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**Situating Performative Neogeography:
Tracing, Mapping, and Performing “Everyone’s East Lake”**

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Abstract:

The emergence and proliferation of neogeographic practices since the mid 2000s have drawn significant attention from GIS scholars. This paper seeks to contribute to the discussion on situating neogeography, particularly through examining the performative dimension of neogeography. To understand performative neogeographic practices I enroll de Certeau’s notion of tactics to read these practices as tactical spatial narratives, which may provide different possibilities for spaces of civic engagement and political intervention in an increasingly networked and yet individualized society. I also draw upon theoretical insights from critical GIS and critical social theory to situate and trace the constructions of performative neogeographic practices within particular sociopolitical contexts. Through this synthesized framework, I discuss a case study involved in a participatory art performance project entitled “Everyone’s East Lake” in China. Drawing upon interviews and document analysis, I examine how participants utilize neogeographic mapping as a form of performance and tactical act in response to the dominant corporate and state power. While performative mapping has long been used by artists and cartographers, this case study illustrates how these performative neogeographic practices might highlight different intersections between self identities, community participation, and sociopolitical conditions, through reconfigurations of mobile and networked mapping technologies. These dynamic, hybrid and networked mapping practices necessitate a broader conceptualization of activism through mapping in critical GIS research.

Keywords: neogeography, VGI, tactic, resistance, China

1. Introduction

The past five years saw increasingly mobile, ubiquitous, and individualized mapping practices, facilitated by the greater availability of GPS-enabled mobile devices, online interactive mapping platforms such as Google Maps and Google Earth, and the emergence of social media outlets for data publishing (Turner, 2006; Goodchild, 2007; Sui, 2008; Haklay, Singleton, Parker, 2008; Elwood, 2009). These mapping practices have been referred to as ‘neogeography,’ usually conducted by amateurs without formal training in traditional GIS or cartography (Turner, 2006). Other widely cited terms used to describe this explosion of user-generated geospatial data production include ‘volunteered geographic information’ (VGI) (Goodchild, 2007) and ‘the geoweb’ (Elwood, 2010)¹. Researchers have attempted to conceptualize the emergence of neogeographic practices and their impacts and sociopolitical implications (e.g., Zook and Graham, 2007; Goodchild, 2008; Sui, 2008; Crampton, 2009; Kingsbury and Jones, 2009; Graham, 2010; Elwood, 2009; 2011). In particular, there has been significant attention to investigating crowdsourcing and participatory dimensions of neogeographic data production and usage as well as their societal impacts.

However, little has been discussed on a performative dimension of neogeography, which cannot be easily addressed within the frameworks of citizen science and participatory mapping. This paper intends to contribute to the broader discussion of situating multifaceted neogeography by exploring this particular aspect. Here, performative neogeographic practices follow the notion of

¹ In this paper, I treat these terms interchangeably, while recognizing that there are nuanced differences among them.

performative mapping, in which the map is viewed as part of performance (Crampton, 2009)². I employ theoretical insights from critical GIS and critical social theory to trace and investigate the constructions of performative neogeographic practices within particular social, political, and economic contexts. In particular, critical GIS and cartography research provides a rich theoretical foundation to investigate the issues of mutual constitution between geospatial technologies and social contexts including power, inequality and representation. Second, I argue that cultural studies on media and communication technologies are also useful in understanding the role of electronic communications in shaping the ways mapping is produced and engaged by various publics. Moreover, I suggest that de Certeau's (1984) conceptualization of everyday practices helps to understand the everydayness of neogeographic practices.

Through this framework, I discuss a case study involved in a participatory art performance project entitled "Everyone's East Lake" (EEL hereafter) in China, which took place from June 25 to August 25, 2010. This case study was selected because it involved a range of neogeographic practices that tend to be more performative and spontaneous than many neogeographic practices discussed in the literature (e.g., Miller, 2006; Tulloch, 2007; Gerlach, 2010; Graham, 2010). I do not intend to use this case study to suggest all possible forms of performative neogeographic practices; rather, my intention is to illustrate an illuminating range of these dynamic and ongoing mapping practices carried out by a wide range of amateurs.

² By performative neogeography, my focus in this paper is a limited one, focusing more on the characteristics of these neogeography practices as part of performance by artists and non-artists in a variety of contexts, rather than engaging with the broader debates of performativity in feminist studies and critical geography (e.g., Pratt, 2004).

The EEL project invited participants to express their concerns through art performance responding to a land grab by private developers over the state listed ecological scenic area in Wuhan city, Hubei Province. Participants used available Web 2.0 mapping tools to voice their concerns over degrading urban environments and their resistance to dominant corporate and state power through spatial narratives. Through interviews and document analysis, I examine how participants utilize neogeographic mapping as a form of performance and resistance, situated in, and enabled by, the intersection of spatial technologies and subjectivities. These spatial narratives, highlighting their authors' everyday connections with urban public spaces, are tactical, reflecting de Certeau's (1984) notion of politics of everyday practices.

While performative mapping has long been practiced by artists and cartographers (Crampton, 2009), this case study suggests how these performative neogeographic practices might show different intersections between self identities, community participation, and sociopolitical conditions. These neogeographic practices are carried out by more than just artists, transcending spatial and temporal constraints. These new communities can be both virtual and place-based; they are constantly shifting and largely issue-specific, representing a particular mode of civic engagement. This loose and dynamic form of engagement generated through specific events and facilitated by neogeographic practices is deeply shaped by China's sociopolitical contexts. Specifically, the processes of framing and representing these spatial narratives are informed by the dynamics of Chinese citizenship, which are associated with greater awareness of individual rights in the post-reform era after the late 1970s. In the meantime, there is strong state control over political contestations expressed in physical public spaces and mainstream media. As such, these spatial narratives constitute new spaces sought by Chinese netizens for resistance. Such

tactical spatial practices may be limited with respect to their lack of occupying a more concrete and dominant place in power relations struggles. At the same time, the loose connections of individualized and yet networked mappers and narrators could provide other possibilities of politics and imaginations. In this regard, a broader conceptualization of activism and political intervention through mapping is needed to understand and facilitate creative engagements with these tactical mapping practices. In what follows, section 2 discusses the theoretical background from which I build a synthesized framework. I then analyze the empirical case in China through sections 3 and 4, with the former focusing on the sociopolitical conditions and dynamics of citizenship in China as well as the background of the EEL project and the latter on more specific mapping examples. In section 5, I provide the concluding reflections.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Neogeography and everyday mapping

In the burgeoning literature on developments of neogeography and VGI (Goodchild, 2008; Elwood, 2009; 2010; Warf and Sui, 2010), one significant issue is the exponential growth of digital spatial data, which is increasingly intersected with the data authors' and users' everyday practices (Perkins, 2008; Elwood, 2009). As such, these new geospatial technologies present a unique and challenging aspect: their close connection to the *everyday* that requires further investigations (Elwood, 2009). A significant number of studies approach the everydayness of neogeography from various angles that can be grouped into two broad and related perspectives, informed by a variety of theoretical frameworks. One body of work has emphasized the great potential of local knowledge produced by neogeographers through citizen science (e.g.,

Goodchild, 2007; Haklay, Singleton, Parker, 2008). This body of work extends the ongoing discussions in GIScience on spatial infrastructure developments (Elwood, 2008). The second perspective involves researching the processes and sociopolitical implications of such spatial data production and representation (e.g., Zook and Graham, 2007; Parks, 2009), which is more relevant to my study here. These studies underline the substantial body of work examining the power relations embedded in, and manifested through, mapping practices from the critical GIS and cartography literature (Pickles, 2004; Harris and Hazen, 2006; Kitchin and Dodge, 2007; Crampton, 2009; Cobarrubias and Pickles, 2009; Elwood, 2011).

In particular, using frameworks from public participation GIS research, some studies suggest the empowering potential of neogeography due to its greater user-friendliness and less geographical and temporal constraints (e.g., Miller, 2006; Tulloch, 2007). Scholars also point out the need to examine the shifting boundaries of the public impacted by the reach of online mappings (e.g., Sieber, 2006; Elwood, 2008). On the other hand, these mapping practices conducted by volunteers necessitate further understanding of the motivations and incentives of the mappers as well as who wins and who loses in these processes (e.g., Goodchild, 2007; Sui, 2008). Related to the investigation of motivations and incentives are the dynamics of subjectivities. Several studies from critical GIS have investigated this dimension of subjectivities that emerges from pervasive computing and geospatial technologies (e.g., Schuurman, 2004; Wilson, 2011). Through examining the training and coding practices of a non-profit mapping program in Seattle, Wilson (2011) interrogates how ‘the geocoding subject’ is not necessarily dominated by the cartographic gaze that concerns with perspective, projection, and accuracy, but is also constituted by the gaze of cartographers that links the act of ‘seeing’ and its materialization through the data and code.

These seeing and coding practices are also embedded within particular discourses such as the ownership discourse in Wilson's analysis. In line with Schuurman's (2004) notion of 'data-hog', Wilson's (2011, page 360) investigation points to the "potentially open" nature of mapping subjects that are hybrid and Cyborgian. Their studies also address the concerns in critical GIS and cartography regarding the implications of surveillance given the unequal power relations embedded in the mapping bodies and those being mapped (see also Pickles, 2004). Cautious notes have also been given on possible exploitation by large and powerful corporations collecting these everyday spatial data generated by individuals enabled by pervasive computing (Obermeyer 2007; Dodge and Kitchin, 2007).

Another related field is the growing practices of art mapping that use geospatial tools such as GPS to call to attention to different ways of spatial imaginations embodying personal experiences (e.g., Lauriault and Wood, 2009; Crampton, 2009; Wood, 2006). Through creative engagement with maps, map artists seek to break down the monopoly control of mapping by powerful institutions (Wood, 2006; Kanarinka, 2006). Indeed, artists and activists have actively employed cartography for experiments and furthering political activities (Crampton, 2009; Cobarrubias and Pickles, 2009). This strand of work is in line with the counter-mapping practices, which include indigenous communities' and social activists' mapping practices to counter and overcome predominant power hierarchies, as well as with the efforts of democratizing mapmaking capabilities (Wood, 2006; Crampton and Krygier, 2005; Sieber, 2006; Cobarrubias and Pickles, 2009; Wood, Fels, Krygier, 2010). In particular, Cobarrubias and Pickles (2009) discuss the meanings of mappings employed by social movement activists. Drawing upon examples of several cartographic experiments by art activists in Europe to visualize institutional

patterns of transnational capitalism, Cobarrubias and Pickles (2009) point out that these critical engagements with cartography underpin a politics of ‘discursive deconstruction’ of traditional cartographies. Embodied in these mappings, the authors argue, is a desire to create new cognitive maps, which constitutes new assemblages aimed at opening alternative possibilities for citizenship.

In sum, neogeography, and mapping more broadly, have been examined as visual practices, with attention to their impacts on power, knowledge and equity (Elwood, 2011). Yet, discussions on possible linkage between the investigation of a changing public and that of subjectivities with respect to everyday mapping through neogeography and VGI are still lacking (Lin, forthcoming). Second, while studies on the power of mapping in relation to social movements and participatory mapping are insightful, they tend to focus on mappings that have a more explicit political statement. Neogeographic practices that are more mundane and scattered and cannot be easily identified as part of certain social movements are thus not addressed. But they may not be apolitical. I aim to tackle this issue through incorporating two perspectives from critical social theory: first, the dimensions of subjectivities intersected with broader technological and social shifts and second, conceptualizations of everyday practices. They are discussed below.

2.2. Subjectivities, everyday practices and tactical spatial narratives

Numerous accounts have discussed the impacts of the advent of new communication technologies on social relations, which are relevant to my study as neogeographic practices are facilitated by Web 2.0 technologies. Sui and Goodchild (2003) also point out that GIS have become a part of the information revolution that has transformed an industrial society to a

postindustrial one. They draw upon Marshall McLuhan's work to conceptualize GIS as media, rather than viewing GIS as rooted in instrumental rationality (ibid). This framework underlines the communicative nature of GIS, which is also insightful to understanding the role of neogeography. Nonetheless, a more nuanced analysis of the general public and the role of agency situated in particular sociopolitical contexts is needed, for which I turn to the work of Mark Poster and Michel de Certeau.

Employing a poststructuralist approach, Poster (1990, 2001) argues that electronic communications have enacted important reconfigurations of the language through which individuals interact with others. Illustrated through the notion of 'the mode of information,' Poster suggests that cybernetic and informational machines emerged in the late twentieth century to form a new human-machine assemblage within capitalism, in which the relation between human and machine is based on internal, mutual communication as opposed to the old nonrecurrent and nonreversible relations of subjection associated with motorized machines (Poster, 2001). The Internet has played a significant role in this process. Acknowledging that many areas of the Internet perpetuate existing power relations, Poster (2001, page 182) notes that the Internet and associated technologies enable new forms of decentralized dialogue and create new individual and collective "voices," "specters," "interactivities" that are the new building blocks of political formations and groupings.

In a similar vein, Wellman and Hogan (2004) describe shifts in social relations with the advent of new communication technologies as the rise of 'networked individualism' that people are connected to each other as individuals rather than as members of households, communities,

kinship groups, workgroups and organizations. As a result, according to Wellman and Hogan (2004), citizenship has become more fragmented, in which connectivity is increasing but with less cohesion. These conceptualizations above draw attention to the complexities of subject formation in the digital age. In particular, citizens may engage in political participation more as individuals, facilitated by the Internet and more recently social media developments. A similar line can be drawn in the case of Chinese citizenship with respect to the significant impacts of the Internet, from which various neogeographic practices have emerged.

Moreover, Michel de Certeau's work on everyday practices frames my investigation of neogeographers' connections with everyday life. Drawing upon Foucault's approach of analyzing procedures that form disciplinary power, de Certeau (1984, xiv) calls for investigating the procedures of *everyday creativity* that constitutes the marginalized and mundane resistances in everyday practices. Such everyday creativity forms the counterpart of powerful controlling systems. For example, in the context of a mass production and consumption system, consumers often re-appropriate the products they consume, rather than acting as mere passive recipients of these products. To trace procedures of everyday creativity and their effects, de Certeau (1984) makes a distinction between *strategies* and *tactics*. A strategy refers to "the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment.'" (ibid, xix) In this sense, political, economic, and scientific rationality have been constructed on this strategic model. A tactic is "a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality." (ibid, xix) A tactic is fragmented and it needs to continually capture opportunities to operate through

manipulating events (ibid). Tactics are conducted by the weak, who do not occupy a dominant position in the power geometry and must constantly work on re-appropriating powerful forces they face and live in.

Everyday practices, such as “talking, reading, moving about, shopping, cooking, etc”, can be tactical (ibid, xix). When direct opposition and material transformation are difficult, practitioners may employ tactics to capture opportunities provided by a particular occasion. In these procedures, “a tactic boldly juxtaposes diverse elements in order suddenly to produce a flash shedding a different light on the language of a place and to strike the hearer” (ibid, page 38). These tactics are conducted by ordinary heroes and constitute what de Certeau frames as “spatial practices” that “secretly structure the determining conditions of social life” (page 96). De Certeau’s tactics thus can be seen as resistance situated in individual bodies and moments (Portwood-Stacer, 2010). In this manner, the body is still “docile” as control and discipline are still in play, but to different ends than the survival and dominance of the state (ibid, page 20).

I employ this conceptualization of everyday practices to understand the politics of everyday mapping and performative mapping. In particular, I suggest that various forms of neogeographic data practices that focus on everyday life can be seen as spatial narratives transmitted through networked digital media. These practices are fleeting, mobile, and fragmented, which are further intersected with the multiple identities that are informed by the mode of information (Poster, 2001). As de Certeau (1984) notes, tactics are performed by those that lack power. In an environment where protests and demonstrations often times are not a feasible option (e.g., Lam, 2010), citizens creatively employ these art performances in combination with digital

representations and spatial narratives to show their resistances to and contestations against powerful state domination. While fleeting and fragmented, these practices represent important (and also complementary) ways in which the less powerful and the weak contest and resist dominant power relations. Using this synthesized theoretical framework addressed above, I will analyze my case study in greater detail in the next two sections.

3. Situating and Tracing “Everyone’s East Lake”

Before presenting my case study, it is necessary to address the research methods employed to situate and trace these neogeographic practices. I adopted qualitative approaches for data collection, including individual interviewing, document collection, and online dialogue observation. Specifically, I used semi-structured interviews to elicit interviewees’ accounts of their mapping experiences. I sent out email invitations to potential interviewees based on my preliminary research. I interviewed twelve practitioners in summer 2010 and summer 2011, of which three were conducted via email, while the rest were face-to-face interviews. Each face-to-face interview was approximately one hour long and explored topics regarding interviewees’ experiences of engaging in neogeographic practices, including their motivations and reflections of such practices. In addition, written texts are another important source of data, such as online reports from mainstream newspapers and dialogues on social media sites, which I started to collect since 2008 regarding neogeographic practices in China. Next, I will first outline the emergence of neogeographic practices situated in the intersections between citizenship and broader sociopolitical conditions in China, followed by a further investigation of the EEL project situated in these broader changes.

Recently, China's growing Internet users have emerged as an important group, so-called netizens, for public opinion discussions, as many news and policy reports often cite 'the netizens' opinion' for hot topic debates³. Researchers have suggested the emergence of a civil society due to these active discussions from netizens (Yang, 2009; Tai, 2006). While the mainstream media is under strong state control in China, the Internet, given its relatively decentralized nature, provides a platform for public discussions on various issues. Indeed, the Internet remains highly regulated and censored in China (e.g., MacKinnon, 2010). Yet, there are also numerous efforts from netizens to circumvent censorship, including employing technologies to gain access to blocked information and using special linguistic terms and arrangements to bypass censorship for online publishing (e.g., McDonald, 2012). In parallel, there is greater awareness of individual rights and stronger contestations against authoritarian governance. One form of expressing their voices when Chinese netizens navigate through the censored online landscape is the so-called acting as 'onlookers' (Lin, forthcoming; see also Hu, 2011), whereby netizens may follow a particular issue and state that they are 'watching.' Such digital 'watching' from netizens presents a way of monitoring and engagement in a controlled environment where other forms of participation are limited. The emergence of new human-machine assemblages in political engagement invokes Poster's notion of the mode of information addressed earlier (see also Lin, forthcoming). Some netizens have utilized neogeography to perform such an act of 'watching' in a tactical way, as shown in the case of EEL project.

³ The number of Chinese Internet users reached 485 million in June 2011 (CNNIC, 2011), one third of which are from the age group of 20-29, with a rising level of mobile Internet access (more than 65 percent are mobile Internet users). Moreover, 40 percent of China's netizens spend their online time on social networks (Kemp, 2011). Despite the rapid increase of Internet users recently, the digital divide remains a big issue, as more than half of the population is not online and there is significant unequal access between urban and rural residents. China's Internet landscape is gendered, as 55.1 percent of Internet users are male, more than 10 percent higher than female users (CNNIC, 2011)

The East Lake is located within Wuhan city in central China, a major city with more than 9 million people. Covering 21,498 acres including around 8,154 acres of water area, East Lake is the largest scenic area in Wuhan and the largest urban lake in China, thus also an important landmark of Wuhan. However, recently, a major development was secretly underway at the north bank, involving illegal expropriation, forced demolition and a blackout on information (Global Times, 2010). In late March 2010, local media reported that 450 acres of East Lake were going to be filled and built into a theme park by Overseas Chinese Town (OCT), a Shenzhen-based real estate developer. The company claimed that no part of the protected scenic area would be filled. However, further examinations showed that more than 1000 mu (approximately 165 acres) of East Lake's water area would be impacted. These news reports led to a huge outcry from netizens. Discussions soon flooded many online forums and social networking sites, exemplifying the active engagement from Chinese netizens in public discussions. However, subsequent reports on the violent demolition and environmental consequences were censored by authorities (Global Times, 2010).

As the window of questioning the OCT project through mainstream media closed, some citizens decided to use art performance to express their discontent about the OCT project (Global Times, 2010), led to the three-month EEL project organized by Liao⁴, an architecture expert, and Tang, an artist. A call for participation document was circulated via email and several popular social networking sites in China, such as Sina Weibo (www.weibo.com) and Douban (www.douban.com). The organizers requested that participants could conduct any art creation along the lakeshore within the project time period. Eventually, this project involved sixty pieces of work by fifty-four participants, including artists, designers, architects, punk musicians,

⁴ Pseudonyms are used for all the interviewees.

theatre workers, poets, scholars, freelance workers, teachers, and students. Their ages ranged from early twenties to fifties. Most of them were from Wuhan; there were a few from other cities that are not close by.

It is notable that maps and online mapping have been quite frequently used in these various performances⁵. Yet, this is not an explicit cartography project per se. For example, the overview map discussed in next section was not part of the initial plan. However, it is this somewhat ad hoc and spontaneous manner of actively employing what is available by the powerless for “spatial practices” (de Certeau, 1984, page 18) distinguishes itself from many of the neogeographic practices discussed within the context of activism or crowdsourcing (e.g., Parks, 2009; Liu and Palen, 2010; Gerlach, 2010; Graham, 2010).

4. Mapping and performing “Everyone’s East Lake”

In particular, through the following three examples I trace the evolution of these mapping processes. My illustration focuses on three aspects informed by the framework outlined above. One is to unravel the *interplay* between the technologies and the participants. Without doubt, these new geospatial tools are much more accessible than conventional GIS and mapping tools. Nonetheless, it is still important to note that these technologies may not be accessible to all the participants and examine how these technologies are employed and constructed over time. Second, I pay attention to how the participants *position* themselves in this controversial issue as part of civic engagement in public discussion. While the actual contours of these neogeographic practices differ from one another, they all are stimulated by a particular issue, underlining the more or less ad-hoc, spontaneous, and diffused manner of these mapping efforts. This

⁵ More than twenty maps and images have been created in this project.

corresponds to the emergence of issue-specific publics (Yang and Calhoun, 2007). Third, I foreground the *style* of such practices and how they might constitute tactical acts. The first example shows how visualization and representation of the art performances through neogeography are communicative and can produce new spatial imaginaries and communities. The engagement with an interactive mapping component in the second example is analogous to de Certeau's conceptualization of walking in the city as a tactic. In the third example, the mappers call upon memories and emotions to act in their efforts of 'redrawing' an East Lake in Sydney, Australia on Google Maps. These visual spatial practices reflect the creativity of participants in integrating everyday life stories with broader issues, in this case, their concerns of the urban environment degradation and contestation of dominant corporate and state interest that lead to such degradation. These tactical mapping efforts are carried out when other means of more direct contestation are suppressed by the authorities. These spatial practices re-appropriate the spaces and boundaries of the East Lake and enroll new actors. Together, these seemingly mundane spatial narratives provide new spaces of resistance in China.

4.1. Putting the project onto a map

The first example is an overview map of the EEL project. Specifically, a Google Maps mashup application was generated to show all the participants' works on EEL's homepage (Figure 1). The pins were first shown in blue for any proposed ideas, and they would turn red after the ideas were carried out. The pop-up window for each pin provides basic information of the corresponding performance, including participants' names, title of the work, time and location of its implementation, followed by a link to more detailed information. The detailed information,

shown on a separate webpage, provides the full-length description of the work and usually includes multiple pictures.

Figure 1: Top: a screenshot of EEL project's home page (<http://www.donghu2010.org/>); Bottom: a screenshot of the overview map on Google Maps

This mashup map, however, was not envisioned in the initial plan. Liang, one of the two organizers noted that he initially did not know about this function of Google Maps before this project. This idea was suggested by his friends who helped him to set up the project's homepage. His friends asked him why not create a map similar to the one he drew by hand in 1998 on rock band performances in Wuhan, entitled "Map of Riots by Wuhan's Punk" (Liang, personal interview). His friends noted that a map could be easily created by Google Maps and be embedded within the EEL project's website.

However, the process of locating each work was not always easy due to both technical and social factors, illustrated in the following three interactive procedures. First, this map was initially set up in a way that registered participants could add their own work. Yet, it turned out that other participants chose to email Liang their projects. "It thus ended up me marking them down [on the map] [smiles]." (Liang, personal interview) Second, location accuracy was an issue. Liang preferred to mark the locations down accurately on the map so that readers would know where the work was performed. But there were some difficulties. One problem was that participants' reports had varying degrees of location accuracy. Some participants provided geographic coordinates retrieved from mobile phones, while some only provided approximate locations (Tang, personal interview; Liang, personal interview). Yet, even with the coordinates, they might show up in the wrong place on Google Maps, as there is some level of mismatch between the GPS standard embedded in mobile phones and the standard adopted by Google⁶. Therefore, Liang needed to become familiar with the approximate range of mismatch. As for those who provided approximate locations, this was mainly because they were more from the humanities and art fields and did not have relevant backgrounds in dealing with map data (Liang, personal

⁶ The standard of Google Maps was intentionally distorted for security concerns by the government, according to Chang (personal interview).

interview). The diverse backgrounds of the participants could likely be one reason many of them had not actively engaged in the map-making process. Third, Liang had hoped to include some pictures in the pop-up window of each location. However, for a technical reason, the pictures could not be linked with the respective authors listed on the left from the project's website. There was also an issue that one could not scroll down the pop-up window on the map. Liang consulted his website design friends, but they were not able to resolve this either⁷.

These procedures speak to the dynamic nature of neogeographic practices. While available online mapping platforms certainly dramatically reduce the technical barriers and costs for amateurs to make a digital map of their own using their own data, this way of mapping still requires certain familiarity with these mapping tools. Moreover, the establishment of this mashup application has provided an important platform for communications and interactions among the participants, although with a varying degree of such interactions. The organizers noted that it was exciting to see how the blue pins (representing plans) had turned into red (representing finished works) over time. The spatial distribution of these works has also resulted in at least one example of locational change for art performance. Tang selected his location of performance after viewing the map constantly and noticing that the southeastern part was without any pin. That location in turn shaped his actual plan for his performance entitled "Still Exists on the Map". It involved posting a Google Map mashup pin on one column of a viaduct in that area, stating that this part shown on Google Maps is still water instead of filled land. In this way, Tang creatively used the somewhat 'outdated' Google Maps images to voice his concerns about the outcomes of rapid

⁷ However, my recent visit in December 2011 showed that each pop-up window now has a picture embedded.

urbanization. A different spatial imaginary thus is produced.

Furthermore, this project and the associated map generated new bonds among these participants with shared concerns. “We did not know many of these participants before this project.” (Liang, personal interview) As such, a new community was formed, even though it might be temporary and loose, without an existing organizational space or a concrete neighborhood boundary.

Therefore, the virtual and the physical are increasingly merged and mutually transformed. These multiple performances illustrated through the overview map inform what Poster (2001) sees as decentralized dialogue and new individual and collective “voices,” “specters,” “interactivities” noted earlier. Together, this map facilitated, and itself was a part of, spatial narratives constructions that are performative and tactical (de Certeau, 1984). These spatial narratives utilized the East Lake incident as an entry point to further question the encroachment of public space by powerful corporate and state interests and the underlying sociopolitical processes of changing urban environments.

4.2. “Strolling with 200 Mu”

The second example presents the project of “Strolling with 200 Mu,” which provides an interactive tool embedded in Google Maps. The name derived from an area called “200 Mu” that was about to be filled by the OCT project. Users can click on a polygon of the size of two hundred mu (33 acres) and drag it to any city (Figure 2). In this way, one of the authors of this project explained, users can understand how big two hundred mu of the lake surface would be (Zhong, personal interview).

和两百亩一起散步

将武汉东湖中“两百亩”湖面轮廓等比例带入到 Google Map 浏览器中。通过与日常熟知环境的尺度比照，让不同城市的人们感知到我们这片可能将会失去的东湖有多大。

无论你在哪里，每个人都可以伴着这片东湖自由地在全球虚拟行走。这个夏天，让我们和这两百亩一起散步！

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Figure 2: Top: a screenshot of the Strolling with 200 Mu; bottom: a screenshot of the performance description.

Yet, this mapping and representation is more than just knowing about the scale of water area being impacted by the OCT project. Here, map users can ‘carry’ this two-hundred-mu area and stroll to any city they want. As the short description writes (Figure 2, bottom), “No matter where you are, everyone can walk virtually with this piece of East Lake on Earth freely. This summer, let’s stroll with the two-hundred-mu!” The term “strolling” has special political connotations for Chinese netizens, which can be referred to protesting (Fan, 2008). This is a tactical act in a sense

that map users employ the tool to travel across different places and to re-appropriate the cyber space for contestation. In this process, the participants' concerns about the impacts of the land grab and landscape degradation are embodied in and expressed through the act of strolling in a digital space.

The three authors were not located in Wuhan when the EEL was carried out. They heard of this project from the Internet. In particular, Zhong, an architect working in Beijing, grew up in Wuhan and was a student of Liang. As such, when he received a call for participation message from Liang, Zhong was very enthusiastic about participating, and joined with two other friends, Liu (architect working in Shenzhen) and Dong (software engineer working in Shanghai) for this purpose. This final outcome shown in Figure 2 was created following continuous discussions among the authors and project organizers, along with adaptation to and rewriting the technical codes. Initially, the authors were interested in creating a series of pictures from satellite images, placing the 200 Mu in the landmark areas of a number of cities, derived from the “scale recognition” technique in architectural projects. Yet, Liang, the co-founder of the EEL (see the preceding section) was not satisfied with this idea since it would not be a performance on the site. The authors also agreed that this way of representation was too static. Later, Dong suggested that to have a more animated feature was not complicated, using Google Maps and Google Earth (Zhong, personal interview). The authors picked Google Maps over Google Earth since the latter has to be downloaded for first-time users. Subsequently, the movable polygon was coded by Dong, while the other two authors worked on the aesthetical aspect. As such, Zhong suggested the relative high technical barrier in setting up this application. “Yet,” he noted, “the users of this map can easily use this tool, without any specific technical requirements.” (ibid) This process

illustrates the participatory dimension of this work. It also demonstrates again the varying technical skills involved/required in neogeographic practices through open-source software packages, which can be exclusive in certain conditions (e.g., at the building stage of this tool) and yet inclusive in other conditions (e.g., after the implementation of this tool).

It is noted that this transformation from a static representation to an online, interactive performance that almost everyone can take part in marks a significant shift (Jiang, 2010). This interactive tool has gained significant popularity. This project would be among the top results in keyword search of “200 Mu” (in Chinese) (Zhong, personal interview). The visual representation of the extent of 200 Mu is critical in stimulating users’ recognition of the impacts on East Lake and raising public’s awareness on this issue. As such, it is a form of visual practice, in line with many other geoweb constructions, to disseminate a political message (Elwood, 2011).

Meanwhile, through virtual strolling participants perform a form of “specters” (Poster, 2001), but with a cautious eye on the implications of shrinking urban public space. Such performances resonate with de Certeau’s everyday practices of walking in the city and re-appropriating the urban landscape (de Certeau, 1984). These discursive virtual acts constitute a way of reclaiming spaces by the participants and users within a highly controlled political environment, capturing available opportunities, and constituting another layer of the tactical spatial narratives illustrated in the above example. This example is also notable in a sense that it greatly expanded the range of users – ideally, everyone that has access to the Internet can ‘stroll’ along with this interactive, virtual representation of 200 Mu.

4.3. “Draw an East Lake in Sydney”

In this work, two participants, both architects, created an outline of the East Lake using Google Maps and AutoCAD and overlaid that outline with Sydney on Google Maps. The participants then identified the landmark points along the lake shore of East Lake in this map and visited these corresponding geographic sites found in Sydney through biking. Pictures and text descriptions of these sites in Sydney were subsequently represented as mashups.

如所附的图，我把东湖按真原比例叠加在悉尼的地图上。在8月7号的那个周末，我会骑自行车沿着“湖岸线”转一圈，并以图片的形式记录下“沿湖”的“风景”。同时，我会在骑车的途中思考高度城市化后带来的负面影响。

“Six hours are a long time period, as it marched over twenty-seven districts in Sydney. Six hours are a short time period, as it only marked a very small proportion of tens of thousands urban stories.[...] Highrises, busy roads, cars whooshing by, underpass, industrial zone, containers, fast food restaurant, train station, and suburban houses build the so-called “modern civilization.” Meanwhile, this civilization is decaying, leaving multiple scars.[...]”

This urban experience brings us back to the East Lake that is thousands of kilometers away. It used to be my most desirable place in my childhood, a place I thought where civilization was located. Yet, it is moving farther away from civilization, with the background sound of developing urban culture. This is not a simple longing for an Arcadian place or “Picturesque Architecture” (this term is originally in English), but an attempt to review the city, and to look for that long lost sentiment.

We love the East Lake.”

As such, this mapping practice is hybrid, mixed with actual engagement with the physical place and virtual representation and visualization. This digital map also ‘determines’ the biking route in Sydney, through which the body travels in real places but in turn also leaves digital traces on the map. Such a process of engagement from remote participants, facilitated by the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies, mark the multiple identities and citizenship illustrated earlier.

These spatial narratives are also tactical, as the participants actively seek ‘another’ place and space to address the issue derived from East Lake in Wuhan. Moreover, memories, emotions, and reflections of urban spaces and developments are merged in this biking trip and the points,

lines, and areas that compose both the East Lake and Sydney in the map. A crucial component of de Certeau's tactics and practical knowledge is memory, composed of "many moments and heterogeneous elements" (de Certeau, 1984, page 82). Memory is generated by circumstances, which can be mobilized through stories to create flashes that illuminate the occasion (ibid). As such, memory and storytelling can be drawn upon to bring "invisible geographies into contact with the ordered realm of the rational" (Crang, 2000, page 150). Embedding these memories and stories in mapping further makes the invisible visible. While in de Certeau's terms, tactics do not occupy a 'proper' place, these neogeographic practices help to generate spatial narratives that are more visible and transferrable through cyberspace. In this process, similar to the "Strolling with 200 Mu" example, the authors of this work stake out a space of their own, through which they tell their own stories and narratives.

5. Conclusions

Existing studies in critical GIS and cartography have provided important insights into understanding the aspects of data and characteristics of neogeographic practices and associated social and political implications. Nonetheless, detailed accounts of how these everyday mapping practices emerge and evolve over time are still scarce. As Andrew Turner notes in the conversation with Michael Goodchild, Matt Wilson and Mark Graham (this issue), his notion of neogeography emphasizes the "personal" dimension of spatial data creation, visualization and distribution. In this sense, Goodchild (this issue) suggests that carrying out neogeographic practices is a way of doing small-g geography. Yet, both Goodchild and Turner acknowledge that increasingly the line between mapping by professionals and academics (big-G Geography) and mapping by amateurs (small-g geography) is blurred. One of the key questions remaining is

how we can unravel these neogeographic practices to better understand their effects and implications.

In particular, while the crowdsourcing aspect and participatory dimensions of neogeography as well as possible data abuse and unethical mapping by third parties have drawn significant attention from researchers (e.g., Goodchild, 2007; Goodchild and Turner's dialogue in this issue; Haklay, Singleton, Parker, 2008; Sui, 2008; Elwood, 2009; 2011; Dodge and Kitchin, 2007; Obermeyer, 2007), neogeographic practices that are more scattered and spontaneous have not been investigated in greater detail. This paper has examined the performative dimension of neogeography to address this issue. Drawing upon insights from critical GIS and cartography and critical social theory, I have traced these mapping processes through a case of performative neogeographic practices situated in China and examined their sociopolitical implications.

These performative neogeography constructions reflect many characteristics of neogeography identified in the literature (e.g., Elwood, 2008; Goodchild, 2007), with respect to variable degrees of technological constructions, nuanced inclusion and exclusion of various participants, individualized and remote participation, etc. Yet, this case study also has sought to address the underlining broader transformations of social relations facilitated by new information communication technologies. In particular, individuals have become much more active in a variety of social issues, in great contrast to China's pre-reform era when the state penetrated almost every aspect of everyday life (Sigley, 2006). The Internet has further facilitated the increasing networked individualism, or what Poster identifies as 'the mode of information' with unstable, continuously constructed self-identities mediated through and by electronic language

(see also Lin, forthcoming). This can be reflected in one interviewee's comment, "I do not belong to any organization. And I like the way it is now." (Zhong, personal interview)

Meanwhile, the state maintains strong control on political discussions in mainstream media and carries out sophisticated Internet censorship. It is within these intersections of sociopolitical and technical transformations that an issue-specific public emerged (Yang and Calhoun, 2007).

Furthermore, performative neogeographic practices have been employed by the netizens to question and contest the dominant state and corporate power, reflected in the case of EEL.

These performative neogeographic practices constitute what I call 'tactical spatial narratives,' informed by de Certeau's work (1984). These tactical spatial narratives are constructed through visual representation, virtual walking, memories and stories, and making new spatial imaginations sparked by particular events. Performative mapping is not new. Yet, there are some differences as well. First, participants in this study come from a variety of backgrounds including non-artists, and largely, they do not aim to reconstruct a map in order to unravel the power embedded in the map (Wood, 2006). Rather, these practices are more about using maps to tell stories (e.g., walking along the lake shore), show embedded information (e.g., how big 200 mu actually is) and project memories (e.g., connecting the famous tourist sites with Sydney's landscape). This does not mean that participants do not view maps critically. Quite the contrary. In their everyday lives, they do not readily accept what is being shown in the map⁸. Second, the networked nature of these neogeographic practices may result in different topologies of community constructions, linking both strong ties (illustrated in the second example) and weak ties (shown in the third example) among participants facilitated by social media connections.

⁸ For example, one interviewee jokingly noted that how Google Maps "always provided the most difficult route" when he tried to drive from the airport to where he lives in Wuhan (Tang, personal interview).

Through these examples, I have revealed special *moments* of mapping and the construction of spatial narratives linked to multiple *sites* in the process of speaking out against the encroachment of public space. As such, I have foregrounded a particular mode of engagement, that is, tactical spatial narratives, through neogeography. This engagement may be highly limited with respect to mobilizing effective opposition against the dominant state and corporate power. In fact, at the end of the EEL project, the 200 Mu was filled by OCT and later Google Maps also updated their satellite images showing this change. However, resistances are more than face-to-face oppositional struggles only (Pile and Keith, 1997). Indeed, these narratives and imaginations go beyond one particular incident and the East Lake. As Liang notes in another interview (Fine Arts Literature, 2010), “This may not change the final outcome of this incident, but it can open up a new discussion space.[...] This can crystallize the conflicts and dilemmas we are in, and it is another way of resistance.” In this sense, these performative neogeographic practices help to create new spaces of resistance against dominant power and institutions. While such a mode of engagement alone cannot lead to radical changes, other more radical modes of engagement may be underpinned by these more mundane, temporary, and scattered tactics. As Scott (1985) aptly argues, weapons of the weak can form the foundation of radical changes. Therefore, it is necessary to expand our conceptualizations of politics of neogeographic mapping to include these tactical visual spatial practices. It is important to note, however, that not every neogeographic mapping practice is inherently resistant or tactical. Examples abound (e.g., Kingsbury and Jones, 2009). What counts for tactical resistance depends on context, resonating with the call from Kitchin and Dodge (2007) to interrogate how mappings take place. As such,

continuous efforts are needed to situate and investigate these various mapping efforts and their implications.

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