

THE INTELLIGENCE FOR TERRITORIAL INTELLIGENCE

Loreto Saavedra Sánchez

PhD Researcher at Université Complutense de Madrid
lsaavedrasanchez@gmail.com , + 34 653 92 91 09

José L. Piñuel Raigada

Professor at Université Complutense de Madrid
pinuel@ccinf.ucm.es , + 34 667 466 620

Professional address

Facultad de CC de la Información. UCM – Avda. Complutense S/N 28040 Madrid

Summary: The project that we are developing involves the content analysis of different aspects of one web site that put together proposals, assertions, and demands of the inhabitants of the city related to Barcelona's urbane territory [cfr. <http://www.bdebarna.net>].

Keywords: territorial intelligence – cognitive capital – mapping – cyborg city.

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The research work at the basis of this presentation¹ aims at exploring the possibilities that the “collaboration maps”, open to users, offer to the administration of the cognitive capital of their inhabitants on the territory. We support the need to know and analyse this cognitive capital and the possibilities of its use for an improvement of the territorial administration. From this results the title of this document “the intelligence for territorial intelligence”.

1. BDEBARNA: STORIES OF BARCELONA, A COLLABORATION MAP.

Our study aims at knowing the relation between the city and the new technologies connected to the territory, particularly since the analysis of the web site “Bdebarna. Stories of Barcelona”(www.bdebarna.net), to which we will refer hereafter as “Bdebarna”. This collaboration project is defined as a “living map” of Barcelona in which it is possible to consult and edit stories, ideas, suggestions, complaints and all kind of contributions related to the city; an exchange of “the secrets hidden by the city”.²

The web page presents a range of singularities that have caught our attention; the first one refers to the represented city, the other ones to the site itself. As for the first one, we deal with one of the cities considered as one of the urban patterns of postmodernism- the Barcelona pattern.³This is how in its internationalization as brand, Barcelona was recently acknowledged as one of the three European cities with the best brand image⁴; it is a city with tradition in the use of “growing effect”, meaning the use of extraordinary events for redevelopment purposes (Capel, 2005:15) with huge scale projects⁵. The recent history of the city is marked by one of the strongest and well organized associative movement and by a social network which has often faced initiatives considered as an imposed urbanization pattern. Among the remarks on the web page Bdebarna are to be emphasized: first hand information about the territory, based on the experience of its inhabitants; we deal with a participative Web- “fed” by the users and inhabitants of Barcelona themselves (users-inhabitants forward in this text); it disposes of a career- almost eight years in the geo-reference of non expert people.

The site was created in 2000⁶ and last year it got to more than 1700 edited stories⁷, stories of its users without whom this site would not exist. Nowadays it has an automatic system of editing- based on PHO and MySQL- to enable the users’ participation. For the same reason is used RSS, data form which allows subscribing for the contents of a page and rerunning the news without need to consult the web it comes from.

The Web functions based on the maps- they offer to a certain extent an “electronic analogy of the real city” (Graham and Marvin, 1989: 179). These representations show the streets and the districts of Barcelona, by allowing posting stories taking place in different parts of the city and, which is even more important,

¹ It is a PhD thesis within the context of the programme of the University Complutense in Madrid « Communication, Social Changement and Development ».

² Tomas Delclós, “Los sentimientos”, Sección Vida & Artes, Diario El País 10-03-2008. Available in digital edition: [http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cataluna/sentimientos/elpepiespcat/20080310elpcat_21/Tes/]. Date de la consultation : 21 août 2008.

³ Initiative concretized by the transformations in the 80s and which involved, according to acknowledged geographers as Horacio Capel (2006), a debate on the way in which it is conducted and how we should carry out urbanism. One of the main critics brought to the quoted pattern refers to its application that involves only the central city of Barcelona, i.e. to the City Hall. In the case of the Metropolitan District or what was called the Metropolitan Region, this territory does not answer to an organized urban increase and they are closer to the situation of other post metropolitan cities in Europe or America

⁴ El País “¿Quién es Barcelona?”. Análisis. 20-08-2008. The city is the third one, only after Paris and London in a hit-parade organized by the image consultant Saffron.

⁵ It happened in the 19th at the Universal Exhibition (1888), in the 20th century with the International Exhibition in 1929 and later with the Olympic Games (1992) and in the 21st century with the Cultures forum (2004).

⁶ As said, the amount of years of operational character born by the project caught the attention; the one that was set up before the appearance the way of positioning of the geographical data by non specialists, “neogeo-reference”, as called by some. However, it is more suggestive to believe that, even if today it would be easier to show such a service, only an example like the one of this web site could be found, now unfortunately inactive.

⁷ In this work we will frequently use the concept of story as defined by Jerome Bruner that refers to a cognitive way of functioning that convinces by its « similarity to life » (1999, 23). However, since some of these stories do not get this meaning, the term will be used as synonym of discourse, by highlighting this in the expressive force of the language that shows this concept emphasized by Hammersley and Atkinson (1994, 123).

geographically placing⁸ them in the place corresponding them on the map, according to a semantic classification by signs. Each of the defined categories corresponds to a chromatic code which identifies the different kinds of experiences.

Complementary to the postmodernist premises of the representation of the city, this site acknowledges upon the variety of lives, dreams and interpretations that could be found in the city.⁹ In this way, it created a mapping- “active process through which the locations and the places, the inside structures and relations of a space are revealed into another space” Smith and Katz, 1993: 70)- which meets a representation considered as “veritable” in terms of emotion and experience of the place in the studied case.

Given the kind of practices used in Bdebarna, it provides us with infinity of subjects of reflections on the possibilities offered by the TIC to the dominion and to the transformation of the territory in the postmodern cities; we will stick to the revision of some general topics of the proposed approach and used methodology.

1.1. “Barcelona- cyborg”

The lack of maturity in the field of the studies of the relation between the telecommunications and the city (Graham and Marvin, 1996) was reflected, among others, in the hasty predictions of the changes in the nature of the city and of the urban life, in an unfortunate debate contaminated with marketing exaggerations and half-truths and in an extreme reduction, which come out of unjustified statements on how the telecommunications have an impact upon the city.

The shortage of studies in this field has also justified approaching the issue without an adequate reasoning upon the theory and the methodology. Some authors such as Warren (1989) even talked about “the candy store effect” around the common place of the telematics, technologies and urban development: we try to understand too much, without any logics to explain why some consequences are explained and other are not.

The relation between the city and the virtual network has often been approached by means of a link established between the imaginary urban space, far off from the daily human practices, and the operative space of a complementary reality “added” to the “veritable reality” (Lopez, 2007: 38.39), that of the geographical space. However, we worked less on the idea of a cyber-city that deletes the borders between real and virtual, beyond analogies between the computer network and the city- in terms of spatial organization or routines (Boyer C., 1996). We did not work either beyond the relation between the technology and the global interconnection (Castells and Hall, 1994; Mitchell, W., 1999.2003). We did not work beyond the interconnection and the mobility (Graham, S., 2001; Sheller, M., 2006; Cresswell T., 2006) in a cyber-city focused mainly upon the emergence of eminently urban practices that influence the configuration of the city (Graham, S., 2004); or in a practiced cyber-city that prevents from keeping talking about a “jump” between the virtual reality and what is real. It is interesting also the study of the significations and information flows that cross the cities- approached by W. Mitchell in *Placing Words* (2005)- but which refer particularly to the city and restructure its space not only according to the practice, but also to the proper significations.

In a constructivist perspective, we should state that “ the natural impulse of a great part of the technological change is better explained by checking the technology not outside the society, like the technological determinism could do, but as inside part of the society” (Mackenzie and Wajcman, 1985: 14, quoted by Graham and Marvin, 1996: 104).

We make use of the metaphor of the cyborg (Lemos, 2004) based on the concept of a city that refers to a hybrid¹⁰ composed of social networks, physical infrastructures, imaginary networks (Westwood and Williams, 1997, quoted by Lemos) and of a complex organism whose dynamic is connected to the new technologies.

⁸ We highlight the concept of locality (Smiths and Katz, 1993, 69), metaphor that suggests the idea “social location” which involves a collective compromise of mutually involved identities.

⁹ It is possible to perceive as well a kind of popular and democratic participation of definition of values associated to what is urban, based on the heterogeneity and fragments and elements restored by the users of the web. This heterogeneity stimulates, in the receivers of the stories, the production of a meaning that cannot be stable or univocal; one of the elements of what is precisely postmodern.

¹⁰ This hybrid organism (cybernetic and organism) can only exist in a world of binary information, directed by the principle of cybernetics (Lemos, 2001).

We use the notion of cyber-city to refer to a contemporary city in which the flow spaces (digital information and its technologies by means of telematic networks as defined by Castells, M, 2005) are connected to what is physical (Lemos, 2004). Within this framework appears a more complex city where we have to question basic notions associated to the study of the territory and of what is urban. There appears a diversity of manifestations of the communion between the cyber-city and the physical city (the territory), overlapping that produces a transformation into what is urban¹¹.

This last idea is the one according to which we want to support the study we carry out. The city of Barcelona that we find in sites such as Bdebarna and the city of Barcelona where more than 1.5 million inhabitants (I.N.S., 2007) live are overlapped and gather technology and environment, making more difficult the job to understand the city where people interact. Mitchell's idea on the new connexions resulting from the use of the network takes shape; these connexions provide innovatory means able to produce and organize the inhabited space with various purposes (2001: 34)¹².

Once this point clarified, it is understandable that our working hypothesis proposes the idea that the relations between what is urban and the technology in the cyborg-city do not only cause deep changes in the perception of the city and in the way of knowing and feeling the city, but they also cause mutations in the physical space and in the communicative practices, in the transmission of the culture and of the information proper to a territory.

We support as well the content of this collaboration site connected to a territory like Barcelona is a representation of the forms of appropriation of the city by the user-inhabitant. There everyone can write and place in the map of Barcelona emotions, memories, complaints, requests, among other topics, to create a map of the "secrets" that the city hides.

Now, if we link our concept of "Barcelona- cyborg" with the one of territorial intelligence, in charge with the informational administration of the data on the territory, it is possible to claim that we deal with a convenient relation.

What precedes is supported by the idea that the dominion of this cognitive capital- to which we could not easily have access- allows knowing the significations, the uses and the appropriations of the territory by a given community of inhabitants; it also allows understanding certain territorial dynamics which can be extremely significant in terms of decision-making and territorial administration.

2. METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

The proposed approach for this case study comes from the ethnographic method¹³ and it is built on three central directions: the participative observation, the analysis of the content of the stories de bdebernautas edited in the web¹⁴ and a series of interviews with specialized reporters (among whom the founders or creators of the site and some of its usual users- oldbies).

Although we developed other activities, in this document we will only deal with some questions connected to the stage when the role of the observatory- participant-participant was privileged¹⁵ (Junker, 1960; pp. 35-38, quoted by des Vallées, 1997; pp.152-159; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1994; pp.109-114) and when we considered the hidden continuous intervention of the researcher (Lofland and Lofland, 1984: 20, 23). As we dealt with a physical place, we decided to set an amount of daily visits to the web site, at different times of the day, post a story, at

¹¹ Examples of these overlapping are those that follow when a person uses his computer in Square La Mina de Cadiz (city in the South of Spain) thanks to free internet connection maintained wireless by the city hall; or the practice of Bookcrossing in Barcelona. These examples show that in any case the physical city is replaced by the virtual or electronic city...

¹² The « bdebernautas » committed to « meet face to face » and they afterwards published it in their network ; they also organized visits to public spaces that are particularly meaningful for them as an outcome of the debate and the interest raised by the page, whose photos and documentaries were afterwards edited on the web site.

¹³ The ethnographic method involves the prolonged staying in a concrete place, where the researcher shares totally the life of a community or a social group.

¹⁴ The data analysis was facilitated by their administration and processing, through the use of Filemaker, once the protocol of the corresponding analysis.

¹⁵ The continuously developed activities got the support of the members of the studied group; the recruitment of the participants was already for the realization of pictures, location of the used spaces by Equatorial immigrants, among others.

least two times a week. The subjects of the stories are randomly chosen according to the information provided by different texts, by the material found in the site itself or by the personal experiences.

Some of the stories we edited became direct interpellations to the researcher, even if it from a rather critical point of view¹⁶. Despite all this we came to maintain a range of interactions with some bdebernavtas taking part regularly in the web dynamic.

As for the stories of the bdebernavtas, we decided to use the discourse analysis in order to identify the places where the described activities take place or to which the stories edited in the site refer to; besides, some tools of the discourse analysis in the discussion groups- which according to Inanez'(1994) methodology constitutes a "production process"- concern the construction the social objects (Reguillo, 1996). These objects involve a group in the network, with all what is formulated, told and examined.

Final comments

The flow of images, knowledge, information and symbols of the city that are exchanged in this site shows us the human experience in that place and informs us about the social construction of the territorial identity, in which representations of the place interfere, proper to collaboration web sites such as Bdebarna. Contrary to the research of the global space as seen by a lot of specialists, what we discover is a strengthening of the identity of the territory we live in. In this case the communicative practices produced by the use of New Technologies are tools of great relevance to provide information about the territory and have access to the vital knowledge about the significations that the inhabitants give to the space of the city. At a first sight it is possible to state that this type of spaces constitutes a body of information on the concrete territory, of major value and which could be essential in the decision-making concerning the territory administration.

In any case, we have to admit that we are before a social construction of the space through the use of the network, which can have an extremely partial outcome. However, what interests us is to focus upon the capacity which, as for Bdebarna, uses internet to shatter, move and redefine the conceptions of the meeting, community and urban life spaces without eliminating the physical territory , but strengthening and restructuring it.

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¹⁶ One of the first interventions has generated a real discussion because of the "non said" in the discourses. What was extremely interesting was that, although we do not talk about the administration and about the little interest paid to the conservation of the patrimony of Roman ruins, but simply to the location of one of the weak columns still existing in the city (that belonged to a Roman temple), the story caused, without wanting it, a contradictory discussion because of the bad exercise of the municipal administration to this respect.

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