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# PEREGRINATIONS

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## **Introduction: Thoughts about Spatial Humanities and Urban Experiences During the Long Fifteenth Century**

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The collection of articles in this issue of *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art & Architecture* is the outcome of the expert meeting, “Spatial Humanities and Urban Experiences During the Long Fifteenth Century,” that took place on 11 May 2020, hosted by le STUDIUM (the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Universities of Tours and Orléans, France) and the Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance (CNRS) in Tours.<sup>1</sup> Because Covid-19 was raging, and because of the *confinement* in France, the presentations and discussions took place online. These “Mappings” articles are based on the online discussions and address

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<sup>1</sup> Results incorporated in this article have received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement Nr 665790. In 2019-2020 Margriet Hoogvliet was LE STUDIUM Fellow at the Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance in Tours with the project “Religious *lieux de savoir* in premodern Tours and Orléans: A Social and Spatial Approach to Religious Reading in French (c. 1450-c. 1550).”

spatial approaches and urban experiences in the late Middle Ages: the movements of courtiers through the streets in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Paris (Boris Bove); textual and cartographic representations of Frankfurt am Main in the late Middle Ages (Felicitas Schmieder); and social and spiritual factors at play in the clustering of artisans of the book and booksellers in Tours around 1500 (Margriet Hoogvliet and David Rivaud). In this introduction, we address some of the theories connecting the three articles, along with other points addressed during our discussions.

### **Theories of Place, Space, and Medieval History**

Since the “Spatial Turns”<sup>2</sup> in the humanities and in historical research, place and space are no longer considered inert backgrounds against which history unfolds, or as elements shaping human culture in a deterministic way; instead, the study of the interactions of human culture with the natural environment, or the co-shaping of constructed urban townscapes and human

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of theories and applications, see Susanne Rau, *History, Space, and Place* (London: Routledge: 2019).

behavior, has proven to be a highly productive avenue for innovative historical research.<sup>3</sup>

As touched upon below, despite continuous research and theoretical reflection since the 1970s, “place” and “space” are still notoriously slippery concepts widely used with a great variety of meanings. This is not necessarily a bad thing; it signals the richness of both notions. For instance, space can be used in social and communicative terms, such as in Jürgen Habermas’s “public sphere,”<sup>4</sup> and materialist feminist theory has further elaborated ideas about place from the perspective of “place making” and situated gendered perspectives.<sup>5</sup>

No study of spatial history can be complete without referring to Henri Lefebvre’s *Production of Space* from 1974, a French work with a philosophical and Marxist social approach to urban planning. He was primarily concerned with modern urbanization and the reproduction of social inequality. Strongly inspired

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<sup>3</sup> Seminal examples include the micro-ecologies of the Mediterranean as studied by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002). In addition, archaeological research often uses Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory by including the agency of objects and environments in the analysis of prehistorical sites, such as in Bjørnar Olsen, *In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> See for instance: Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

by Marxist ideas about capitalist societies, Lefebvre was particularly interested in social spaces. Lefebvre proposed a theory of human space, in particular of spaces that are the result of social practice, by studying them from physical-mathematical, mental, and social perspectives. This work resulted in the famous triad of “perceived, represented, and lived spaces.”<sup>6</sup> Although this is an attractive model, its simplicity is often misunderstood, reducing Lefebvre’s ideas to these three points does not do justice to his philosophical approach’s complexity.

Edward Soja used some of Lefebvre’s theories of space in combination with Michel Foucault’s work on heterotopias and surveillance for the development of “thirdspace,” an adaptation of Lefebvre’s “*espace vécu*” (lived space). According to Soja, this third critical perspective on space entails “a growing awareness of the simultaneity and interwoven complexity of the social, the historical and the spatial, their inseparability and often problematic interdependence.”<sup>7</sup> For Soja, spatiality, sociality, and historicity are closely

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<sup>6</sup> In French “l’espace perçu, l’espace conçu and l’espace vécu”; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 38-39.

<sup>7</sup> Edward Soja, “Thirdspace: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical Imagination,” *Human Geography Today*, Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Philip Sarre, eds. (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 260-278, at p. 261.

connected: “The three terms and the complex interactions between them should be studied together as fundamental and intertwined knowledge sources, for this is what being-in-the-world is all about.”<sup>8</sup>

Even if the spatial theories developed by Lefebvre and Soja are at times strongly politicized visions of modernity, processes of hyper-urbanization, modern mass media, and globalization, historians of the medieval and early modern periods have often used their work in a fruitful manner. Their terminology is remarkably valuable for analyzing the qualitative spaces of the medieval and early modern periods, such as conceptual spaces where political power was expressed, or spaces where the sacred could be experienced in spiritual or hyper-material form.

In comparison to modern grid-based megacities, medieval and early modern urban spaces were less smooth and undifferentiated. Instead, these spaces often assumed different qualities: territories were disputed, high-rising architecture was at times tied to the affirmation of identities, and there were filthy, maze-like spaces to which access was prohibited or only available to

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<sup>8</sup> Soja, “Thirdspace,” 262.

specific genders, ethnicities, or classes of people. Some places could assume different spatial qualities; for example, open urban spaces could alternate between serving as marketplaces, theatres, and ritual sites imbued with religious or political identities.

Sacred spaces were more visibly present in medieval and early modern cities. Very interesting recent work has been done on the struggles for the ownership of sacred spaces between Protestants and Catholics during the Reformation,<sup>9</sup> while urban domestic spaces as sacred spaces is now emerging as a new field of research.<sup>10</sup> The “power of space,” the real or represented presence of political power in medieval and early modern spaces, is another important topic in spatial approaches to urban history.<sup>11</sup> Still, another is the analysis of visualizations of political power, or of the sacred in physical spaces, most notably decorated spaces, where power and/or the sacred could be staged (*Inszenieren*).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Marc Boone and Martha C. Howell, eds., *The Power of Space in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Cities of Italy, Northern France and the Low Countries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Regula Schmid Keeling, Barbara Schmid, and Ursula Kundert, eds., *Ausmessen – Darstellen – Inszenieren. Raumkonzepte und die Wedergabe von Räumen in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Zürich: Chronos, 2007).

Finally, the investigation of places and spaces of culture, such as places of knowledge storage and knowledge transfer (*lieux de savoir*) is an emerging and promising area of historical research.<sup>13</sup> One of the main challenges for new historical research is to shift the focus away from looking at the intended meaning of historical spaces to bringing together such current spatial theories, historical spatial experiences, and modern reconstructions of historical spaces.

### **GIS Maps, Deep Maps, and Historical Maps**

History is concerned with events and material heritage objects that can be localized in specific places and spaces. Historians are increasingly aware of the importance of places and spaces co-shaping history and culture, as stated by

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<sup>13</sup> Christian Jacob, “*Lieux de savoir: Places and Spaces in the History of Knowledge*,” *KNOW: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 1.1 (2017): 85-102; Christian Jacob, *Qu’est-ce qu’ un lieu de savoir?* (Marseille: Open Edition Press, 2014); <https://books.openedition.org/oep/423?lang=en>; Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih, eds., *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture* (London: King’s College London Press, 2012). See also the book that Sabrina Corbellini, Bart Ramakers, and Margriet Hoogvliet are currently writing as the outcome of the research project, *Cities of Readers: Religious Literacies in the Long Fifteenth Century*, (2015-2020) funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and conducted at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, which investigates the places and spaces of religious reading by the laity in late-medieval towns in Italy, France, and the Low Countries.

Barney Warf and Santa Arias: “Where things happen is critical to knowing *how* and *why* they happen.”<sup>14</sup>

Recent developments in digital humanities, in combination with the availability of large amounts of historical data made possible by the digitalization of written archives, and computer-based Geographical Information Systems (GIS) have accelerated the possibilities for spatial historical research, as Sam Griffiths and Laura Vaughan write:

By assigning two-dimensional co-ordinates from a given cartographic projection to diverse archive source materials in a process known as georeferencing, GIS enables “messy” historical data to be precisely located on maps and plans of urban space. Mapped data can help identify relationships between phenomena that may not be self-evidently connected by revealing their shared location.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Barney Warf and Santa Arias, “Introduction: The Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences,” *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Barney Warf and Santa Arias, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 1-10, at p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Sam Griffiths and Laura Vaughan, “Mapping Spatial Cultures: Contributions of Space Syntax to Research in the Urban History of the Nineteenth-century City,” *Urban History* 47 (2020): 488-511, at p. 488; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926820000206>. Publications are burgeoning: Anne Kelley Knowles, “Historical GIS: The Spatial Turn in Social Science History,” *Social Science History* 24.3 (2000): 451-470; Anne Kelley Knowles, “Emerging Trends in Historical GIS,” *Historical Geography* 33 (2005): 7-13; Anne Kelly Knowles and Amy Hillier, *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS are Changing Historical Scholarship* (Redlands, CA: ESRI Press, 2008); Jean-Luc Pinol, “Les atouts des systèmes d’information géographique – (SIG) pour « faire de l’histoire » (urbaine),” *Histoire urbaine* 26.3 (2009): 139-58; Ian N. Gregory and Paul S. Ell, *Historical GIS: Technologies, Methodologies and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

However, limiting historical research to “placing history” alone will not be the most productive approach; it is also necessary to proceed further into “spatializing history:” the investigation of social production of spaces, spatial experiences of historical subjects, and the agency of places and landscapes. Sam Laurence and Laura Vaughan have called this “space syntax,” which

takes the town plan or map as the starting point for empirical research into the historical relationship between urban space and urban life on the basis of the network (i.e. relational) analysis of urban space viewed configurationally as a differentiated system of spaces.<sup>16</sup>

Boris Bove takes a similar approach to spatializing history in his article analyzing the clustering of city residences owned by courtiers in medieval Paris. In addition to plotting the position of these residences on a map of Paris, he investigates the spatial logic of the city that co-shaped the clustering of courtiers, for example by locating competing political factions, the existing grid of urban plots, and, most importantly, the agency of the urban street network leading to the Royal Palace that co-shaped courtiers’ preferences for specific sites.

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<sup>16</sup> Sam Griffiths and Laura Vaughan, “Mapping Spatial Cultures: Contributions of Space Syntax to Research in the Urban History of the Nineteenth-Century City,” *Thinking Spatially: New Horizons for Urban History*, *Urban History* 47.3 (2020), 488-511; at p. 489; <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926820000206>. See also p. 491: “the material or ‘artifactual’ arrangements of built forms is generative of social life through its historical role in mediating the production, reproduction and material embedding of social information across space and time.”

Historical maps can be important sources of information about spatial logic, lived spatial experiences, spatial conceptualizations from the past and their changes over time.<sup>17</sup> For instance, Keith Lilley has argued that medieval maps of Bristol and Chester mediate lived experiences of these English cities, as well as spatial conceptualizations from the past.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in her contribution here, Felicitas Schmieder discusses conceptions of space and their representation in either textual or cartographic form, based on Baldemar of Petterweil's mid-13<sup>th</sup>-century taxation record of Frankfurt am Main and early modern plans of Frankfurt, such as Matthäus Merian's 1628 map of the city. Such sources are highly informative about the cultural qualities of space—in this case, identity-based, political, and fiscal features.

Historical maps are often dismissed by software developers and cartographers who select the maps used for GIS, or they are only deemed useful after having been georectified. GIS packages almost invariably use maps with a

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<sup>17</sup> Griffiths and Vaughan, "Mapping Spatial Cultures," 489.

<sup>18</sup> Keith D. Lilley and Gareth Dean, "A Silent Witness? Medieval Urban Landscapes and Unfolding Their Mapping Histories," *Journal of Medieval History* 41.3 (2015): 273-291; <https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2015.1048094>; Keith D. Lilley, "Materialising the City: Mapping in the Imaging and Imagining of Medieval Urban Spaces," *Kommunale Selbstinszenierung: Städtische Konstellationen zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Martina Stercken and Christian Hesse, eds. (Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2018), 241-252.

bird's-eye perspective, apparently assuming that these are interchangeable with satellite photos on Google Earth, for example. Likewise, for many scientists and information specialists, maps are straightforward, reduced models of the geomorphological situation at ground level that can be used as small-scale stand-ins for reality. Unfortunately, this simplistic positivism often underpins GIS maps as well, and most software developers and data specialists are not aware that maps are biased selections of data, shaped by the cultural assumptions of those who created them and of which their creators are not always aware.

Since the publications by the historian of cartography J.B. Harley in the 1980s, "critical map theory" has led scholars to question maps and other man-made spatial representations.<sup>19</sup> For instance, Harley showed us that maps are used for administrative purposes and, as a consequence, for determining the

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<sup>19</sup> Harley's publications are collected in J. Brian Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). Publications on this subject are burgeoning, see for example: Neil Smith and Cindi Katz, "Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics," *Place and the Politics of Identity*, Michael Keith and Steve Pile, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 67-83; Denis E. Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Christian Jacob, *The Sovereign Map: Theoretical Approaches in Cartography throughout History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Jeremy Crampton and John Krygier, "An Introduction to Critical Cartography," *ACME, An International E-journal for Critical Geographies* 4.1 (2006): 11-33; Rob Kitchin, Martin Dodge, "Rethinking Maps," *Progress in Human Geography* 31.3 (2007): 331-344; John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012).

functioning of political power; therefore, they often express territorial claims, political hegemony, or cultural superiority. Maps are often primarily concerned with defining borders and centers, thus creating peripheries and areas of exclusion. Maps are based on cultural choices, and so Harley was concerned with what gets mapped and, more importantly, what is left out?

Maps are based on very selective uses of data. They are usually static, lacking in real-time experiences, movement, social interactions, and networks; they do not inform us about cultural uses of space or historical experiences at ground level. Consequently, we might consider exploring the possibilities offered by different, experimental, maps, such as those offering a bird's-eye perspective, with immersive features and avatars such as those of the augmented reality game Pokémon Go. The "Hidden Florence" and "Hidden Cities" applications developed by Fabrizio Nevola and his team make use of GPS applications for smartphones to offer a similarly immersive experience of urban history led by historical characters.<sup>20</sup> It also may be worthwhile to explore further alternative forms of mapping, such as maps with variable scales (a larger scale

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<sup>20</sup> See <https://hiddenflorence.org> and <https://www.hiddencities.eu>.

for important features), maps with different perspectives (an oblique view with multiple perspectives for important elements), or visual and aural itineraries that reproduce a trajectory on the ground. Another possibility would be the development of active forms of mapping—narrative maps, GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) maps, multi-layered maps—in order to show space in ways that allow the mapping of dynamic processes and changes over time.

The “deep map” is another promising alternative. It was conceptualized by David J. Bodenhamer, because, as he points out, digital computer technology is not always sufficiently geared toward humanities and historical research, even quantitative historical research:

[A] mismatch exists, in short, between the positivist epistemology of GIS and the reflexive and recursive approaches favoured by historians who wrestle continually with ambiguous, uncertain, and imprecise evidence and who seek multivalent answers to their questions.<sup>21</sup>

As a consequence, it is necessary to broaden the possibilities of GIS to include more than just georeferenced quantitative data, such as the qualitative and cultural information studied in humanities research:

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<sup>21</sup> David J. Bodenhamer, “The Spatial Humanities: Space, Time and Place in the New Digital Age,” *History in the Digital Age*, Toni Weller, ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 23-38, at p. 30. For a critique of GIS, see also John Pickles, ed., *Ground Truth: The Social Implications of Geographic Information Systems* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995).

A deep map is a finely detailed, multimedia depiction of a place and the people, animals, and objects that exist within it and are thus inseparable from the contours and rhythms of everyday life. Deep maps are not confined to the tangible or material, but include the discursive and ideological dimensions of place, the dreams, hopes, and fears of residents—they are, in short, positioned between matter and meaning.<sup>22</sup>

As Bodenhamer suggests, deep maps could reflect “spatial narratives” that consider the interplay and mutual influencing that occurs between societies, individuals, and spaces:

What we require is a spatial narrative that acknowledges how engaged human agents build spatially framed identities and aspirations out of actions, behaviors, imagination, and memory. At its core, this narrative focuses on spatial patterns as a means of understanding social interaction. It reflects a geography of the constant interaction between structure and process, a continuous interplay between society and the individual and/or group within a spatial environment that both shapes and is shaped by social norms and by individual or group agency.<sup>23</sup>

Margriet Hoogvliet and David Rivaud’s contribution is a tentative exploration of deep mapping -- specifically, the spatial spreading and clustering of artisans of the book and booksellers in the French town of Tours around the year 1500.

Previous studies have explained spatial patterns as the result of economic

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<sup>22</sup> David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor M. Harris, eds., *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>23</sup> David J. Bodenhamer, “Narrating Space and Place,” *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives*, David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor M. Harris, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 7-27, at p. 20.

motives. Hoogvliet and Rivaud dig deeper into the spatial context and spiritual life of a social network of printers and book artisans, thus enriching the GPS map with qualitative and cultural data and leading to the conclusion that religious bonds and spiritual motives were probably equally important factors in determining their predilection for specific sites in the city.

In the near future the development of deep maps as the outcome of humanities research will be accelerated by new digital technologies, such as enhanced reality, 4-D reconstructions, virtual reality, and Artificial Intelligence. These developments will offer exciting new possibilities, like those imagined by William G. Thomas:

Extending historical GIS, [historians] might attempt to recreate “lost landscapes” in ways that fully allow readers to move and navigate through them. These four-dimensional models might restore buildings, roads, and dwellings to historic landscapes as well as the legal, economic, social, and religious geographies within them. Networks of information, finance, trade, and culture might also find expression in these models. Readers might do more than query these datasets; they might interact within them too, taking on roles and following paths they could not predict but cannot ignore.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> William G. Thomas III, “Computing and the Historical Imagination,” *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth, eds. (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 56-68, at p. 66.

The development of deep maps will require further experimentation with cartographic representations, interactive devices, and immersive applications, but also historical research that has a sensitivity for human life on the ground, among family, friends, culture, economy, society, and religion, and with an eye to the human pursuit of happiness. 🐼