Contemporary cartographic factories : from modelling
to empirical practices ?

Research Seminar under the supervision
of Laurence Corbel and Nicolas Thély

Session 2

Mapping the Republic of Letters:
mapping practices as heuristic
instruments for digital humanities

June 23rd & 24th, 2014 – Université Rennes 2

Session organizers: Alexandre Dupont & Robin de Mourat,
　　　　　　　　　PhD students, Arts : Pratiques et Poétiques.

Session's topic

The first session of the seminar "Contemporary cartographic factories" dealt with the notion of cartographic constrains by studying the creative translations of OuLiPo's methods to the field of map-making driven by the OuCarPo collective. This second session is the occasion for us to focus on the role of *mapping* in humanities' research, as a vector of renewed analytical and heuristic practices in a digital context. It involves numerous methodological and epistemological hybridations, and addresses some concerns deeply engrained in the realizations and reflexions of the *Digital Humanities* movement.

In that way, we will use as a structuring case study the project *Mapping the Republic of Letters*, conceived thanks to collaborative experiments engaged between researchers, engineers and designers at Stanford University since 2007. The main purpose of this interdisciplinary collaboration is to explore and analyze, through the production of mapping tools and artifacts, a huge corpus of letters exchanged between several intellectuals of the Enlightenment during the 17th and 18th century, and identified under the name of Republic of Letters: a digitized litterary production taking the form of a database gathering more than 55000 letters and documents exchanged between 6400 correspondants.

Mapping the Republic of Letters represents an exemplary challenge for scholars because it questions data analysis practices in the humanities and their epistemological groundings in a digitized context: while academic standards of disciplines such as literature would usually focus on *close reading* practices, these new types of mapping tools and environments provoke a movement to *distant reading*, aiming at interpreting *patterns* that emerge from the maps actively produced by researchers, that would allow to formulate or to verify new types of research hypothesis.

The attention given to this famous project in the *Digital Humanities* is the occasion to welcome two major actors of the *Mapping the Republic of Letters* initiative. Thanks to the participation of Nicole Coleman (Academic Technology Specialist) and Giorgio Caviglia (designer and design researcher), we will be able to gain some first-hand insights from an empirical approach of mapping practices in the digitally equiped humanities. What does produce the spatialization of research data? How to conceive and comprehend the territory produced by these heuristic analysis tools – we would rather speak of *apparatuses*? To what extent could these cartographic forms renewed by digital technology be qualified as the result of an abstraction process, and how does it question humanities research's established paradigms? Finally, how to understand the notion of *pattern* interpretation (T.N.: the word *pattern* is hardly translatable in french language) and how to define the specific types of knowledge produced by such a methodological approach?

This session will be held in english.

Program

Day 1: humanities' research through the lens of *mapping*

9h30-10h   *arrival and introduction*

10h-11h15   Giorgio Caviglia, *Stanford University, San Fransisco*. –
"Mapping heuristic practices for the Republic of Letters."

11h15-11h30   *pause*

11h30-12h   Alexandre Dupont, *Université Rennes 2*. –
"Why mapping and scientific value of patterns."

12h-12h-30   Robin de Mourat, *Université de Rennes 2*. –
"Digital mapping instruments and scholarly communication."

12h30-14h15   *lunch*

14h15-14h45   Virginie Pringuet, *Université Rennes 2*. – "Mapping
contemporary public art: moving borders of public space."

14h30-15h30   Anne-Lyse Renon, *EHESS/CNRS, Paris*. – "Design as a verb:
graphical methods for semantic change modeling."

15h30-16h30   Laurence Corbel, *Université Rennes 2*. –
"Artwords.org – mapping artists's stories."

16h30-17h   *pause*

17h-18h   Nicole Coleman, *Stanford University, San Fransisco*. –
"Story of the Mapping the Republic of Letters project."

Day 2: workshop – "*mapping* (and) research questions in the digital humanities"

9h30-12h   formulation of research questions on the basis of two datasets –
exploration through mapping with RAW and Palladio

12h-14h   *lunch*

14h-17h   making of provisionnal maps to answer research questions
defined in the morning, cartographic tools' specifications to
feed them.

17h-18h   results' presentation – account of the questions raised by the
session.

Practical information

Dates

June 23th & 24th 2014.

Place

Université Rennes 2, Campus Villejean, Place du recteur Henri Le Moal, Rennes.

Bâtiment B, espace recherche.

Access : Métro Villejean–Université.

For more information

Secrétariat de la cellule recherche ALC – Nelly Brégeault-Krembser : 02 99 14 15 04.

Session's organizers : Alexandre Dupont (alexandredupont.rennes2@gmail.com) et Robin de Mourat (robin.demourat@gmail.com), PhD students at APP under the direction of Nicolas Thély.

Credits

This seminar benefits from the support of the Actions Spécifiques de l'université Rennes 2. It is a part of the research program La fin des cartes ? Territoires rêvés, territoires normalisés [Institut Actes (Paris 1) – Equipe Arts : Pratiques et Poétiques (Rennes 2) – Centre Scientifique et Technique du Bâtiment – Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Toulouse – Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs Laboratoire – Géographie–Cités, équipe E.H. GO (Paris 1–Paris 7) – Laboratoire CALHISTE (Université de Valenciennes) – Laboratoire Arts des Images et Art contemporain (Paris 8) – Electronic Literature Research Group (University of Bergen) – FRAC Centre – Espace Khiasma – Revue Leornardo (The University of Texas Dallas, School of Arts and Humanities, Arts and Technology)]. This session benefits from the support of GIS M@rsouin and the Région Bretagne.

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