**The urban bias of Pokémon Go**

Pokémon GO, as most probably know by now, is a massive cultural mobile gaming phenomenon with people obsessively hunting their surroundings for Pikachus, Charmanders and more.

But for some, the journey to “catch ‘em all" is tougher based on where they live.

A chief mechanic of Pokémon GO involves finding “PokéStops”, which are checkpoints where players can replenish vital supplies like eggs, potions and Pokéballs – items necessary to collect and maintain a growing stable of digital battle monsters and increase a character’s strength.

But the physical location of these pit stops are found in publicly accessible spaces of local significance, creating heavy concentrations in urban corridors and leaving many players in rural areas and suburban neighborhoods struggling to keep pace.

“Only landmarks near me are the post office and some dilapidated bookstore that looks like it went out of business 10 years ago," said <a href="https://www.reddit.com/r/gaming/comments/4s81ah/when\_your\_town\_is\_pokemon\_af/d57b77k “ target=”new\_”>Reddit user Czsixteen last month</a>, echoing sentiments found on social media and message boards across the Internet.

PokéStop and gym locations in Pokémon GO are drawn from developer Niantec’s previous augmented reality project, Ingress, a game where players on two opposing teams compete for control of crowd-sourced portals, which were repurposed for Pokémon GO.

The game is really built for pedestrians, and perhaps cyclists, with the hatching of new Pokémon eggs tied to how far you walk. Driving and playing Pokémon GO is discouraged by in-game messages and common sense.

Data from the <a href=”https://www.ingress.com/intel"target=”new\_”>official Ingress intel map</a> reveals a favoritism toward public spaces with landmarks in dense urban corridors – historical markers, statues, museums, old churches, skyscrapers, street art, city parks and the like. Gyms and stops around residential suburban communities are fewer, further between and stretched across landscapes less friendly to walking.

<img src="http://striblab.github.io/datadrop/20160803\_pokemongo/img/pokestops.png" width="100%" />

Pictured: The in-game view from residential Maple Grove (left) and from Downtown Minneapolis (right) with PokéStops represented by the blue checkpoints.

Big public spaces in urban areas are prime Pokémon hunting territory, including the downtown cores of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Victory Memorial Parkway, the State Fair Grounds in Falcon Heights and elsewhere across the Twin Cities and their first-rung suburbs. The further out one gets, the more private residential areas emerge and the harder it gets to find these game markers.

<iframe id="datawrapper-chart-Nk5V5" src="//datawrapper.dwcdn.net/Nk5V5/1/" frameborder="0" allowtransparency="true" allowfullscreen="allowfullscreen" webkitallowfullscreen="webkitallowfullscreen" mozallowfullscreen="mozallowfullscreen" oallowfullscreen="oallowfullscreen" msallowfullscreen="msallowfullscreen" width="100%" height="450"></iframe><script type="text/javascript">var embedDeltas={"100":616,"200":511,"300":494,"400":467,"500":450,"600":450,"700":450,"800":450,"900":450,"1000":450},chart=document.getElementById("datawrapper-chart-Nk5V5"),chartWidth=chart.offsetWidth,applyDelta=embedDeltas[Math.min(1000, Math.max(100\*(Math.floor(chartWidth/100)), 100))]||0,newHeight=applyDelta;chart.style.height=newHeight+"px";</script>

Some locations have complained about Pokémon hunters flooding neighborhoods where rare creatures have appeared and there have been complaints from the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. and other less-than-appropriate locations for video games as well. Niantec <a href=”http://www.nbcnews.com/tech/video-games/pokemon-go-creators-working-remove-problematic-pokestops-n619856“ target=”new\_”>has reportedly been working to remove PokéStops and gyms from organizations that have filed complaints</a>.

The ability for players to request new PokéStops was briefly available some weeks ago, but has since disappeared. A Niantec representative said a “huge number" of requests have flooded in for new Pokémon GO stops and gyms, and that the company isn’t in a position to process them until the game completes its global launch.

<style type="text/css">.dataframe { height:900px;} @media only screen and (min-width: 200px) and (max-width: 767px) { .dataframe { height:980px; }}</style><div class="embed"><iframe class="dataframe" src="http://striblab.github.io/datadrop/20160803\_pokemongo/" border="0" frameborder="0" scrolling="no" width="100%" height="900"></iframe></div>