

Title of your exhibition piece *

From Point A to Point B

Short description of your proposed exhibition *

(250 Words Max)

What happens in the empty space between data points?

The NYC Open Data platform provides data on the taxi and bicycle trips of New Yorkers. For technical and ethical reasons, these data sets contain only the starting and ending points of the trips, and not the in-between route, and even some data sets do not provide the GPS-based coordinates. This piece attempts to fill in the space between the points through a combination of data methodology and poetic exploration, thereby imagining the experience of the travelers.

Using the starting and ending points included in bicycle and taxi trip data sets, this piece imagines the unrepresented and undocumented experience of the traveler during their journey in the in-between space. The trip data include timestamps that indicate when events occurred, which this work uses to choose a trip that happened in the corresponding time of day. A custom program estimates the route of the journey, using the Open Source Routing Machine (OSRM)'s recommended route, then extracts points of interest (landmarks, businesses, etc) around the route. Using NLP methods and tools such as ConceptNet, as well as parameters drawn from additional data sets such as traffic speed and crime stats, the program then generates a fictional narrative of the journey that the traveler could have experienced, but almost certainly did not.

A visualization of the trip is projected onto a screen, while a printer prints out the generated itinerary and narrative. The methodology of this work is presented through an academic paper format, available at the venue.

Short description of how your proposal relates to the theme of "Not a Number" *

(250 Words Max)

Data do not simply represent reality; they are reflective of specific worldviews ingrained in their collection and usage, and conducive to imposing said worldviews to the world. Data are supposedly revelatory, but data also act as a force that shapes reality.

What does this mean in practice? To an urban data researcher, data that lack details can be frustrating. Data-based models are hungry for more data and granularity; when these latter are unavailable, data methodologies tend to fill in the blanks and estimate what is not measured by employing assumptions and proxies. While data are often associated with objectivity, in practice they involve imagination and interpretation as much as any field; creating fictitious versions of the unrepresented in-between space, while hoping that these work well enough for practical purposes.

This piece nods to this data-based attempt to guess the in-between spaces, the fissures of data. However, it also acknowledges the fundamental irreconcilability of data and the world it represents. Instead of trying to render the world into an 'accurate' fixed state, we explore the different potential states opened up by the sparsity of data. We take the idea of inventing realities quite literally, creating speculative accounts based on people's journeys documented in open data sets.

This work is an illustration of data methodologies' reliance on guesswork and assumptions, which invent numbers where measurements do not exist. At the same time, it is a poetic exploration of people's experience rendered invisible through its abstraction into numbers.

List possible NYC Open Data that you plan to use *

- Citi Bike System Data
- Yellow Taxi Trip Data
- Real-Time Traffic Speed Data
- NYC Park Crime Stats

Please list any materials you plan to use and or need to exhibit your work (e.g. screen, projector, etc.) *

1 Projector
1 Desktop (Mac Mini would be the best)
1 Screen
1 Laserjet Printer