 1989, the end of the Cold War. It symbolises the analogue to digital system conversion and the end of industrial mode of production. It also implies the dominion of public social space under surveillance and the impact on landscapes, among others. Cartography is a system of visual representation of knowledge to display in exhibitions of contemporary art solving problems to society under value of ethics. Also it belongs to Genealogy of Space, a categorization initiated by Foucault with panoptic and heterotopia, which continues with non-site, atopia, distopia, utopia, the permanent site of power, TAAZ (Temporal Autonomous Zone and Borders). All physical or non-physical spaces are conceptualized in an embodied/disembodied effect on the subject. Psycogeography is another system of representation giving solutions as heterocronos or real time, an approach to performance. The deconstruction in dada objecthood and the meaning of surrealist images make contemporary cinematic visual era understand what Tarkovsky in this film *Stalker* synthesizes under the meaning of the cave, a manner of production art in relation to society. Then, art turns into a visual representation of knowledge and its strategies of visualization, representation and displaying are affected by progress, history and evolution. This implies the displacement from the unique vision (the plane earth in modern age) to complex models of visualizing (affected by NASA and aerospace) producing systems as video.art to net.art, that are representing, communicating and informing. The more significant contribution in that field of research is Fredric Jameson dealing with the cognitive map and how about visualizing information under matters of subjectivity and translation of meaning and also the codification and hermetism of the point of view that Buckminster Fuller tries to solve in the Dymaxion map representation. Databases, mapping and cartographies encounter in conceptual art an immediate precedent. Using documents and

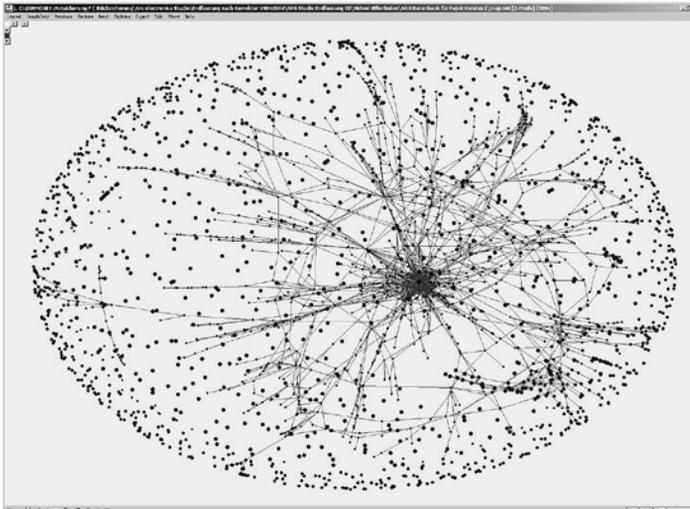


Fig. 1: Database Visualization Photo: Gerhard Dirsomer Ars Electronica Database

art & language aesthetic based in lists, alphabetical order or archives, the 70s conceptual art is based in the relations of art and memory. Nowadays database visualizations are the site of documentation and materialisation of knowledge, based in software and interfaces. In that sense, maps and diagrams are the resulting site depicting data but recognising the incomplete representation on computational machines. As Ascott appoints, in future the connectivity of computers will set up the total intelligence of humanity. On the contrary, media art databases are considered by Alan Turing an impossible ideal representation because of random access to information and the searching determinism in browsers. Webstalker by I/O/D is one of the art alternatives to Google. From Nam June Paik's *Random Access* (1960) to Josh's *On They Rule* (2005) databases, nomadic politics and decentralised poetics encounter in post-capitalism a deterritorialized space surviving from system hazard, building the common global village of Lev Manovich. In that database visualization displaying of data, information and knowledge, are more than 600 existing models of database visualizations of information, basically diagrams based in softwares like thesaurus or processing. Gerhard Dirmoser and Ben Fry are working on them. Many types of software (basically based in artistic opensource tools) are being used as a mapping strategy to display an interactive visualization of the cyberspace flows. Based in cybergeography, they are trying to depict the density flux of communication networks, databases and many other networks. Also named and recognized under categorization of mapping the net, they are using clusters, processing and pure data. Some common examples are Antidatamining, Antoni Muntadas, Ethan Miller or Warren Sacks. Mapping the city is based on the counter-map ideology of Fredric Jameson. One of the main points how to act is the surveillance displaying. Many actions using locative media are

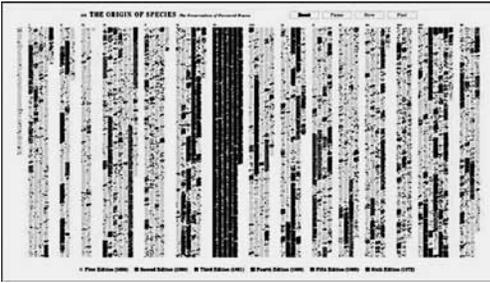


Fig. 2: Database Visualization

Photo: Ben Fry On the Origin of Species: The Preservation of Favoured Traces

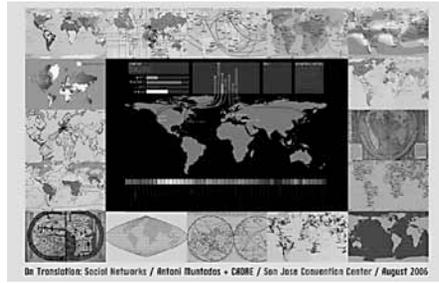


Fig. 3: Mapping the net

Photo: Antoni Muntadas On Translation Social Network

recognised as well as tactical media, although there are some differences between them. Soundscapes are included in that field of research trying to deconstruct the relation within space, time and sound. Artists as Jodi, Stanza, Manu Luksch and medialabs around the world display and research with opensource, mainly, to improve data conditions in public space. These co-existing different strategies to map the city are working with surveillance, traffic, weather and pollution, security and health, among others more abstract as feelings, identity or memory. Also, data displayed in streams is dealing and confronting publicity vs information. From situationism to psychogeography, the contemporary art devices display into the city strategies not to perceive the city as a decorative stage for massive corporation, but such a place of memory, refusing the commodification of non-place and the unifying landscape. Since surveillance has turned into merchandise, other tools to socialise public space (implies strategies in communication, location, weather or transport) are being used for artist to build so called DataCities. The George Orwell Big Brother control and securitizing system is now reality. Landscape implies an understanding of melancholic aesthetics where the ethos of subject turns into a participatory agent in history who reading the memory of landscape turns it into the poetics of the space, field of artists.

References

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