

Imagining the Details: Happy Places and Creative Geovisualization

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The proposed visit to the utopian No-where of Now-here is a glimpse of an emerging human science as challenging as anything ever imagined.

Gunnar Olsson, 1991¹

1. Imagination Stations

'Imagining the Details' privileges collaboration and the idea of 'critical-creative engagement' to explore the limits of data, visualization and the representation of lived, imagined and imaginary geographies. This paper takes seriously Gunnar Olsson's invitation to join his excursion into the 'Land of Thought-And-Action,' the unknown territory in which the geography of the future or the future of geography (and mapping) will be written. The journey to the Land of Thought-And-Action epitomizes Olsson's critique of cartographical reasoning in particular its grounding in the geometric mode of (re)presentation. The challenge is, as it is stated in the epigraph, that we must find our way by relying on 'maps of the invisible,' themselves invisible and therefore requiring us to think beyond the usual limitation of (visible) representation.² For Olsson, the process starts with a departure from geometric forms of rhetoric that privilege demonstration and representation in favour of those still waiting to be invented, created and imagined, since that which cannot be spoken or shown may still nevertheless be imagined.³ Matthew Edney and Denis Cosgrove's 'mapping' make similar assertions to think beyond cartographic forms of representation in favour of other non-visual, non-geometric spatial mappings.⁴

Our project is equally inspired by an essay titled 'What is a Station?' in which Molly Nesbit, Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Rirkrit Tiravanija propose a new model of thinking about art, not as a series of objects - nor even as a set of relationships or social gestures - but as a 'way-station.'⁵ That is, for Nesbit, Obrist, and Tiravanija, contemporary art can present such interesting opportunities for social and political encounter because people increasingly pass *through* it rather than encountering it directly. 'The Station in other words become a place to stop, to contemplate, to listen and see, to rest and refresh, to talk and exchange.' In direct contrast to the objectifying gaze of traditional arts analysis, 'What is a Station?' proposes a form of art that catalyses engagement rather than presenting a finished or resolved representation or message, in essence thinking art *geographically* as a site rather than as a series of objects - art in place *and* engagement in place. It also marks art's expanding field of theory and practice (as well as geography's own expanding field of operations) - artists'

changing orientation and attentiveness toward a site, not just as a physical fixed location, but as a fluid space of making and shaping.⁶

Between the invisible spaces of Olsson's new cartographies and the fluid spaces of Nesbit, we see Obrist and Tiravanija's stations as an opportunity for rethinking the usual relationships between geography, art and urban living - which we are conceptualizing as *imagination stations*. In particular - in the context of this project - we are curious about the potential contribution such a rethinking might make to the discussion about homes and housing. Rather than thinking about homes and places as static sites, we are curious about what it would mean to dislodge some of the fixedness of these terms and the power dynamics that come with them and allow them to be thought of in ways that include an imagined and emotional dimension. Terms such as 'home' and 'place' are key for us, since this enmeshing of concepts is both a metaphoric and a material articulation of place that is unfixed and incommensurable with the ways in which home is traditionally thought. We believe that the complexity of social living cannot be adequately mapped using only rational, data-driven or informatic methods. We are searching for ways to include more grounded and embodied, yet critical and creative, methods in processes of building forums for dialogues and the re-imagining of urban space. We intend to foreground often very complicated details of urban living, telling and mapping the stories of the city and its inhabitants as it *is imagined* rather than simply as it is observed and assumed. This intention is anchored in the belief that the diversity of inhabitants in urban environments anchors an equally diverse set of imaginations - not just what people do, but how they imagine. Beyond the *facts* of urban living lie the actual *experiences* of living in urban space. We believe these experiences have both geographic and artistic components that are necessary to consider if one seeks a detail-oriented method of representing the complexities and unknown territories of urban geography. In this, we join an increasing number of scholars who are beginning to embrace abstract modes of data and analysis that value 'representation' and 'mapping' in a different way. These include Christian Nold's examination of emotional bio data⁷, Trevor Harris's spatial narrative of 'deep geography'⁸, William Heat-Moon's 'deep mapping'⁹, Stuart Aitken and James Craine's 'affective geovisualization'¹⁰, Angela Last's 'experimental geography'¹¹ and Harriet Hawkins' 'creative geographies'.¹² Each of them forms an attempt to present the juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, and the discursive and sensual.¹³ These efforts of reconstructing maps and mapping allow us to explore and attain a deeper understanding of people and places, as distinguishable from that of the Cartesian pictographic and Euclidean geometric world of observation/representation.

This project also builds on our earlier collaboration, which offered a model for considering multimodal composites of real, representational and imaginary data.¹⁴ It expands our vision of bringing together sympathetic trends in qualitative geovisualization and contemporary generative artistic practices as ways to frame the different registers of story, information and detail that a map can generate. To address questions as complex as urban community and homelessness it is not enough to employ representational methods (e.g. conventional GIS/spatial analysis and mapping). More difficult and nuanced, but more interesting, is the challenge of honouring the complexity of place while building forums for dialogue and the re-imagining of space. By integrating multimodal forms of data (real, representational and imaginary) we model a method for including creative forms of data (some of which may even resist categorization as data) alongside more normative representational mapping practices, including those that highlight emotion, affect and the imagination. This paper shares contextualizing thoughts and design strategies for a project currently in the final stages of development. It uses multimodal forms of data alongside the metaphor of the *happy place* as a catalyst for imagining some of the complexities of urban precarity. The goal is to propose a form of integrated and multimodal mapping (a *station*) that can generate stronger

and more nuanced geographical and artistic insights into people's embodied and affective experience of urban space.

This paper consists of five parts. We begin with a discussion of creative mapping and geovisualization. In section two we highlight the way in which geography and arts proffer a new way to think about the space differently as a sensuous realm, and how creative geovisualization encompasses creative, digital, spatial and visual practices from this convergence. In section three, we address questions of urban space, geographic precarity and homelessness. We insist on new ways of approaching the complexities of homelessness and creatively rethinking and re-imagining what it means to be homeless. The design of our project, the Happy Place project, is explained in section four. An entire process of the project from conceptual framework to strategies, analysis and dissemination is discussed in detail. The final section reflects how an engagement with geovisualization and imagination embraces subjective, affective and imaginative forms of social and spatial meaning that are nuanced, relational, contingent and non-representational.

2. Creative Geovisualization and Mapping

The past decade has produced a veritable explosion in the use of maps, GIS and other new digital geospatial technologies to foster artistic, emotive and affective ways of knowing.¹⁵ A spatial turn has meant that the arts and humanities increasingly incorporate spatial thinking, and in parallel, a cultural turn has geographers more engaged in artistic and humanistic practices.¹⁶ Various interdisciplinary and hybrid methodologies are combined, including a growing body of creative geographies, socially-engaged public arts, participatory design and public scholarship.¹⁷

From this shift, a new way of conducting critical scholarship *with* and *about* mapping and geovisualization has emerged, one which can be regarded as a diverse evolution from critical mapping and critical GIS. Critical GIS in particular tried to find a way to reflect various epistemologies and ontologies and unfolded the mutual relationship between GIS and society.¹⁸ This new evolution, resulting in the discussion of qualitative engagement of/with geovisualization and mapping, is the convergence of geography, arts, and geo-humanities.¹⁹ We engage this new possibility of mapping for its capacity to provide attention to perceptual and creative representations, not just maps of precisely measured objects. We aim towards techniques that are not limited to charting what is known but rather towards exploring what is unknown. We also consider taking post-presentational or 'non-representational' perspectives on mapping, which re-theorize maps as processes and mapping practices as performances.²⁰ It is a denial of an ontological security of map, but a celebration of maps being always of-the-moment. transitory, fleeting, contingent, relational and context-dependent.²¹ We demonstrate that maps do not just re-present the world, but rather co-constitute and produce it in ways that are constantly in motion and ontologically insecure. We therefore approach maps as generative and 'imaginative entities.

Critical-creative geographies highlight the way in which geography and art proffer the potential to think and practice space differently. Creative mapping/geovisualization particularly opens up ways to think about understandings and experiences of space, valuing creative practices for their ability to question and deconstruct conventional norms and meanings, and to reveal hidden meanings, experiences and relationships.²² It aims to *map* urban space as it is experienced, interpreted and performed rather than by traditional Cartesian representation. Embodied experience and affective relations were central to the Situationist International (SI),²³ for example, where the 'view from above' is replaced by the

fragmented and subjective experience of 'going over.'²⁴ These revolutionary practices are well imbued with current discussions of critical-creative engagement and invite us to attend the emotional and imaginative aspects of the urban space. It offers a new way to think about the urban space as a sensuous realm that is lived, performed, contested and imagined.

Creative geovisualization also offers an unconventional way of examining geographic visual representation by highlighting the productive flexibility of visualization for fostering multiple ways of knowing and representation. Various new forms of geovisualization present innovative ways for us not only to describe space but also to imagine and produce qualitative, artistic and humanistic experiential and visual representation. Mei-Po Kwan, for example, explores the possibility of taking GIS as visual art that particularly expresses emotion, withholding any discernible spatial representation.²⁵ As a humanistic alternative to GIS and geovisualization, Anne Knowles' 'inductive visualization' epitomizes a creative, experimental exploration of the structure, content and meanings of place and people's experiences. Knowles and co-researchers showcase the examples of the Geography of Holocaust Studies, including the tableau diagram of *Einsatzgruppen* attached on Lithuanian Jews in 1941, the path showing the movement of Jews from various camp sites, and the mapping of silences in survivors' accounts.²⁶ Moreover, with an example of the 'Happening Now' map, Sarah Elwood argues how the visual politics of micro finance maps can operate through intimate abstractions that blend scientific objectivity, affect, intimacy, and expert and exploratory epistemologies.²⁷ These new trends demonstrate an evolution of our ways of integrating critical research of mapping and geovisualization, which has challenged the use of maps in creative ways.

In summary, geovisualization can help to better represent people's lives and experiences of space in a visualized form that has great potential to reveal often intangible and non-representable data. Differing from the ways that we usually present spatial data through cartographic maps, creative geovisualization can be used to represent the social, cultural and political relations that constitute the meaning of space that people experience, interpret and feel. Creative geovisualization can be seen as encompassing creative, digital, spatial and visual practices emerging from the arts and spatial humanities.²⁸ The integration of creative data, such as representations of emotion, affect and the imagination, with mapping and geovisualization points toward a new form of qualitative and affective geovisualization, one related to, but not limited by, more traditional approaches. Geographic visualisation becomes more expressive than representational and analytical as it specifically takes visual, artistic and humanistic forms. New methods for the analysis and representation of spatial and emotional complexity and the embodied/experiential and creative/imaginative are emerging in new qualitative geovisualization practices, moving the discussion of mapping and geovisualization into creative geovisualization.

3. Creatively Rethinking Homelessness

This project seeks to provide ways to reimagine the relationship between geography and living, in part motivated by hesitations around the ways in which urban precarity and homelessness are imagined as *problems* rather than as lived situations. In response, we want to re-emphasize the geographic and psychogeographic aspects of city living, eschewing the discussion of 'problems' for a preliminary attempt to engage the imaginations of those living in urban precarity.

This problem of constituting homelessness as a 'problem' has been much discussed. Important points of reference for our project are critical urban scholars like Doreen Massey,²⁹ Stuart Hall and Alan O'Shea³⁰ and Vicky Lawson and Sarah Elwood.³¹ They have written that economic and political processes and unequal material relations produce urgent urban

challenges. These challenges are held in place by social and cultural ‘common sense’ - the accepted wisdom in a society about what problems exist, what causes them, what should be done about them, what should not be done, what is the role of policy, government, citizens, and so on. However, existing common senses of the homeless may constrain us to the ‘imagined geographies’ of those who have the power to objectify the people that they are imagining.³² From this, we can hypothesize that creating new ways of addressing the challenge of homelessness will require new ways of thinking and imagining what it means to be homeless. In this, creativity is essential, because it can prompt our social, political and economic imaginaries outside of existing and socially taken-for-granted understandings of the issue. Creativity prompts us to ask new questions, to see and engage new publics, to re-imagine problems and their causes while attending to their inherent power, and to imagine new ways of responding to these problems.

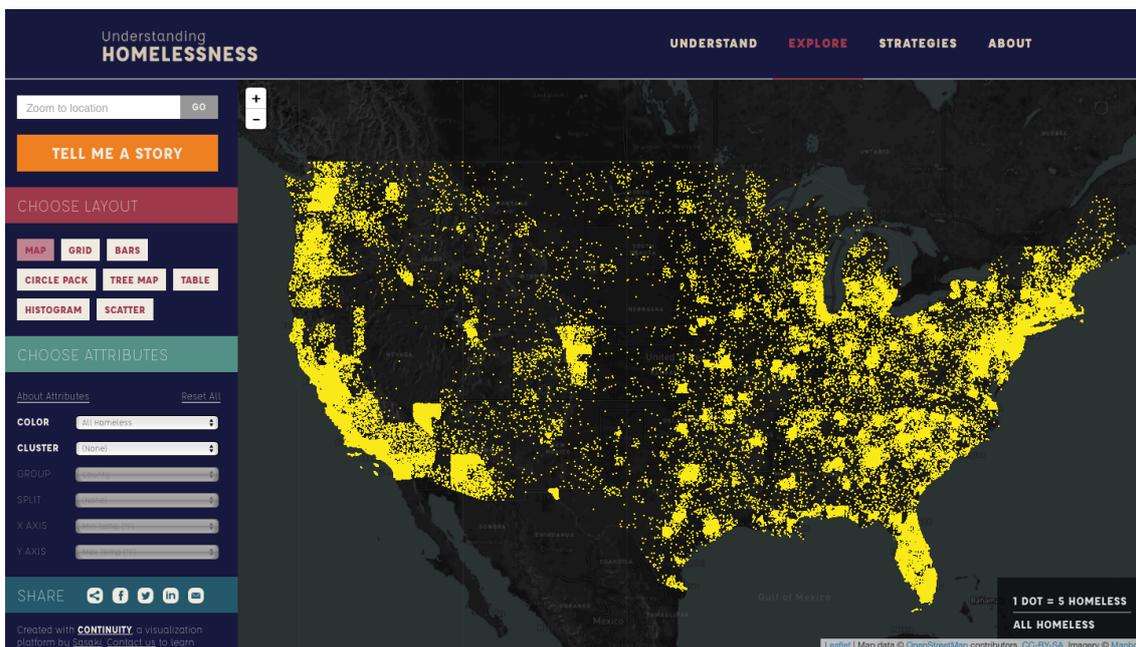


Figure 1. Mapping Homelessness (<http://www.understandhomelessness.com/explore/>)

Seattle/King County in Washington has the third largest homeless population in the United States, after New York City and Los Angeles City and County. A count of homeless individuals in King County in May 2018 reported over 12,000 residents identifying as homeless, 6,320 of whom lived unsheltered. More than 70 percent of the county’s unsheltered people live in Seattle.³³

Meeting and responding to the challenges of homelessness require a range of creative methods and forms. Mapping the location of homeless populations and tracking where and when homeless people congregate may help us to find the best locations for providing additional services and shelters (see figure 1). However, gathering this locational information may work in ways that are counterproductive for the homeless communities themselves, excluding them from public sites and forcing them out of public view.³⁴ The City of Seattle spent over \$10.2 million on the removal of homeless encampments in 2017 and exacerbated the insult by installing anti-homeless bike racks after clearing a homeless camp in a practice of hostile or even mean-spirited urban design.³⁵ ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute Inc.) is providing its own solution to local government for tackling homelessness – namely, apps for reporting the location of homeless individuals and encampments in the

community (figure 2). However, these new technologies have warped into very powerful surveillance instruments for high-tech community patrolling and serve mostly to exacerbate the problem. The authorities in Seattle promote the use of the *Find It, Fix It* app, a mobile-phone based app offering community members the opportunity to report selected issues (e.g. abandoned vehicle, illegal dumping) to the City of Seattle, as a homelessness-prevention tool.³⁶ Other methods might be used to report encampment. However, the *Find It, Fix It* app became popular with the ease and anonymity to 'pinpoint the location' of people experiencing homelessness. It epitomizes how we mistreat and misconceptualise the homeless as a technical problem and issue, that needs to be found and fixed, rather than a humanistic problem in need of engagement, empathy, care and help. The intention is not to provide a solution to homelessness. Instead, it is meant to provide a means for the new kind of critical and creative engagement to address and approach social issues imposed by homelessness.

ArcGIS Solutions for Local Government ▾ GALLERY COMMUNITY DOCUMENTATION 🔍 SEARCH

Homeless Activity Reporter

Home Get Started

Overview

Homeless Activity Reporter is a configuration of Survey123 for ArcGIS that can be used by the general public and engaged organizations to report the location of homeless individuals and encampments in the community.

Whereas the [Homeless Point-in-Time Counts](#) survey is typically conducted on a single night in January, the Homeless Activity Reporter application can be used year-round by the general public to report homeless activity in the community.

Health and Human Services personnel can configure the Crowdsourcing Manager application and Operations Dashboard for ArcGIS to monitor, verify, and assign reports to internal staff or volunteers that provide aid to individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Homeless Activity Reporter

Activity Observed •
The type of homeless activity observed

Individual

Encampment

Other

Automated deployment option
This ArcGIS Solution can now be quickly deployed in your organization with the ArcGIS Solutions Deployment Tool.

[ArcGIS Solutions Deployment Tool](#)

You may be interested in
ArcGIS Solutions for Local Government includes several related maps and apps that also can be configured in your organization:

- [Homeless Risk Reduction](#)
- [Homeless Point-in-Time Counts](#)
- [Health Resource Inventory](#)
- [Homeless Service Locator](#)

Figure 2. Homeless Activity Reporter in ESRI's ArcGIS Solutions for Local Government <https://solutions.arcgis.com/local-government/help/homeless-activity-reporter/>

The embodied accounts of urban dwellers will provide access not only to the material, but also to emotional and imaginative aspects of city life. The Homeless Vehicle project, designed by Krysztof Wodiczko, a New York artist, is a great example. It demonstrates a critical artistic and design engagement with creative geographies in the landscape of the evicted in New York City.³⁷ The Vehicle is used as a shelter, a means of transporting belongings, and as a utility for the scavengers. However, its importance lies more on shedding a light on the production of attention and the creation of a legitimized status for its users in the community of the city. Homeless people share the public spaces but their presence in the urban landscape is often contested. Their presence and visibility are consistently removed by institutional efforts to move them elsewhere - to shelter, out of to poor neighbourhoods, out of the parks, public spaces and malls to other marginal spaces. The Homeless Vehicle project is an intervention to empower the evicted by enhancing their identities and making them more visible. It is a means of producing and reproducing homeless peoples' space in ways that are more sympathetic to the geopolitics of exclusionary urban space. We draw from this moment of critical mapping to represent homelessness in our project as we engage in the broader social and discursive processes of

urban space.³⁸

Creative re-working of the homeless invites us to engage with those who self-identify as homeless, and by those who might not, acknowledging that homelessness is a both a lived situation and a technical category to which people are (sometimes against their will) held accountable. In the process, participants can freely explore the city, continuously encounter other people and places and truly tell everyday life experience by engaging with the city. For this, we have decided on a method of participatory and generative mapping where we are not ourselves generating the data points but rather inviting others to provide this data for us. Our project reverses the role of the homeless as the observed and as spectators by asking the homeless to be active participants the artistic process. We are also interested in exploring the inherent complexities of homelessness by recruiting participants from different strata and spaces of the community to participate in these acts of mapping and imagining. The goal of our project is to establish a critical interdisciplinary discourse and practice at the convergence of mapping, arts, and community engagement. We propose to build a site not simply for geographic and artistic engagement but one that aims to understand and respond directly to critical urban struggles.

We also imagine having moments of intentional *unmapping*, of not being mapped. Marginalized communities and urban inhabitants, such as the urban homeless, have sometimes struggled for visibility since they are often all too visible and this hypervisibility may mean increased public surveillance, control and the possibility of being removed from the public space and gaze. We invoke the possibility of giving freedom and rights to be concealed from the view. *Unmapping* is an intervention to empower homeless peoples to erase their identities themselves in their own rights by *unmapping*. We value these new ways of (un)mapping and imagine how we might better engage with others who share our urban space. We are interested in how homelessness is imagined – literally - by those who are categorized as homeless, and also by those who do not identify as such.

4. The Happy Place Project

Situated at the intersection of discourses of contemporary art and qualitative geovisualization, 'Imagining the Details' help us reimagine possible ways of interacting with multimodal data and examining the interrelationships between geographic data, narratives, photographs, videos, interviews and art works. We envisage these approaches to mapping and drawing in a similar way to Richard Long's Land Art³⁹ and the Situationist *dérive* in the sense that they are inherently more spontaneous forms of knowing the world. In our previous work, we called this kind of compilation a 'data portrait.'⁴⁰ Making these portraits accessible to the public is another goal of this project. In effect we aim to turn data portraits into imagination stations for the purpose of expanding the discourse of mapping and geographic visualization into a discussion on qualitative, affective and creative geovisualization.

The project is particularly interested in participatory, generative and ambiguous forms of data, forms of data that are irreducible to traditional forms of mapping and analysis. We see these forms of data as having dynamic potential, and we have set ourselves the challenge of trying to find ways to engage with the data without reducing it to an information set - to find ways to engage people without constituting a problem. As part of this process, we want to allow for an element of creativity and serendipity in the data itself, an ambition best achieved by setting loose criteria for what it is that we are actually measuring and mapping. We see this as a curatorial approach to generating data in the sense that we will be setting project guidelines for participants, but we do not and will not seek to control the final forms of their contributions.

4a. Conceptualization: Happy Places

This project is imagined as a contribution to the study of urban precarity and homelessness, but it approaches these topics obliquely. Our aim is to avoid the categorization of a population as 'homeless' and instead to engage the question of urban experience. In this way, we resist the idea of labelling people according to their lived circumstances and instead call on ourselves and others to shape more complex ways of imagining precarious urban experience. We have chosen the idea of the happy place as a conceptual marker for the work, embracing the complexity of geographic, affective and imaginary implications that such a term hold. The term is purposefully ambiguous, allowing -perhaps even requiring - reflective and imaginative thought in order to understand its operant modalities. In this sense, a happy place is the site of discourse and imagination that allows participants to reflect and represent their feelings of a particular place or moment. The effect is to unsettle the importance of place in a way that permits the examination of affect as a nonrepresentational modality for mapping and imagining. A happy place might be an actual place, a favourite bar or the public library. But a happy place might also be linked to a feeling - the place where one happens to be when experiencing joy, for example. A happy place can also be imaginary, a place one imagines oneself to be when in need of consolation, or a reminder of happy moments in one's life. Thus, a happy place may not always be happy. It may not even always be geographic - it might instead be psychogeographic. But in each instance, it will be marked by a certain imagination which contextualizes the ambiguity of the term in concrete, mappable ways. It would certainly be possible to find other similarly ambiguous markers for such a project. We do not claim that a happy place is exhaustive of the methodological possibilities we are seeking to model. Rather, the happy place concept stands as an example of a type of marker that can be deployed in ways that have capacity to engage both imaginary and real forms of data.



Figure 3. City Hall Park, Seattle, Washington (Authors Photo)

In order to situate the project in proximity to questions of urban precarity, our approach is

geographic rather than demographic. We will look both at places where complex and diverse urban populations congregate and at the pathways through the city that they imagine in their daily lives. To this end, we frame the project as one that attempts to map happy places in all the complex geographic and metaphoric ways in which such a term might be employed. Participants will be invited from downtown Seattle, specifically recruited from a site where we have a pre-established relationship with the local community, a monthly event in which free meals are distributed to those in need, taking place in Seattle's City Hall Park (in the downtown neighbourhood of Pioneer Square - see figure 3). We will also engage with two other public areas in Pioneer Square, Pioneer Square Park and Occidental Square. Each of these locations is frequented by a diverse range of populations - local residents, artists, business people on lunch breaks, but also tourists, sports fans, and members of Seattle's ever-increasing homeless population.

4b. Strategies: Tracker Technology and Participatory Drifts

As our mapping and unmapping tool, we intend to use Tile Mate trackers (<https://www.thetileapp.com/en-us/>), a small GPS and Bluetooth tracker designed to keep track of personal belongings. Buckets of trackers will be left at three prominent locations in downtown Seattle's Pioneer Square district: (City Hall Park, Pioneer Square Park and Occidental Square. The prompt on the tracker asks for participants (anyone who is curious enough to actually take a tracker) to 'leave me in a happy place'—and is conceived as an invitation to imagine and engage (see figure 4). As trackers are taken and moved, maps of their pathways will be created, providing three sets of geographic data that will each be correlated to the particular starting location. The goal is not to actually determine the 'happiest' place, nor to try and track quantitative and qualitative geospatial patterns among Pioneer Square residents, but to provide a data set that can be used to imagine different psychogeographic scenarios and possibilities. The goal is complexity rather than distilled analysis, possibility rather than fact, privileging the idea of individual imaginations as the driving forces behind the placement and replacement of trackers.

The Tile connects via Bluetooth to use the GPS in a mobile phone, providing a map that indicates where the device is located. While generally conceived as a personal-use device, our project uses Tile in a more creative way, not to track belongings but to mark moments and share experiences rather than monitoring mobile bodies. When left outside Bluetooth range of the owner's phone (generally about 150 feet), Tile trackers rely on a user network in order to help monitor location. Thus, there is a social element to these devices, which requires reliance on a community of users to provide effective location data. They are also symbols or tokens, markers of a certain idea about place and the city. They are questions, possible answers and suggestions.

Participants leave their Tile Mate in a place they consider to be a 'happy place' and we will collect the trackers the following week, noting the geographic (GPS points) and visual (photographic) data points which will be compiled along with a photographic portrait of the participant and audio recordings of a short participant interview afterward. The trajectory from the site of this project (City Hall Park) to wherever the trackers are left, will be considered (for the project) as both a drawing and a participatory drifting activity.

In our current conceptualisation the movement of trackers from public areas to user-selected sites can be thought of as a sort of 'drift,' in line with the Situationist conceptualization of the *dérive* as a meandering through urban geography. The Situationists defined the notion of drift (the practice of *dérive*) as a form of intervention towards the ways that urban landscapes preemptorily fashion behavioural modes of navigation. Drifting is a way of understanding everyday life experience by truly engaging with the city and it aims to the openness to

encounter with people and place. In his Theory of the *Dérive*, Guy Debord explains drifting as a dropping of usual motives for routine movement and as a way to let ourselves be drawn by the attractions of terrain and unexpected encounters.⁴¹ However, the factors that enable one to drift vary - according to corporeal, social and political conditions - and people thus have different capacity to drift. However, what does contextualize each drift is the unique set of circumstances embodied by any given individual, encountering themselves as inhabitants of physical and psychological space. Where sidewalks script walking to the curb, and stop signs impose a rhythm on the pedestrian flow, the *dérive* can be such an interesting concept because it intentionally ignores architectural scripts in favour of affective modulation and



Figure 4. Happy place postcard with shortened project statement

spontaneous directional change.⁴² This offers a new way to perceive the experience of the city as a sensuous realm that is lived, performed, contested and imagined.⁴³ We think of this as the opposite of (conscious) 'drawing,' allowing oneself to 'drift' through the city and finding meaning through random encounters through embodied action, all the while being (perhaps ironically) mapped in the process - mapping 'drift' of urban dwellers and their embodied

experienced of urban space.

The challenge for the Situationists was one of intentionality, how to achieve a properly *aimless* movement through a city-scripted space. Our solution to this challenge is simply to outsource intentionality to project participants, asking them to think about their experience of the city in affective and poetic ways. We think of this as a form of participatory collective *dérive*, in which one begins to experience the city anew through the motions of others. Massey gives particular importance to the potential surprise of space and to the encounter with the unforeseen, and argues that understanding of the spatial requires a resistance to stasis and closure.⁴⁴ We intend to generate a drift map that maps the ambiguity, flow, fluidity and openness of lived experience in urban space.

4c. Analysis: Data Portraits and Bluetooth Drawings

We liken the GPS maps this project will generate to an intentional mode of mark making, a form of drawing. Our vision of drawing is inspired by Richard Long's 'Field Drawing' in which he walked a straight line back and forth in a field until he had crushed the grass and plants, stomped the dirt and ground and unmistakably left his mark on the ground itself. Long documented his drawing with a photograph.⁴⁵ Participants in our project do the same. There are many other instances of this kind of mark making on a landscape, all of which also factor into our thought process and form part of the framing of the project for those involved. Artists such as Anna Mendieta (*Siluetas Series*, 1973-80), Robert Smithson (*Spiral Jetty*, 1970), Francis Albs, and Wafaa Bilal (*3rdi*, 2010-11) will be important reference points for both the explanation and analysis of the 'drawings' created, examining how a body, passing through space, can be understood as transcribing an object of substance.⁴⁶

The outcomes of both drawing and drifting activities will be transcribed onto web maps to show a composite representation of all participant pathways to their respective happy places (figure 5). The location of happy places can be mapped, along with connected qualitative, affective and artistic artefacts such as photos, narrative, videos and artworks as multi-modal forms of representation. For example, these GPS drawings will be supplemented by a series of site photographs, taken at the locations where each of the Tile trackers is found.

Importantly, the photographs are not imagined as documentary evidence but as catalysts for imagining the site as a happy place. Some creative rethinking of the camera is also needed, since cameras tend to flatten the affective dimensions of space. To move the photograph towards greater affective and poetic complexity, we intend to take a series of full spectrum images of each site, such that the infrared, ultraviolet, full-spectrum and optically 'normal' representations of each place can be brought together to metaphorically reinforce the kind of data complexity that we are seeking to generate (figure 6).

Other forms of data and response will be gathered as far as is possible, including participant interviews and informal responses collected from postcards and posts to an online comment feed that will be created. While these supplementary details are secondary to the main GPS and photographic data sets for the project, they are important for providing a dynamic and flexible range of ways for participants to scale their interaction with the concept of the happy place and its relationship to their own lived urban experience.

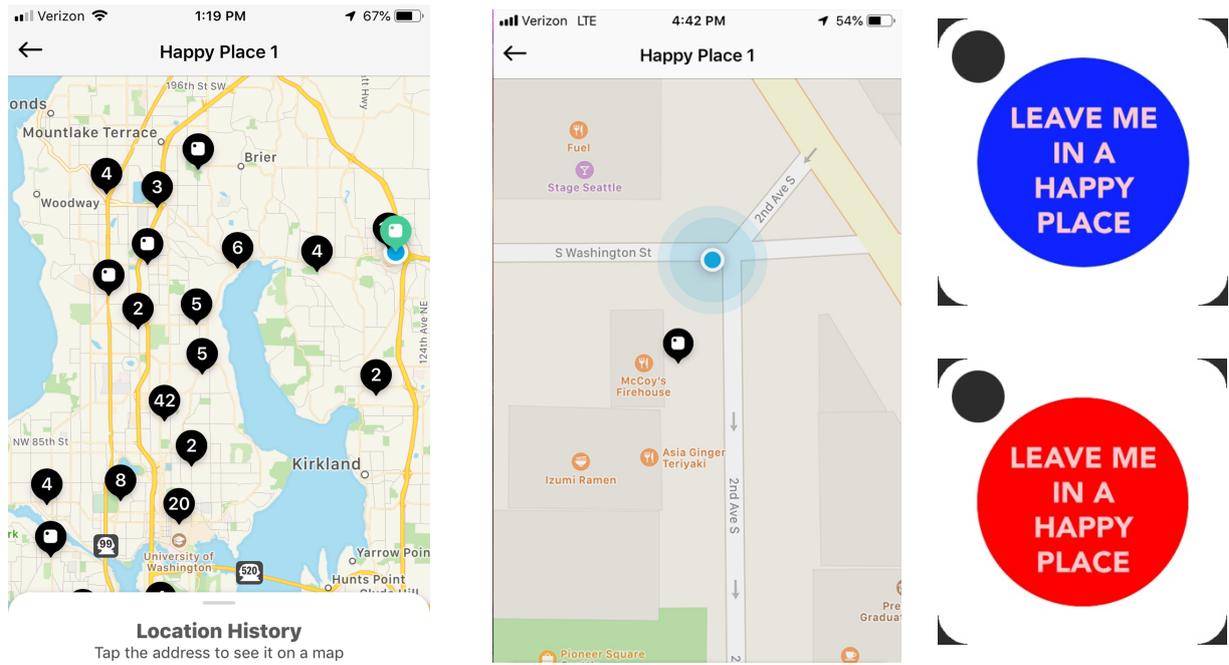


Figure 5: Prototype Tile tracker device and app showing location history of 'happy places' in Seattle



Figure 6. Pioneer Square Park. Clockwise: optically 'normal', infrared, ultraviolet, full-spectrum (source: authors photo)

4d. Sharing: Imagination Stations

Tracker drawings, photographs, interview data and narratives collected through postcard and online feed will be combined into a data portrait representing different registers of data. These data portraits will then be shared online, and available through the project website or by scanning a QR code that will be printed on stickers and left at each of the happy place sites so that passer-by can connect to the details of the project (figure 7).



Figure 7. Sticker marking the location where trackers are found, i.e. happy places.

Responses from the project will be compiled into *imagination portraits* that feature aspects of each participant's reactions to the experience. Importantly, we are not conceiving of these portraits as project outcomes, but as themselves generative of a next phase of conceptual interaction in which viewers, readers and respondents are encouraged themselves to adopt affective and creative interpretive methods and to imagine rather than analyse the works generated. To make this assertion is to insist on the blending of artistic and geographic visualization methods yet again, eschewing the traditional formality of research claims and contributions in favour of a dialogic request for contemplative engagement. For us, this is simply an extension of our participatory and collaborative method, imagining the ways that collaboration can help to provide new territories for speculation that are more difficult to find as individuals. Together we think about what it means to map the relationships of art, technology, visualization and space, focusing on new digital art and spatial technologies that provide us with possibilities for revealing, representing and imagining the world around us. We extend our work of integrating multimodal data, analysis and representation by integrating participatory and experiential and experimental forms of mapping and digital art practices and thinking. It provides us with new possibilities to map and imagine the spatial narratives such as homelessness. This mapping preserves, represents and generates a

strongly nuanced, contextual and deeply contingent representation of urban space, and mapping that foregrounds identity and imagining as a new way of engaging with the complexities of the lived and imagined experience.

We approach this through the idea of data portraits (which could also be conceived as digital maps) of contributors and their actions that can be dynamically engaged across a variety of analytic and creative modes. Taken together, we conceive of these bundles of data as *imagination stations*, archives of various registers of material and creative interaction that we plan to engage. They provide a way to foreground relational or dialogic interaction, proposing a mode of creative analysis as a complement to other forms of critical urban geographic analysis.

In our work, we insist on the imaginary for its unique capacity to provide visualizations of that which cannot be known directly. In some ways, it is to defy knowledge in favour of the imagination, or at least to put the two into an impossible dialogue of sorts. It is a visualization experiment, an imaginary exercise that exists first and foremost in their own minds. It is also a good excuse to talk about data - what it does and does not do, what it pretends and assumes, what it can and cannot represent. In regard to mapping, it will also help to ask questions over what can and cannot be mapped, and what should and should not be mapped. The data visualizations work well as provocations to take the imagination seriously - since that is what these participants are doing, and it is what we must do in order to access the relationality of the work. They are catalysts for 'our' imaginations of 'their' imaginations of what it might be like to be others, or mapping others' places. It is a circuitous loop - and that is partly the point.

5. Imagination and Geovisualization

We consider practices of mapping and geovisualization and demonstrate how creative geovisualization can be the meeting point between mapping, imagination and the material world. In other words, acts of imagination may take us out of reality. However, by the same token, they could return to the empirical world that which rational and informatic representation, schemes and experiences are based on. There certainly seems to be a complexity between mapping and imagination. On the one hand, maps tell spatial stories, express feelings, experiences and one's interpretation and those spatial narratives reflect and recreate realities. On the other, we also know that a limitation of visualization is that, as soon as stories of place and people are mapped, it can lose some of its potential to catalyse the mapmakers' and readers' imagination.⁴⁷ However, even then, we need not commit ourselves only to imagine what we already know and experience, and we can be more imaginative beings as we map. As a post-representational perspective on cartography moved from the representational to the processual, from ontology (what things are) to ontogenetic (how things become), we consider both maps and imagination as continuously recreated and reimagined process and emergent - mapping and imagining.⁴⁸

The blending of the critical and creative, the visual and material, demand a creation of interdisciplinary space of knowledge production between and across different disciplinary spaces.⁴⁹ Collaborative in vision, participatory and digital in method, and innovative in design, our project seeks to introduce new ways of mixing disciplines, devices and discourses in order to explore original and exciting new forms of geo- or spatial-humanities, digital geography and art scholarship. From the experience of our earlier collaboration, we learned how to try to hold our own analysis accountable to the propositions of complexity that we were arguing for in the context of the interdisciplinary nature of our project. We will continue exploring both the differences and the common currency between artists and geographers and will resist the idea of reducing the project to a set of firm or final

conclusion. A lowest common denominator of consensus is much less interesting than what we call 'a highest point of interdisciplinary convergence' – a place where creative and critical geovisualization methods meet the generative, participatory, and creative engagement of new media artists in attempt to render an (un)expected map of the links between the imagination and observation, the imagined and experienced, and representable and unrepresentable.

Our efforts to tap into ways of knowing that have been entirely unrecognized in most prior engagement with geovisualisation/mapping imply a shift from the Cartesian emphasis on accurate and precise representation of spatial objects and geographical relationships to mappings that embrace subjective, emotional, imaginative, even imaginary, forms of social and spatial meanings oriented toward nuanced, non-reductionist and deeply contingent ways of knowing. It opens up new possibilities for expanding the epistemological repertoire of qualitative geovisualiation through artistic and affective approaches. It also affirms that the practice of mapping is not what we see but what and how we perceive, conceptualize, feel, or *imagine*, considering how mapping unfold through a plethora of contingent, relational and contextual practices.

We also propose to think about the relationship between geovisualization and imagination from the perspective of *affective geovisualization*, which is an attempt to represent how affect occurs in relation to objects or entities and how these interactions or affects are *felt* as intensities in the body. Considering the relationship between affect and geovisualization requires us to address how representation and visualization also *affect* the production of affect - how representations may be bound up in non-rational forms of communication that have an impact upon the body, but not necessarily in completely rational or reflexively considered ways. We acknowledge that the rational and non-rational are socially produced categories with a power-laden history that matters in this constitution of affect. Though affect cannot be fully presented or *re-presented*, we may continue trying to map and evoke moments when affect is evident or try to believe in the affective power of maps and the possibility of mapping affects. Affects might be 'always already ungraspable and unrepresentable by thought (consciousness).'⁵⁰ Affective geovisualization responds to what Guattari called 'speculative cartography,' which requires us to continue to experiment with non-representational affect and affectivity while working on the map.⁵¹ The practice of mapping constitutes the visuals within which specific relationships between map subjects and objects are made imaginable. Also, affective geovisualization creates room for conversation about, and the imagining of other ways of knowing about places.

To end with a short speculation might be to return to ask about critical ways to engage creative methodologies and practices as a mode of critiquing, interrupting and revising dominant forms of knowledge production. Our project responds to this question by designing a research framework that is embedded in deeply important urban struggles around the homeless and shelter crisis. We propose to focus on systematically engaging the 'how' of different modes of knowledge making - how do we understand the workings of imagination and perception in ways that allow us to systematically understand experiential and interpretive modes of knowing, creativity, emotion and affects, and other perceptual knowledge? How can multiple digital technologies or modes of digital data be brought together to systematically and empathetically 'represent' the non-representational? How can we *map* and *imagine* urban precarity and unhoused by engaging through empirically grounded research? The dyad of *drawing* and *drifting* in the imagination stations structures the experiential and imaginative practices that the participants can engage in and interrogate various layers of data - real, representational and imagined.

Our efforts to engage the stories of others through mapping and imagining, considering layers of complexity through different representational and non-representational strategies, and our curation of imaginary experience is intended to render moments of interaction

between data, culture and the imagination, the critical and the creative, and the rational and the imagined, with practices of creative geovisualization. What we see is not what is happening but a marker of the fact that we cannot see what is happening. It might be only possible then through the invisible space of imagination that the map-makers can ever hope to understand 'the absent is made present, the present made absent.'⁵² Mapping non-mappable worlds can be a map-makers' nightmare; however, it could be their dream. Creative geovisualization works so well for this because it is fully co-opted by both the informatic drive to archive knowledge and the spirit of the creative dreamer. It is both, even though they seem to sit in opposition to one another and even though we do not really seem to be able to think in both ways at the same time.

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