

Cartographic Vocabularies and Their Redescription – A Contribution to Neopragmatic Cartographic Theory in Light of the Challenges Posed by Augmented and Virtual Worlds as well as Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract:

Since the 1980s, the positivist-oriented tradition of classical cartography has come under criticism. Critical cartography has attributed to it a strong link to power structures, a failure to fully consider the social constructedness of maps, and the practice of governmental agencies withholding geodata. In an initial phase, cartographic representations were largely rejected. In a second phase, the goal emerged to create an alternative to positivist cartography through participatory counter-mapping (e.g. Crampton und Krygier 2005; Harley 1989): From a neopragmatic perspective, we argue that both cartographic approaches to the world—large parts of both the traditional and the critical approaches—are useful for engaging with the world. This argument is ultimately based on philosophical considerations regarding the mutual irreplaceability of idealism and realism. Traditional cartography provides orientation within the (particularly material) world, whereas critical cartography addresses the questions surrounding the cartographic construction of the world. From a neopragmatic viewpoint, the usefulness of traditional cartography is acknowledged, but its claim to simply represent the world is rejected (Edler und Kühne 2023). Similarly, the critical cartographic perspective on the social constructedness of cartographic representations is embraced; however, an overly narrow restriction of mapping forms is not considered productive. Following the concepts of neopragmatic cartography, the contingency of the world becomes central to these considerations, along with the question of how (ironically) new contingent interpretations of the world can be generated (Kühne et al. 2024; Kühne 2024). The concepts of contingent and inverse landscapes serve as tools for this purpose. The focus on usefulness in solving concrete problems and the inclusion of broader population groups (such as individuals with disabilities) also guides the approach to virtual and augmented reality, as well as artificial intelligence. On the one hand, these technologies allow for an expansion of the contingency of cartographic world interpretations. On the other hand, they provide a low-threshold opportunity for an inclusive approach to (carto)graphic representations—though they also have the tendency to reproduce spatial stereotypes.

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