Remapping the Map *(A Media Manifesto 2019)*

We live in an era of velocity. Every action one performs is one of direction and speed. We limit our leisure and treat it as a step in the right direction. The rush to reach the next point using a rational amount of time is encompassed in the machines we depend on. We've arrived at a point in time where the idea of a map has been revolutionized. No longer is it the stagnant piece of information that has been prewritten, and must constantly be manually rewritten and redistributed. No longer do we adapt our bodies around a piece of paper to interpret a space, but rather the roads and paths bend on our screen according to our point of view. The conception of the Global Positioning System, or GPS, became a turning point for the way people relate themselves to their environment. The world around us is now augmented with the voice of our personal devices, creating a space in which we don't cultivate our geographical intuition, but rather ride on the programmed intuition of a third party system. We refuse to accept that there's a way of getting to a location without the guidance of satellites. This is caused by the one restraint, the same one that drives us to navigate the world and our time through the element of velocity: time. In a world where efficiency is equated to success, speed is of utmost importance. The GPS has embedded the idea in us that we will always know how long it will take to reach the next point on our route, instilling us with the perceived power of having control over our time.

The GPS has been translated into a variety of forms that serve different purposes. The navigation system in a plane is partially used for tracking to avoid collisions in flight paths, in addition to helping them navigate the air, where there are no landmarks. However, the form that we are most used to is Google Maps-- a mapping system that tells us exactly how many minutes to walk in a certain direction to attain a specific location. Normally, one enters two points into

the mapping system. People rarely, almost never, enter a location in between that is not absolutely necessary to go to. The purpose is to get from point A to B, without potential for exploration or the expectation of increased familiarity. The pale colored lines of the digital map remove character, with areas filled with culture, tradition, and danger reducing to calculated and expressionless lines. Google maps and the GPS in general, with their intention of acquainting you to your surroundings, has achieved something entirely different. It makes you oblivious of your surroundings until you need to pay attention to the next set of directions. The concept of wandering has been wiped off the map entirely. After inputting their point of interest, what often happens is a total disregard for surroundings that are not directly relevant to the route. When someone is told to stay on their current path for 5 miles, their thoughts shift from looking for landmarks and understanding the area around them, to other details that they have the space to think about now that they don't have to figure out the various configurations in routes that will get them to their destination. After years of living in the same place, it is very possible that someone would not know how to tell you to get from point A to B, as their device has guided them between those points for the entirety of their experience with them. The digital map is a method of restriction-- restricting oneself to a set of paths between points and hence a limitation to their knowledge of extraneous paths that may not exist within the system. It should instead be a method of exploration; of accidental learning and grounded understanding of the ecosystem one exists in.

Walking around a neighbourhood with google maps has created a scenario of heightened isolation. Directed walking is no longer about taking the route that will allow you to run into your friends, nor is it about choosing the route that will allow you to pass by that one house with

the tree in front that has roots like octopus tentacles. Reimagining the satellite- based digital map to be a tool for education and inquiry, as analogue maps were once used for, would invite the idea that direction and navigation no longer have to be restrictive. Every step one takes, rather than representing one less step to take towards a target, could represent one more step towards a realm of spaces uncharted by oneself. There are inevitably a set of problems that come with this. One of the most obvious problems would be the fact that most people don't have the time or energy to wander aimlessly and to chart their own paths. Commuting, however, doesn't necessarily have to be pointed and uncompromising.

In rethinking the dependency on digital mapping systems, several alternatives for the uses of maps both in and out of the context of art arises. Maps can force one into exploration through restricting the number of times it will allow you take a particular route. Rather than setting a parameter of distance and location, one should be able to set a parameter of time. Given a set amount of available time and the direction one has to walk in, the map would suggest paths. It would periodically give you time to wander around a spot and find landmarks or items of interest that other people have tagged to the map previously. By predetermining the time parameter, it is eliminated from consideration in terms of the velocity equation, leaving only direction to be taken into consideration. The main element that needs to be returned is play, which will almost inevitably lead to a greater visceral and psychological understanding of place. This is assuming that one even has a limited amount of leisure time to be able to conduct such an exploration. Perhaps this could be a way of incorporating productivity into leisure, and therefore people would be more inclined to allow themselves leisure. Instead of viewing potential routes from the scale of most efficient to least, the map could solely provide the least efficient route, giving the

viewer the opportunity to initiate a search for a more efficient route. Isolation is manifested not only in the lack of a sense of place, but also in the way that the map makes no effort to connect the viewer with people around them, and rather causes them to avoid the traffic of people, to take side streets and shortcuts. If digital map measured activity of a specific area, and allowed one to choose to surround themselves with people or not, perhaps the phenomenon of running into acquaintances or meeting new people would increase, breaking people's monotonous daily rhythms and creating a space for learning. The common GPS disregards these factors, purely focusing on the geographic aspect of place and time.

Being acquainted with a place is often taken for granted. As soon as something becomes familiar, one's curiosity is often lost. Wandering is devalued and deprioritised, and the deep understanding of space and politics is overwritten by satellite formed images and coded line. Machines are built to be efficient. However it is this inbuilt value of efficiency and velocity in the machines we use that reinforces the desire to be efficient. A rethinking of people's relationship with a place and how they navigate their lives requires a restructuring of the interface between human and geography. At this specific point in time, this interface is best represented by the Global Positioning System, and is calling for radical change.