Positions through Iterating

Landscape photography and satellite imagery of the earth have always been very interesting to me. I found myself being fascinated by the details of nature and topographical patterns that emerge when zooming in and out with tools such as Google earth. I find myself using Google Maps every single day even though I would know the exact ways on where I have to go. It's only function to me is getting from point A to B. I found myself becoming completely reliant on the app's directions, to the point where I was oblivious to my surroundings. This raised the question: Is this reliance on the app akin to blind reading? How can I navigate so blindly with a tool that was designed specifically for that purpose?
This has made me want to investigate the way on how we interact with digital navigation tools and how our way of reading them gets influenced by colours, gender, perspective, experience and knowledge.

Satellite Collections *Jenny Odell*

I came across Jenny Odell's project, where she collects Google maps images of structures, that she arranges one next to the other like a collection of objects. I found this project interesting because she uses Google Maps as an archive tool to document man-made objects while bringing them into a new context but with a sort of scientific view. I agree with her definition of the earth as an all-readable surface which made me question if we can interpret the Earth's features and phenomena like text and how our reading works when using technological navigation tools? In her project, Jenny Odell chose not to assign names to the objects, however, when we engage with maps, we tend to interpret them as textual narratives, relying on named landmarks and streets for navigation. So how does technology influence our ability to "read" the Earth? And how do we touch the earth through our smartphone?

I remember when I was a child and I would travel somewhere with my parents they would buy a paper map of that place in order to navigate. Interpreting those maps felt daunting, demanding a certain level of comprehension to navigate effectively. However, with the advent of virtual mapping tools like Google Maps, this intermediary step becomes obsolete.

Geography as Imagination *Giuseppe Dematteis*

In Geography as Imagination, Dematteis has collected four short essays that, on one hand, recount his journey as a geographer, and on the other hand, investigate the very essence, more hidden, of the subject. He says that Geography opens up new worlds and at the same time concludes the one in which we live. This made me realize that Google Maps categorizing information into layers such as roads, landmarks, and businesses organizes geographic data in a structured but also concluded manner within its digital realm. It is based on a grid, that provides a framework for dividing the Earth's surface into smaller tiles, each containing geographic information at various levels of detail. The grid is made out of lines that represent the way on how we navigate. Ultimately humans can only walk straight, if

there is a focus point that they can see. North, West, South and East become irrelevant and the only directions that matter are left and right.
What happens when you attempt to disrupt or deviate from the established grid? Can navigation still be achieved? A grid typically implies something that is structured, defined, and complete, so how does navigation fare when this structure is challenged or broken?

What is a Kaleidoscope?

A kaleidoscope is an optical instrument that creates many different symmetrical patterns and designs by reflecting loose, coloured objects inside a tube containing mirrors, often used for entertainment and visual stimulation. This raises the question of perspectives and how the Kaleidoscope can offer a diverse range of viewpoints of the Earth, potentially breaking away from the conventional grid. Can it function similarly to a satellite camera, capturing multiple spectrums? While a kaleidoscope is often associated with seeing beauty, what about seeing the less attractive or hidden aspects? What role do optical instruments play in the context of travel and exploration?

The Death of the Author *Roland Barthes*

The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* ‘confiding’ in us. (Roland Barthes, [1967] 1977, P. 143)

Comparing my iterations from week one to week two I realized that my first approach was more experience based and personal whereas the second set of iterations was based more on an objective view. As Roland Barthes says in his book the interpretation and explanation of a work is often sought through the lens of the individual creator's perspective, experiences, and personal expression, rather than being purely objective. In map design, the choices made by cartographers — including what information to include or omit, how to symbolize data, and which projections to utilize — contribute to a subjective viewpoint. However, when designing something, the question shifts from "What would I do or want?" to considering the preferences and needs of the audience. Where are the limitations when it comes to that and can design ever be completely non subjective?

Fruitone *The guide for colour blind people*

This project is interesting to me because it addresses the limitations of colour as a navigation tool, while making it easier for individuals with colour blindness. It uses colour as an organizing principle and challenges the notion of colour as an absolute and fixed property, highlighting instead the dynamic and subjective nature of colour perception.

An aspect that caught my attention during my investigations was the colour scheme used in Google Maps. After noticing numerous negative reviews from users regarding Google Maps' new colour palette, I became curious about how colours are utilized in technological tools and their resemblance to natural or organic colours. I wondered about the impact of these colours on individuals with colour blindness and how they could be adjusted to align more closely with nature while still being efficient for navigation. What factors determine whether these colours are easier for navigators to interpret? These questions make me want to explore the representation of colours in digital navigation tools and their implications for user experience.

Census, Map, Museum: Imagined Communities *Benedict Anderson*

Anderson emphasizes that maps provide a tangible and concrete representation of the nation's geographical extent, reinforcing the idea of a bounded and unified entity. They delineate borders, define territories, and depict the spatial relationships between different regions within the nation. Colonial powers used maps as tools of domination to assert control over territories and to justify their presence by mapping and claiming ownership of land. In this context, maps became instruments of power and served to shape the perception of national boundaries and identities. Given that the majority of maps have historically been crafted by men, they tend to reflect a more masculine perspective. This limited perspective may overlook or marginalize aspects that are significant from other viewpoints, potentially reinforcing gender biases within the cartographic representation. This brings me to the male gaze concept, which links on how to understand digital maps and how they can shape perceptions of space, borders, and identities through their data, algorithms, and design choices.

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