EDITORIAL

Centres Seen from the City's Residents

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City designs and urban imaginaries often follow geocentric principles. Enault [1] describes that these principles reflect ethological and psychological theories of egocentrism and introduces how and where these are detectable and made visible in the perceptions of urban citizens. A crucial element here is that distance is subjective. An equal distance may, for example, be considered 'far' if one must travel from the centre to the periphery, whereas the same distance is felt as 'nearby' if the direction is from the periphery to the centre. Based on this perception, most centric city (re-) designs use distance to the centre as a key indicator. An "x-minute city" design, with "x" being a variable such as 15, 20, or 60, echoes this travel time and reflects the idea that a resident needs time-related proximity or accessibility to certain 'central' points of interest, such as stations, shops, medical services, government offices. On a larger scale, cities and countries are often mapped from the idea that a centre or central point of interest is also the most important location for all residents, which reflects an egocentric and centralistic territorial perspective. For this reason, many country maps and world maps also start from this central point of power and authority instead of reasoning from where the most relevant artefacts or activities take place.

Alternative spatial designs not only use distance to services but also distance to green. The 3-30-300 rule for urban forestry is a framework for urban forestry that suggests every city resident should have access to 3 trees visible from their home, 30% tree canopy cover in their neighbourhood, and live within 300 meters of a green space. This rule provides a benchmark for cities to increase urban greening and promote equitable access to nature [2]. Along similar lines, countries which decide on positioning or relocating a new capital city tend to position this new city in the geographical centre of the country, even if this is relatively far from all crucial activities of the country [3].

Despite the emphasis on centrism and distance to central points as the key principles of spatial fabrics, Enault [1] notes that many of these designs draw on subjectivity, personal experience and discretionary rationality of ideal spaces, which create an overall urban space as disconnected and discrete personal "bubbles" or zones of comfort. These are not necessarily connected to broader abstract conceptions or imaginaries of urban spaces and urban territories. The consequence of this disjointed relation is that an abstract policy concept of an x-minute city may not align with an ideal or sustainable city master plan, for example. To overcome this disconnection, Enault [1] presents a geospatial method to quantify and apply the qualitative "law of proxemics", which would apply to both individual and collective scales. This method aims at aggregating individual perceptions to a point where the aggregate "proxemic distance" corresponds to the collective perception of space within a city. This approach involves using mathematical models, such as Clark's model, which relates population density to distance from the city centre. This allows for the creation of maps, which may look distorted but represent the city as perceived by the residents. The article presents

examples of such distorted maps, such as the deformation of France based on an individual's location in Bordeaux and the "tunnel effect" between Paris and Bordeaux.

What is evident from [1] is that the way one perceives reality remains a core research focus of cartography and geospatial visualisation. Urban spaces represent an abstract concept reflecting operant subjectivity and collective perceptions. Converting this into meaningful and effective visual representations, which ultimately can support better spatial governance, remains, however, a challenge. Distorted maps may present better reflections of real situations, but also are less common to decision makers and affected stakeholders, and may thus be contested for this reason. Although existing theories and models offer meaningful examples, the contemporary expectations of urban planners and citizens have changed. The consequence for future research is how these insights will trigger new ideas and examples for collective urban intelligence and thus create new urban geographies and imaginaries. Socio-political concepts such as spatial justice, spatial equivalence, spatial diversity and the right to the city need to be better integrated and aligned with geospatial concepts of proximity, density and connectivity. This may not only require searching for new geospatial models, but also for new socio-political ones.

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