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Geographies of virtual space and the problem of internet communication

Pavel Doboš

Introduction

- Virtual space, cyberspace, digital space
  - digitized, coded via software, algorithmized
  - not a „mirror“ of the real, but part of the real
- Subfield of digital geographies

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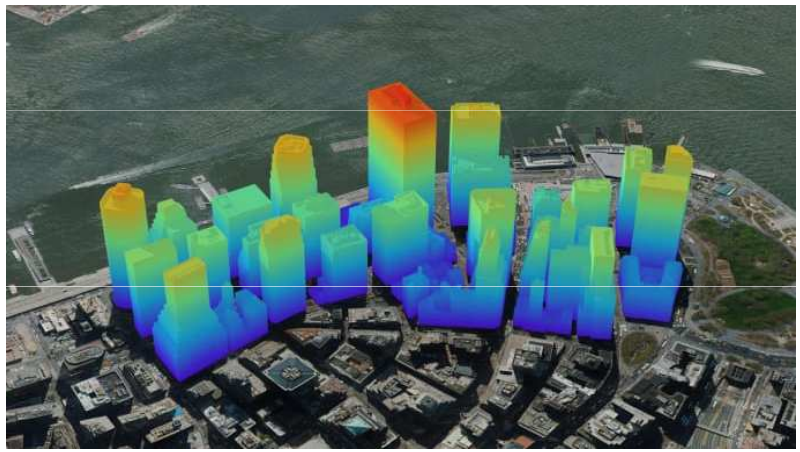
Geographies through the digital

- Geographies made through quantitative computational big data
  - epistemic rationalities imposed by digitally networked spatial platforms that render the objects and spaces of representation „knowable“ in ways that privilege abstraction and calculability
  - visualizations via aerial view preferred (i.e. Google Earth)
- Geographic information systems
  - GIScience, critical GIS



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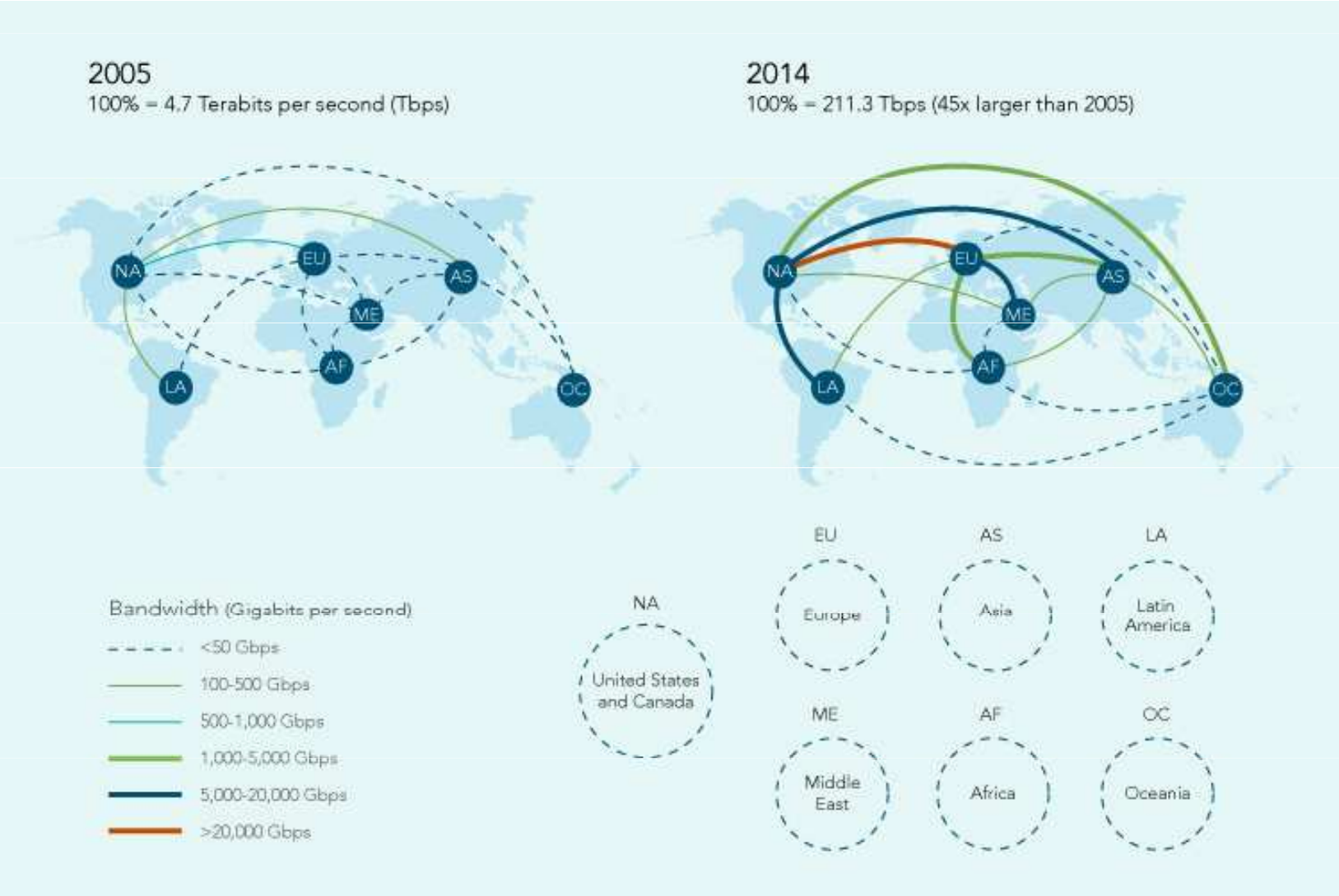
Geographies produced by the digital

- Production of space is transformed with digital media and software
  - global economic space, space of flows, space-time compression
  - code/space – ontogenesis of certain spaces via software codes and algorithms
- Spaces are being increasingly mediated and experienced through digital interfaces
  - locative media, geoweb, augmented reality
- Smart cities and big data governmentality
  - how populations are managed is mediated by information systems and databases

Geographies of the digital

- Virtual space/cyberspace geographies
  - predominantly visual understanding of space in which various computer-generated environments are accessed via a screen
  - spatialities of video games and social media
- Geographies of big data production
  - data mining and the emergence of data doubles
  - unequalities in the production of web content
  - problem of algorithmized automatic production of big data
- Geographies of Internet communication

Spaces in communication



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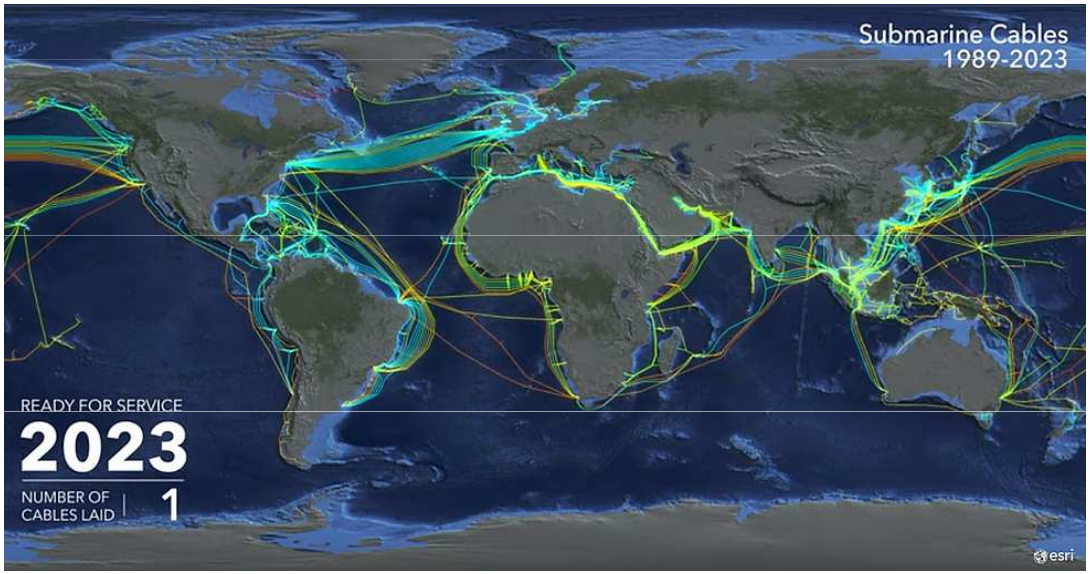
Communication in spaces



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Places in communication

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Communication in places

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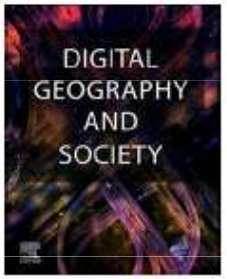

The exclusion of Others through Facebook: The technological unconscious, the Orientalist unconscious, and the European migrant crisis

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on Facebook's shaping of communication regarding the European migrant crisis in the Czech Republic. Topological spaces in communication with entanglements of inclusion and exclusion were produced by practicing the communication, with the mutual influence of two kinds of the collective unconscious, the technological and the Orientalist unconscious. The paper is based on a participant observation of Czech-language Facebook groups and pages where discussions about the European migrant crisis proliferated. Due to the technological unconscious, algorithm-induced "filter-bubbles" helped to separate discussions of different opinions about migration so people with anti-immigration attitudes could be building European free-thinking people identities who distrust mainstream media, and people with pro-migration attitudes were excluded and considered trustful "sheeple". Due to the Orientalist unconscious, European free-thinking people identities were strengthened by the sharing of ideas about uncivilized, irrational, and barbaric imaginative spaces of migrants' origin, which were entirely Other to Europe.

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Critical cartographies and the cartographic reason

Pavel Doboš

Beginnings of critical cartography

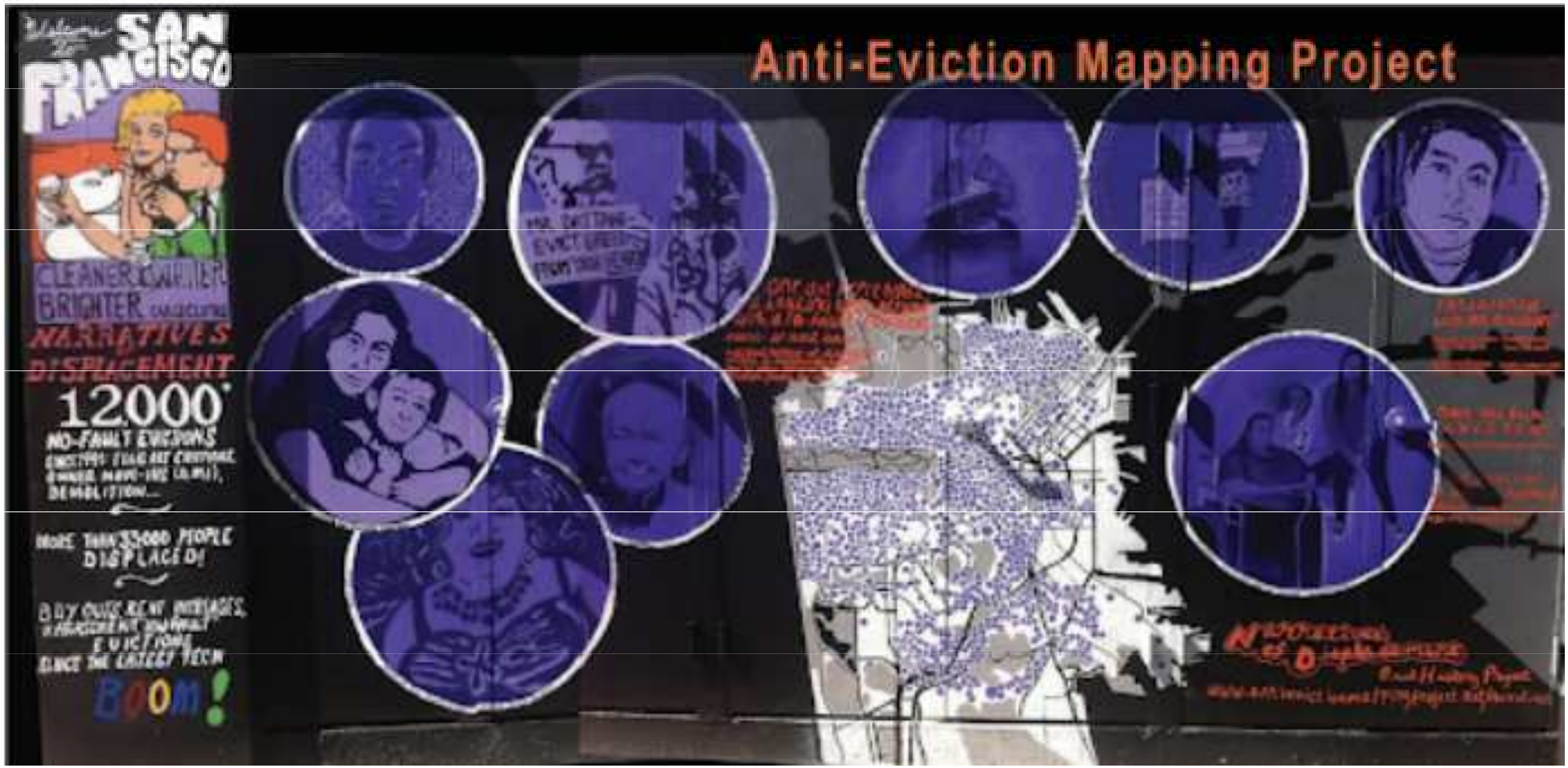
- 1990s: J. B. Harley
- Maps are not purely objective, scientific representations of the world
  - rather products of the social and political contexts in which they are created
  - tools of power and ideology
  - cartographer's choices highly important
  - instruments of control, surveillance, colonization, military strategy, administration, …
  - maps should be approached critically and deconstructed

Crit. cartography today – 1. approach

- Majoritarian maps must be scrutinized and criticized
  - all maps are subjective and influenced by the cartographer's perspective, as well as societal, cultural, and political contexts
  - maps can be used to assert authority, enforce boundaries, and marginalize communities
- Maps are not merely passive reflections of the world but active agents in its construction
  - they are performative
- GIS technologies can both challenge and reinforce traditional power dynamics
  - critical GIS

Crit. cartography today – 2. approach

- New critical maps must be created
- Participatory and community Mapping
  - democratizing cartography, giving voice to marginalized and indigenous groups
- Activism and counter-mapping
  - creating alternative maps that challenge dominant narratives and highlight issues of spatial justice
  - visualizing social inequalities, environmental problems, …
- Ethical considerations
- Experiments with alternative visualizations


SAN FRANCISCO
Anti-Eviction Mapping Project
NARRATIVES
DISPLACEMENT
12000
NO-FAULT EVICTIONS
BOOM!

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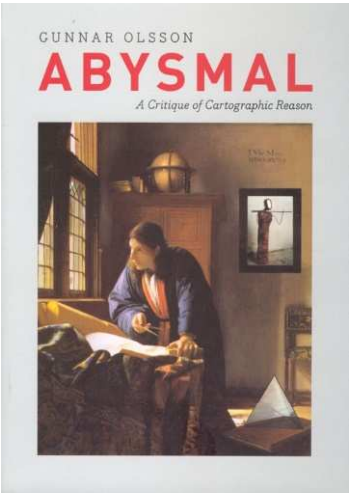
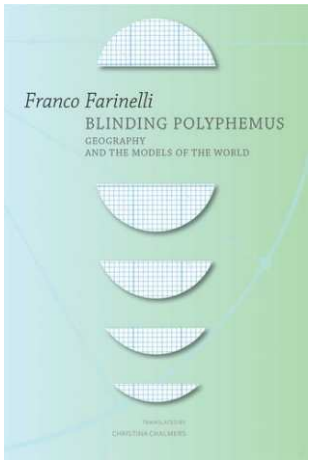
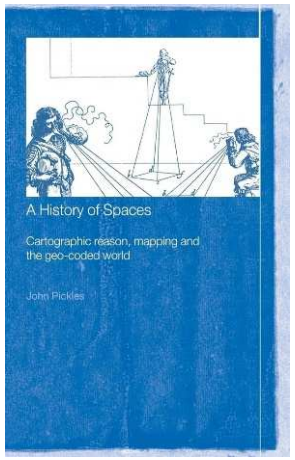
Critique of cartographic reason



- Mapping the (practice of) mapping
  - Gunnar Olsson, Franco Farinelli, and their successors
- Cartography is a rationale for much of Western philosophical thought
  - cartography is ocular-centric, accentuates a geometric approach to the world, and is able to structure our thoughts on a canvas. It stabilizes the world in synchrony, persuades us to perceive the world of and through boundaries, and is a utopian practice for world improvement.
- Our belief in modern maps is almost religious





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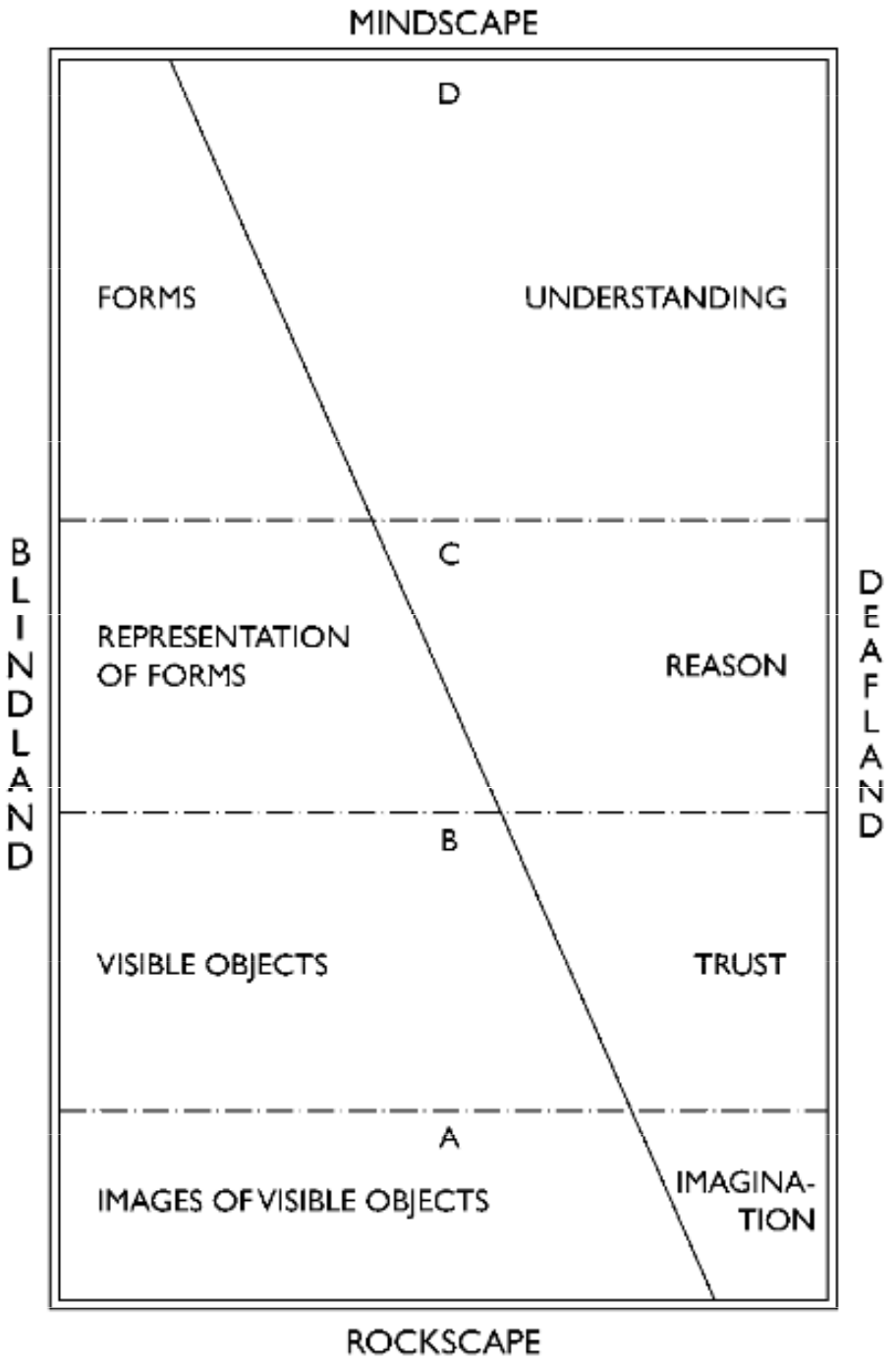

Administrative map of Plato's *Republic*.

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MAPPING

MAPPING IS TRIANGULATION

TRIANGULATION IS THE GEOMETRY OF POWER

THE GEOMETRY OF POWER IS THE PRACTICE OF CARTOGRAPHICAL REASON

THE PRACTICE OF CARTOGRAPHICAL REASON IS THE CRITIQUE OF MAPPING

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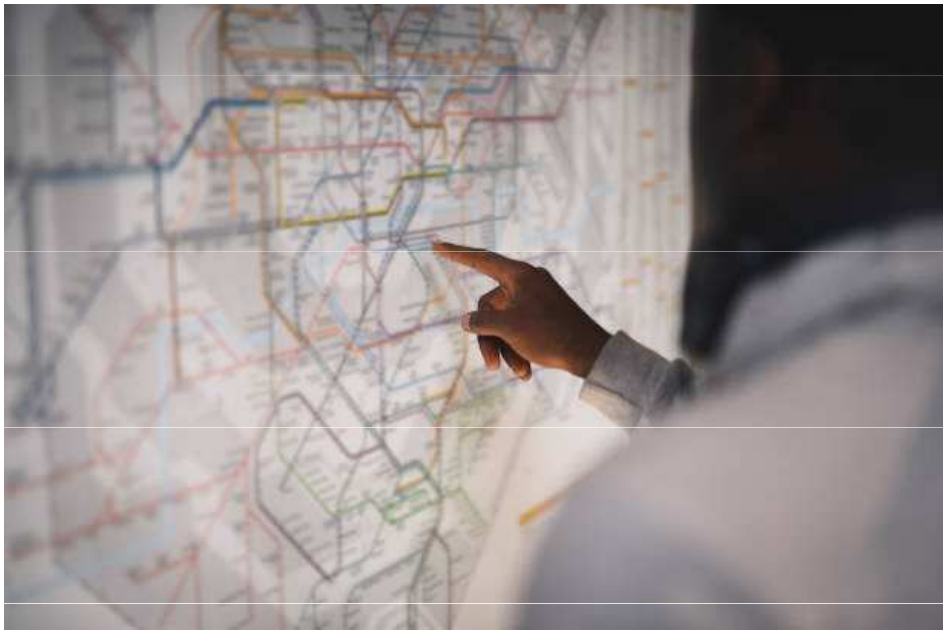
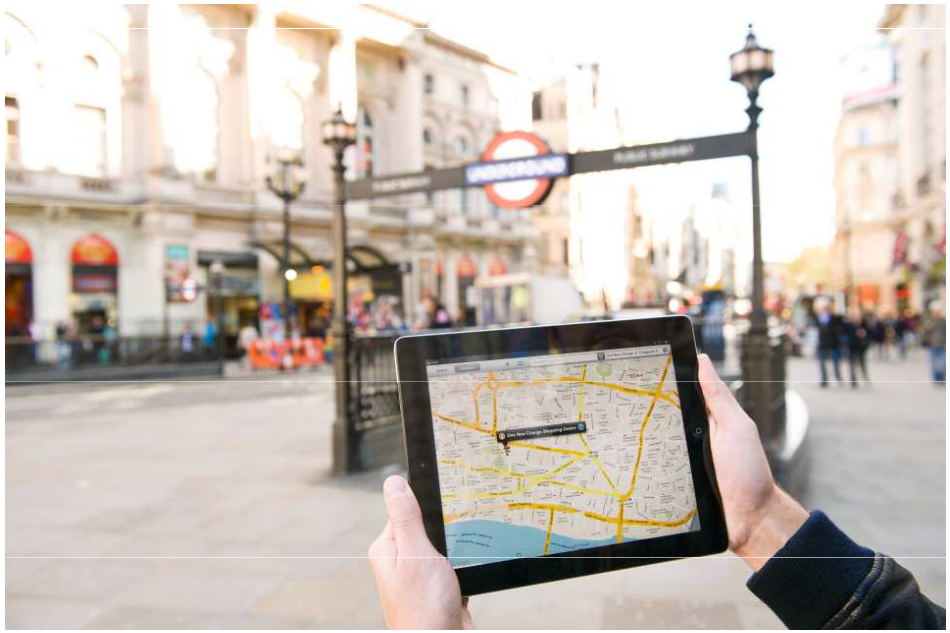
Post-representational cartography

- Mapping as a set of practices rather than just the production of stable inert images
  - processes, interactions, and performances involved in map-making and map-use
- Mapping as embodied and situated knowledge
- Mapping as plural and ontogenetical
  - maps are not fixed but are constantly evolving through their use and reinterpretation
  - maps are relational tools that help to negotiate and produce spatial understandings
  - maps have agency
- Maps as unstable and mutable objects
  - object-oriented cartography