**Deep Mapping and the Spatial Humanities: Connecting Matter and Meaning**

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**Abstract:** Over a century ago Mikhail Bakhtin, Martin Heidegger, and Edmund Husserl, among others, recognized the disjuncture between the Enlightenment world of logical-rational empiricism and the nascent world of Einsteinian relativity and phenomenology. Bakhtin, a Russian semiotician and literary theorist, captured the problem neatly in his notion of the chronotope, the inextricable linkage of time and space that defines both reality and our perception of it. As he described it, the chronotope also is an experiential form: “time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history…. [It]... is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied…. Time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible; the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins.”

For Bakhtin, the world could not be understood without considering both when and where an event or action occurred, as well as when and where observers stood as they became aware of or considered an event. By its very nature, the time-space link within the chronotope emphasizes particularity; it reminds us of the distinction between the observed and the observer; and it reflects the dynamic, interdependent, and relative context of all knowledge. If all of these things seem commonplace today, it is because we have adopted these insights in the way we interpret reality. But this view is missing from typical applications of GIS to the humanities, which in turn makes the technology less appealing to scholars who might profit from it.

The use of appropriately cast spatial technologies within history and the humanities—in sum, the spatial humanities—promises to develop a unique postmodern scholarship, one that accommodates the contingent, fluid, and ambiguous nature of human beliefs and actions. The goal is not to sacrifice the rational, logical, and empirical approach to knowledge that has been the hallmark of the humanities since the Enlightenment, but rather to complement it with different ways of discovery. Deep mapping is one of those ways.

This presentation explores what we have learned from our application of geospatial technologies to the problems of interest to humanists: What impact has historical/humanities GIS made in our disciplines? But it also sets an agenda for the future of this work, a future that will witness the increasing convergence of technologies with GIS and other geospatial tools and methods within new formats, such as virtual reality. One result is likely to be an innovative, expansive, and fluid form of mapping, with an emphasis on experiential knowledge that complements traditional rational-empirical approaches. What does this development mean for the spatial humanities as we continue to seek ways to connect matter and meaning on the subjects that interest us?