THIS IS NOT THE WORLD

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A map is a portrayal on a plane of the surface of the earth or some larger or smaller portion of it.

**So it's a portrait?**

A map is a representation of the milieu.

**So it's a representation?**

A map is an image proclaiming its objective neutrality.

**So it's an image?**

Maps are way too abstract to be portraits or images. Representation is a fancy word that always bogs us down in irresolvable ontological quibbles, but let's take a closer look at it anyway.

Pauline Rosenau describes six kinds of representations. Where do maps fit?

Delegation: "One individual represents another in parliament." Maps don't seem to be this kind of representation at all.

Resemblance: "A painting represents on the canvas what the painter observes." Maps are not views; they show us heavily transformed observations. Some marks on maps sorta look like stuff in the world, but are very abstracted and generalized.

Repetition: "A writer puts on paper the word (language) that represents his/her idea or thought (meaning)." Marks on maps are ideas (ideals) but do they repeat stuff from the world on paper? They repeat ideas consisting of selected or abstracted stuff from the world. Maps are rather poor repetitions of the world.
REPLICATION: "THE PHOTOGRAPH (IMAGE) REPRESENTS THE PERSON PHOTOGRAPHED (OBJECT)." IF MAPS REPLICATE (ECHO COPY) THE WORLD THEY DO IT IN A HIGHLY MODIFIED MANNER, IN NO WAY LIKE A PHOTO. INDEED, THE POWER OF A MAP COMES FROM THE FACT THAT IT DOESN'T JUST REPLICATE THE WORLD!

DUPlication: "A Photocopy Represents the Original." Tip a huge copy machine over and hit "COPY" and you don't get a map.

SUBSTITUTION: "A LAWYER REPRESENTS A CLIENT IN COURT." WHILE WE SUBSTITUTE MAPS FOR THE WORLD ALL THE TIME, WE ARE CONTINUALLY WARNED THAT THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY! THIS IS MORE ABOUT HOW MAPS ARE USED RATHER THAN WHAT THEY ARE.

MAPS ARE ODD CREATURES THAT DON'T EASILY FIT IN ANY OF THESE FORMS OF REPRESENTATION.

IS THERE A MORE USEFUL WAY TO THINK ABOUT MAPS, PARTICULARLY IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT MAKING MAPS?

I HAVE A PROPOSITION FOR YOU...

THIS SHOULD BE GOOD...
insistence that a map is like veneer was probably due to an error in translation from Eckert’s *Die Kartenwissenschaft*.

All cartographic propositions, however elaborate, are ultimately realized through fundamental spatial/meaning propositions expressed in the sign plane of the map. The most fundamental of these cartographic propositions — *This is There* — establishes an equivalence between a *This*, a specific instance of a pre-existing conceptual type, and a *There*, a specific location in the cartographic sign plane. Similar *Theses* may be located at more than one *There* and a *There* may be populated by many *Theses*. Multiple *This is There* propositions (cartographic postings) comprise and create the territory of the map. This territory becomes the subject of the map’s action.

Relationships established among *Theses* and *Theres* facilitate the exchange of meaning within the cartographic sign plane. The coincidence of *Theres* affords and affirms the mapping of authority (political, cultural, religious, scientific) over territory and its constituent *Theses*, potentially at many levels. The correspondence of *Theses* raises the opportunity for constructing new *Theres* (in the present, past, or imagined future), and consequently new territories.

We attempt to unfold these operations here through a provisional calculus of space and meaning propositions as they are expressed in the sign plane of the map. This calculus is presented diagrammatically and algebraically to illustrate how cartographic propositions are formed and how they function in creating both space and meaning. In the special logic of map signs, space and meaning are indivisible.

**This is**: The precedent existential proposition.

Every map is about something — some things, and some place — and what are the *things* that populate maps if not content types, readymade to be realized, to be instantiated in the cartographic sign plane? There will be a house in the map, and a church, and a fire station, and a park, and...

... etc., etc. The house, the church, the fire station, the park, the roads, are all categorical types residing (in some way we don’t pretend or need to define) in a conceptual space (or "conceptual universe" or "content space" or "content plane" or "semantic field" or "semantic cloud"). Any of these types can be given existential claim in the map insofar as it is differentiated from other types and has potential expression in the map. *TYPE_A* might be differentiated from *TYPE_B, TYPE_C, TYPE_D,* and *TYPE_E* in denoting a dwelling type "house" as distinct from a "condominium," an "apartment," a "mobile home," or a "hut." But the deployment of cartographic signs entails much more than semantic differentiation and denotation. Each of these signs also carries an enormous connotative load, waiting to be dropped into the map at the stroke of a pen, or a keystroke. The precedent existential proposition not only entails a distinctive, if abstract, existential claim but also requires certain territorial potentials for its realization. In the City of Raleigh, for example, there can be houses, condominiums, and apartments but no mobile homes (at least not legally). As for huts, those only exist in Third World countries, don’t they?

When a content element is expressed in the sign plane of the map it is simultaneously given a location in that sign plane. What does this mean by the *cartographic sign plane*? We refer simply to the cartographic presentation commonly recognized as "part," which is to say, the integral planar display bounded by a neatline but, in any case, set apart from displays such as supportive maps, graphic distinction being drawn here is between elements of the larger cartographic ESRI makes this distinction further — the sign plane is called a "view" or "chart," presentation a "layout."). We refer instead to the plan than simply "sign plane" — the photograph, the picture...
Historical Preservation
Boylan Heights, Raleigh NC

This proposes the old Boylan Heights plantation should be streets and houses.

Traffic Trouble
Boylan Heights, Raleigh NC

This proposes traffic is getting to be a pain in the ass in Boylan Heights.

This proposes that in Boylan Heights rich people carve pumpkins on Halloween and poor people don’t.

This proposes that the mailman helps make Boylan Heights a place.

Each proposes a different Boylan Heights.

Many maps of the same place... and none are it.
MAPS ALSO PROPOSE DIFFERENT IDEAS OF THE SAME STUFF... AND NONE ARE IT.

THIS IS NORTH INDIA.

NO, INFIDEL, THIS IS NORTH INDIA.

DISPUTED BOUNDARIES

VEGETATION

THIS IS VEGETATION IN DELAWARE CO., OHIO

NO, SORRY, THIS IS VEGETATION IN DELAWARE CO., OHIO

DISPUTED BOUNDARIES

GEOLGY

THIS IS THE GEOLGY OF DELAWARE CO., OHIO

NO, THIS IS THE GEOLGY OF DELAWARE CO., OHIO

GEOLGY

CARIBOLI

NO, CARIBOLI DON'T BREED IN ANWR.

THIS IS WHERE CARIBOLI BREED IN ANWR.

CARIBOLI

SO HOW DO MAPS WORK TO ADVANCE PROPOSALS?
MAKE A MARK

A GAZILLION ALTERNATIVE MARKS FOR THAT CONCEPT
PIN IT DOWN

COMPLEXITIES OF A PLACE OF WORSHIP: CONGREGATION, PARKING, COMMUNITY SERVICES...
RETURN TO ONE PAIR
AND EXPlicate

THINKING OF MAPS THIS WAY IMBUES THE
CARTOGRAPER WITH POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY