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Pop!Tech Notes: Christian Nold and Emotional Mapping of Cities

POSTED BY JOEL JOHNSON, OCTOBER 18, 2007 6:55 AM | [PERMALINK](#)

Image: [Christian Nold](#)

Speaker: Christian Nold, <http://biomapping.net/Softhook.com>. (My comments in parentheses.)

"London only has enough food for three days."
"Cities are consensual hallucinations."



Participatory sensory mapping. Nold blindfolds and temporarily deafens people, leaving them only by touch—they are led by the hand—and smell. A map of a college area with notes like "noise like car sirens" and "the wall where I hurt my finger" and "like something died" instead of roads and conduits. Almost 50% of the experiences recorded by 30-some-odd schoolchildren were positive. "We sat on a wet bench for a minute, it felt so cold because it was raining," was an example note. The entire map is just a couple thousand meters square.

He developed a device called the "Bio-mapping device," essentially based on a lie detector, based on physiological arousal, connected to a GPS unit. They participants go around for something like an hour, creating "emotional maps." Map notes such as "argument with mom"; spikes near shabby industrial areas.

Nold ends up taking all the data in aggregate and publishing printed maps showing the "emotional landscape." A "high arousal area" around a cafe that will be demolished soon, perhaps indicating that the cafe should not be torn down.

"San Francisco emotion map." (They have emotion in San Francisco?) Sample note: "Smelled really strong pee but only a second later smelled beef. Mmm!" Nold: "Lots of people felt really strong arousal walking past their old [sexual] partners' houses." Another note: "I really like the mural with the bears." (These, as Nold alluded to, would make fantastic maps for walking tours in a new city. Emotional landmarks!)

Another map did the arousal biomapping, but also allowed them to draw little figures along with their mappings. New shopping area was low arousal; old market was high arousal.

Big issue in UK is stopping kids from "hanging around." (The whole chav thing.) Young people are being marginalized. This sort of mapping may help to bring about emotionally positive spaces for kids.

(The whole thing reminds me a lot of the conversations that occurred last week in NYC at a Burning Man event [organized by the AIA](#). A woman who spoke was a architect in London, who learned about integrating "sacred" spaces into city planning from Black Rock City, which is torn down and recreated every year. In essence, it's easier to discover what's been done wrong than it is to correct it.)

See also: [Pop!Tech: Christian Nold's Emotional Maps](#) [EthanZuckerman.com]

posted in: [RESEARCH](#)

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Recent Comments

JEMAELEDDIN SAID: ""nad"? "can"? Joel, are you blogging drunk again? ..."

CALANAN SAID: "Reminds me of the <a href="http://www.careprojects.com/productDisplay.cfm"..."

ANONYMOUS SAID: "I cannot for the life of me see what makes this superior to a Transporter from Slim Devices (makers ..."

ANONYMOUS SAID: "My mum had the original Beogram 4000, which, while missing the quadrophonics of the 6000, being the ..."

DAVID B. SAID: "This is adorable! I don't suppose it's made in China with 20x lead content? - cause I'm all about t ..."

DAVID B. SAID: "GULP! I'm pretty sure the "value" of my audio materials are out of the league of something like this ..."

ZACH HOEKEN SAID: "hey! tis awesome to see RepRap on BoingBoing. I'm heavily involved in the project, and have also b ..."

SONNY P FONTAINE SAID: "If everyone would just order the radium pad from the last page of the article the human race would b ..."

SORCERER MICKEY SAID: ""I, for one, welcome our new insect overlords!" - Kent Brockman ..."

ANONYMOUS SAID: "Small, menacing and only one eye... surely this should be Plankton and not spongebob? ..."

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