

Digital Tools for Psychogeography

A Discussion on the potential benefits of augmented reality browsers for psychogeographic practices.

By: Maria Treacy

Supervisor: Dr. Sorcha O'Brien

In times of economic downturn, there are many people out there that fall into repetitive daily patterns and wear down the sidewalks that form the bridges between their homes, jobs and nearest amenities. With the regular and timed tread of their tired and worn out soles they mark out the same paths through their city or town, crossing streets at the same points, preferring one patchwork pavement to another.

By veering off the fixed path and allowing oneself to drift, observing the communal terrain and absorbing microclimatic ambiances which occur across differing urban zones, ones sight of society becomes enriched with an alternative view of the hierarchical systems which confine human experience. Does technology have the capacity to enrich this counter-cultural experiment? One may negate the system that has evolved over time to control and manipulate masses. But should one also dismiss the products of such systems? The ability to extend space and create an information rich environment would appear to have enormous implications for the observation of urban spaces. This research is focused on the political and social implications of its use by highlighting issues such as the mapping of social boundaries, territorialisation, the digital footprint, and evolving surveillance strategies in urban areas.

This paper examines psychogeographic practices that evolved from the early 1960s, beginning with the radical ideas of the French Situationists, and discovers if such experiments may be aided by use of augmented reality browsers.