

Building participatory counternarratives: Pedagogical interventions through digital placemaking

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Abstract

Places are filled with stories, with histories that shape how people understand the nature of a place. Places are unique sets of trajectories – each with a story – coming into contact. However, just as much as places are defined by their histories, they are also shaped by the histories that are forgotten, or far too often, actively suppressed through dominant narratives. After all, dominant media of spatial, public memory – for example, plaques and public monuments – often reproduce dominant narratives of a place, narratives created by the powerful. This project examines how digital placemaking can be deployed through locative technologies to push back on dominant spatial narratives and make places more polyvocal in consequential ways. In particular, through a project at Clemson University, we examine how locative storytelling applications can help students intervene in traditional narratives of place to engage with social justice and alternative histories.

Keywords

Digital history, locative media, mobile media, mobile storytelling, mobility, pedagogy, place, rhetoric

Here is the story people typically tell of Clemson University: It is a major US research university located in the state of South Carolina that is nationally known as one of the best college football teams in the country. In many ways, Clemson University is typical of many US universities. The

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campus is in a small, semirural college town. The town reflects college life; the flows of people and business tend to revolve around the typical US academic schedule. And like many universities in the southeastern United States, the history of the university is tied to the history of oppression and slavery. Less than half a kilometer from the authors' offices, the campus quad has a building called the Fort Hill Plantation. Campus buildings are built on top of old slave quarters, a stockade to house convicted laborers, and a cemetery where slaves were buried. And going back even further, the land Clemson University sits on was originally inhabited by indigenous Cherokee peoples (see <https://www.landgrabu.org/> for more details). Like many universities in the United States, Clemson University was built on a history of oppression.

On the one hand, the story of Clemson is unique because all places are unique. After all, places are filled with stories, with histories that shape how people understand them. As Doreen Massey (1994) puts it, places are unique sets of trajectories coming into contact. However, just as much as places are defined by their histories and the specific intersection of trajectories, they are also shaped by the histories that are forgotten or – far too often – actively suppressed through dominant narratives (Farman, 2015). Most universities, whether in the United States or not, are not built on slave plantations. But almost all places have buried histories that may conflict with the dominant narratives people share about a place. After all, traditional media of spatial, public memory – for example, plaques and public monuments – often reproduce the dominant narratives of a place (Blair, 1999).

This article examines how locative media can help disrupt these dominant narratives of place by using a case study of a pedagogical intervention the authors performed at Clemson University. In particular, we examine how practices of digital placemaking – defined ‘as the use of digital media in cultivating a sense of place for oneself and others’ (Halegoua, 2020: 16) – can help reshape how people come to know a place. Possibly most importantly, our contribution to this special issue focuses on digital placemaking as a pedagogical approach. We argue that digital placemaking can work as a pedagogical intervention into how students and communities cultivate and shape a sense of place. And importantly, we argue that participatory counternarratives can make places more polyvocal and encourage different voices from different groups to contravene the typically White, patriarchal dominant narratives of place.

To make our argument, this article builds upon research on spatial annotations, a term that refers to location-based narratives created through various forms of locative media. These narratives can include everything from locative fictionalized storytelling to location-based reviews through applications like Yelp or Foursquare. In fact, Ben Russel's *Headmap Manifesto*, a prescient 1999 artistic statement about the potentials of locative media, focused on how spatial annotation could remake place through locative media. Twenty years ago, he wrote

there are notes in boxes that are empty
 every room has an accessible history
 every place has emotional attachments you can open and save
 you can search for sadness in New York. (p. 3)

This article examines those accessible histories – those empty boxes filled with geotagged notes – through what we call *participatory counternarratives*. We define the concept as the ability to use locative media for new forms of digital placemaking that push against dominant histories and

dominant stories we tell about a place, and we detail the intersection of participatory counternarratives and digital placemaking through a case study of an assignment we use to teach students about the history of Clemson.

While our case study focuses on one example of exploring an alternative history of a place, our argument about participatory counternarratives as a form of hybrid pedagogy could be applied more broadly. We submitted our first version of this article in April 2020. At that point, debates about historical narratives were obviously significant, but the importance and relevance of the topic has only exploded since then. June 2020 saw widespread protests after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and many of those protests involved the removal of physical memory markers (e.g. statues) that upheld dominant narratives that glossed over the many racist parts of different places' history. At Clemson University, the protests led to the university requesting (they have to get it approved by the state legislature) to change the name of the campus's main building – Tillman Hall – because Benjamin Tillman was a White supremacist who defended lynching on the Senate floor. In addition, Clemson changed the name of the Calhoun Graduate School because it was named after a proslavery Vice President. All over the country (and even the world), statues have come toppling down and names have changed as protestors and activists have fought back against the dominant narratives of a place. This article is a modest contribution to that broader movement, and we show how digital placemaking through locative media can work as a pedagogical intervention that disrupts some of these dominant spatial narratives.

To make our case, we begin by examining research on spatial and public memory. We then transition to the concept of hybrid space to discuss research that has explored how merging the digital and physical in new ways can influence how people experience physical space and movement. The next section then introduces the concept of participatory counternarratives and provides a detailed description of our pedagogical case study, which involved having students at Clemson University use the application Geotourist to create location-based narratives that intervene in the dominant narratives of the campus. We conclude with a discussion that places our pedagogical intervention within the broader conversation regarding spatial memory and hybrid spaces.

Spatial and public memory

Memory, whether public or individual, is tied to both media and place. Various media forms, including orality (Ong, 1982), writing (Innis, 1950), scrapbooking (Humphreys, 2018), and even social media (Frith and Kalin, 2016; Schwartz and Haleboua, 2015), are important parts of how people preserve memories of experience. Often, the ability to mediate among people across space was just as importantly the ability to mediate among people across time. But place also plays a crucial role in how memory is enacted and preserved. Individuals have memories attached to specific places that mark those places as important. For example, people often remember where they were when a major event happened, whether that event was important on a societal or personal level. The most generic of places may still elicit the most consequential of memories (Tuan, 1977).

Public memory obviously is different than individual memory. For one thing, public memory often requires more effort to preserve (or create from scratch). Consequently, public memory is often enacted at the intersection of both place and media. The role of place can seem rather straightforward. Places are where historical events happen. Events are commemorated (or not commemorated) at those places and then either retain their importance as sites of officially

recognized public memory or not. Linked to the role of place is the role of media, particularly the typical media forms of public memory tied to place. For example, many famous places feature plaques or statues, which as Blair (1999) argues, 'inserts itself into our attention' (p. 46) and becomes a text with clear links to specific narratives of public memory. These plaques or statues commemorate events that happened in a place and are designed to elevate a place as one supposedly worth remembering. And these plaques and statues are inherently political (Dickinson et al., 2010). In a book about the National Mall in Washington, DC, Savage (2009) detailed the many political fights over which narratives were preserved through various media of public memory. And of course, many of these plaques may eventually be forgotten, so the act of remembering itself is intensely political.

Debates about which places are worth remembering and what types of spatial media are appropriate for a place happen again and again. Germany had to wrestle with how to address statues commemorating Nazi history (Forest et al., 2004). Eastern Europe confronted the past of the Soviet Union that was often enshrined through spatial media such as Soviet-era statues (Forest and Johnson, 2011). And in the United States, confrontations over mediated forms of spatial memory have only become more pronounced, with recent protests toppling statues devoted to slave holders.

Statues and plaques are communication media designed to enact certain types of public memory. Like all media forms, they have specific affordances and limitations. On the one hand, these physical media are durable. They last through bad weather, and some physical media of collective memory have been around for hundreds (sometimes thousands) of years. On the other hand, they also have important constraints. For one, they are often expensive: the average person cannot build a statue or create a plaque and have it built into the side of a wall. Secondly, even if people could afford it, private property laws and city zoning restrictions in capitalist societies generally prohibit citizens from adding plaques to buildings or erecting statues in public spaces. And finally, as Farman (2015) points out, the constraints of these physical media 'include the amount of space available to tell a story. What tend to emerge, due to such limitations (coupled with the costs involved in telling narratives with durable media) is that the "grand narratives" of a space get told', which are 'the stories of those in power, those with the wealth to set up durable media, or the agreed-upon story by the people in positions of authority' (p. 106). These three factors combined with a larger political push to preserve some narratives over others contribute to the limited voices of public memory in many physical spaces.

Physical media are obviously only one part of public memory. History is passed down through texts and shaped through stories communities tell in other ways. However, the physical media of monuments, statues, and plaques have been a powerful media form that shapes the historical narrative of a place. But these spatial media often represent the powerful voices, and other voices from the past are silenced because they have no place on a 200-word inscription. We return to the intersections of media, place, and public memory later in this article when we focus more on the constraints of physical spatial media in contrast to the digital placemaking potential of newer forms of digital media. But first we look more at how locative media can disrupt the dominance of physical media through the increasing hybridity of place.

Hybrid space and spatial narratives

Physical media of monuments and plaques still play a major role in public and spatial memory. If anything, debates about how history and place are memorialized have only become more visible,

and artists have exposed the grand narratives memorialized through these media by introducing different types of statues to shared spaces. For example, Kehinde Wiley's Richmond statue upended traditional narratives of the Confederacy by constructing an equestrian-based statue but with an African-American male on top of the horse (Capps, 2019). But people also now have more options for enacting public spatial memory in part because of the widespread adoption of smartphones and their locative capabilities. The use of smartphones and other forms of Internet-connected mobile media have contributed to new spatial configurations Adriana de Souza e Silva (2006) calls 'hybrid spaces' (p. 261).

Hybrid spaces refer to the merging of the digital and physical space into a single assemblage, in contrast to some Internet theory that positioned the digital and physical as separate and sometimes in opposition (see Baym, 2015, for a discussion of this history). In hybrid spaces, the digital and physical merge and become co-constitutive, and 'the physical location determines the information one receives, just as the location-based information influences how people move through and make decisions about their physical space' (Frith, 2015a: 23). Hybrid spaces reflect the fact that many people engage with space now through a combination of physical movement and digital data. For example, people follow routes through Google Maps, find restaurants on locative applications like Yelp, or retrieve information about historical monuments through tourism applications. The way people come to know the physical world is increasingly shaped by digital information.

Hybrid spaces refer to the larger trend toward the merging of digital information and physical mobility. What we focus on in this article is a specific type of hybridity enabled through a form of storytelling/placemaking: spatial annotations. Spatial annotations refer to the ability to create texts (broadly defined) that include geotagged data so the texts can be placed on a map and – in some cases – can only be listened to/read when someone is in that specific location (Frith, 2015b). These spatial annotations can make the co-creation of mnemonic spatial media more participatory, or as de Souza e Silva and Frith argue, 'when people start contributing to create the information that is attached to locations, they actively create the links among these locations... people are then transformed from readers into writers of urban spaces' (2014: 45).

There are many examples of spatial annotations. The most ubiquitous come from commercial applications like Yelp or Tripadvisor that involve reviews of locations that are then plotted on a map and attached to the locations (Humphreys and Liao, 2011). Even the rather mundane text of a geotagged restaurant review implicates questions of memory; after all, what is a Yelp review but a text of an experience at a specific place that is then mapped?

And spatial annotations have also been explored outside of more commercial applications. Zeffiro's (2012) work traces the genealogy of how locative media have been used for annotations and the creation of counternarratives. The phrase 'locative media' was first coined in 2003 by Karlis Kanin (Zeffiro, 2012), and the idea of adding alternative narratives to a place was central to much of the formative work in locative media art, which had its roots in artists who reappropriated locative technologies of surveillance for artistic and social purposes (Knowlton et al., 2002; Lane, 2004; Rueb, 2007; Tutters and Varnelis, 2006). While arguably the dominant form of locative media art in the 2000s tended to focus on gaming, other projects throughout the 2000s – including projects like *Can You See Me Now?* and the *Tactical Sound Garden* – worked to shift people's experience of place by letting other users contribute spatial texts of various types. These artists made important contributions that laid the groundwork for later explorations of locative media, but 'Locative media remained the stuff of demos and art-technology festivals until 2008 when Apple released the GPS-enabled iPhone 3G' (Cornell and Varnelis, 2011: n.p.). The widespread adoption

of smartphones as locative media is when the types of spatial annotations examined in this article became far more accessible.

After the widespread adoption of smartphones, researchers began exploring new ways to take advantage of the combination of mobile Internet and locative capabilities. For example, Løvlie (2011) created a project called *text/opia* that explored the intersections of GPS and mobile phones. And possibly the most hype about locative narrative was found in the journalism literature, which featured multiple articles in the mid-to-late 2010s about the potential of locative journalism to reshape how people consume content (Erdal et al., 2019; Weiss, 2015). Farman (2013) produced an edited collection that focused mostly on mobile storytelling through locative media, and much of that storytelling focused on producing histories that were meant to be experienced in certain locations (Oppegaard and Grigar, 2013). Many of these examples focused on public memory by unearthing the forgotten histories of places and using digital media to recreate historical narratives in physical sites where the physical markers of that past were mostly erased. As Farman (2015) puts it:

‘Mobile storytelling projects . . . explore ways of making these stories visible, especially when the built environment that functions as the foundation of the story is removed and made invisible. The story can still be represented even if the site is no longer a part of how the landscape is represented’ (p. 110).

Participatory counternarratives

Recent years have seen universities throughout the southeastern United States grapple with and confront their institutional histories. For many of these universities, their histories are tied to the labor of enslaved African Americans. At Clemson University, the *Call My Name* project led by Rhondda Thomas has publicly focused on how slavery, colonialism, and institutionalized racism shaped the university in the past and the present (Thomas, 2019). Other scholarly projects have also critiqued this history, centering Clemson University and the surrounding area as a specific geographical location around which narratives of racism, power, and institutional history propagate (O’Brien et al., 2018). We build on this work through a project we used in one of our courses that explored locative media’s potential to intervene in these institutional, spatial histories.

Building on work conceptualizing participatory culture (Jenkins, 2008), participatory counternarratives extend recalibrated narratives onto geographical places to more meaningfully make visible the narratives frequently *not told* about a place. Borrowing from participatory culture’s emphasis on the active production and creation of artifacts in networked environments, participatory counternarratives challenge dominant, normative assumptions about a place. Responding with a counternarrative that brings to light some new perspective, consideration, or experience has the potential to challenge dominant spatial narratives by countering them with digitally produced location-based narratives that further alternative placemaking goals and outcomes. Scholars working in critical race studies in particular have advanced understandings of counternarrative and counterstory (Martinez, 2020; Solorzano and Yosso, 2002), but for our purposes, a definition supplied by Mutua (2008) suffices. Mutua (2008) defines counternarrative as ‘stories/narratives that splinter widely accepted truths about peoples, cultures, and institutions’. We particularly foreground Mutua’s emphasis on cultures and institutions when building a theory of participatory counternarratives and consider how the two converge through digital placemaking as a pedagogical and political act.

The construction of participatory counternarratives represents an opportunity to challenge institutional, ideological powers by pluralizing our conceptions of place-based narratives. Places

are composed of physical, material geographies, but they are also shaped by the stories and experiences layered onto them. Participatory counternarratives, we argue, can augment experiences of place through new forms of digital placemaking that diversify narratives of public memory and are particularly useful for pedagogical purposes. By taking advantage of the imbricated nature of place in strategic, critical, and creative ways, locative media and hybrid spaces might help make visible the historical ways places have been experienced, constructed, and performed. The next section explores this concept in more detail by examining specific participatory counternarratives we co-created to complicate the dominant narratives of Clemson University and explore digital placemaking as a pedagogical approach.

Case study: Building pedagogical participatory counternarratives

To explore how mobile media can pluralize the digital narratives of a place, we used a first-year composition class to examine how locative media could intervene in public, participatory placemaking through participatory counternarratives of Clemson University. Specifically, students analyzed narratives pushed by various community stakeholders concerning the campus' history, especially regarding slavery, racism, and race-based exclusion. Students examined policy plans, public records, historical archive materials, and public relations statements from official university stakeholders. Many of these documents, while not explicitly denying the university's history with slavery, plantation life, and institutional racism, tended to downplay, soften, or gloss over the university's difficult histories as a plantation and as a university that did not admit African-American students until 1963. In other words, students quickly grasped that many university-sanctioned materials demonstrated clear rhetorical goals, which generally included crafting narratives that minimized the horrors experienced by enslaved African Americans on the campus' geographical location.

In response, students mapped carefully considered counternarratives onto campus buildings, streets, and historical markers using the mobile smartphone application Geotourist. Geotourist is a free application available on most smartphones that allows people to create an audio tour that members of the public might interact with. The app enables people to tether audio, image, text, and other multimedia files to a particular location by embedding geotagged metadata in the digital information (see Figure 1).

After exposure to some of the dominant narratives that have been articulated about Clemson's campus, students were introduced to Geotourist and were given time in class to explore the crowdsourced audio tours that are tethered to places of importance to them, including their hometowns and places of national and international prominence. After some introductory class sessions devoted to the recording of audio files, students began writing scripts for the production of audio tour counternarratives that intervene in the dominant story told of a particular place on Clemson's campus. After collaboratively writing their participatory counternarrative scripts, students recorded their audio tour entry into a 5–8 min MP3 file, which the class then uploaded into Geotourist. Here, the counternarrative audio tours were visible to the public on Geotourist's mobile and desktop applications for the duration of the semester and can be said to have contributed to the hybrid space of Clemson's campus for anyone with access to the Geotourist application.

We chose Geotourist for the project because of a few key affordances of the platform that were beneficial for nurturing sensibilities toward digital placemaking. The most important were Geotourist's locative functions and the fact the platform is free to use. Additionally, Geotourist has a relatively simple interface that focuses attention primarily on places and their accompanying

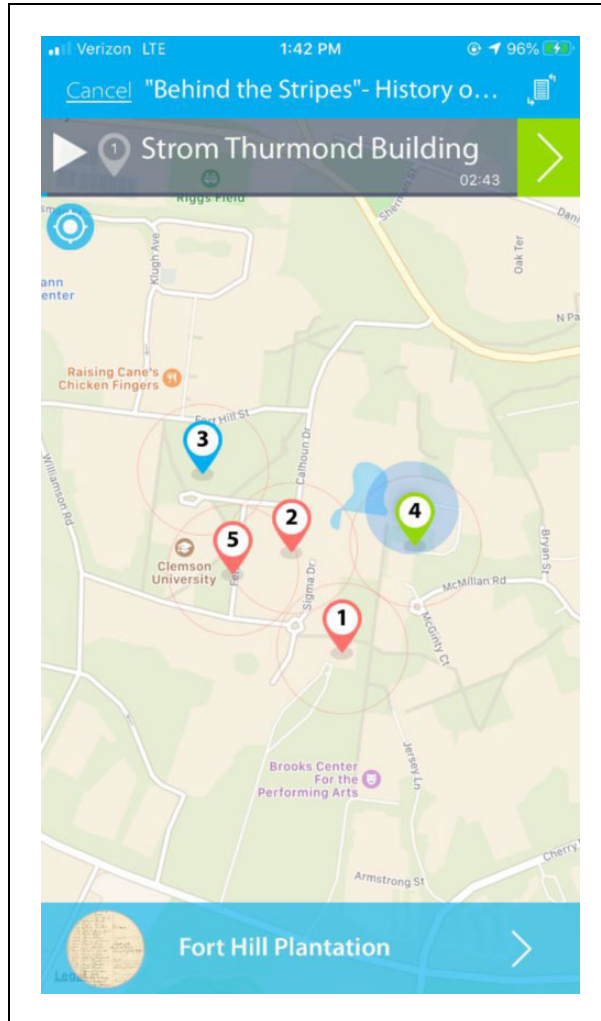


Figure 1. Screenshot of the mobile phone application Geotourist showcasing 'Behind the Stripes', a student-produced participatory counternarrative. Each point on the map is attached to a geographical location and connects to an audio file that narrates histories and counternarratives of that place.

stories. Finally, Geotourist worked for this project because the tours and individual tour points can be made publicly accessible and allow a variety of participants to construct, interact with, and respond to particular places through the application. For example, one user might map a digital audio tour chronicling the construction of a campus' earliest buildings, while another user might create an audio tour showcasing important sites in the university's history during the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. In this way, students can leverage the potential of mobile and locative media to compose participatory counternarratives that are digitally tethered to geographical places through the Geotourist application. These participatory counternarratives create a hybrid space that layers the digital, the physical, and the historical onto an experience of place.



Figure 2. A historical marker on the site of the Fort Hill Plantation house on Clemson University's campus. A student-produced participatory counternarrative project is 'mapped' over this geographical site in the Geotourist application, foregrounding the role slavery played in the founding of the university.

When someone accesses a geotour, they are provided with a map on their smartphone screen (or a regular computer screen if they are not using the app). They can then choose to listen to the files mapped onto locations to learn more about a specific place. If people choose, they can also use the locative mobile options to physically travel to each mapped site to listen to the audio text in the actual place it describes. Throughout the 6-week arc of this project, students not only learned to engage sensibilities of digital placemaking as a collective social construction but also learned how to intervene in public memory in their own local contexts.

For example, one group of students posted a participatory counternarrative to Geotourist positioned over the Fort Hill plantation house. While the dominant, public narrative of Fort Hill (demonstrated within the historical marker shown in Figure 2) only partially or tangentially engages with the history of slavery in the university's founding, the students' participatory

counternarrative foregrounded this history. In other words, while the university's official narrative as showcased on the historical marker makes no mention of slavery, the student-produced project intervenes to create a hybrid space surrounding the Fort Hill complex narrating an alternative, more socially just history of that place. This ability to map narratives and then have people follow certain paths to listen to narratives within the places they describe has long been one of the important interventions of locative mobile media. The ability to physically move – if able – to experience spatial narratives can alter both the way people engage with the information and with the physical place being described (Angus, 2010; Farman, 2013).

This student-produced participatory counternarrative geotour entry provided a publicly accessible counternarrative for the Fort Hill plantation house. The plantation house is a historical attraction on campus that in the 19th century served as the home of US Vice President John C Calhoun as well as Calhoun's son-in-law Thomas Green Clemson. In this example, students responded to the dominant narrative celebrating Calhoun – the Clemson Honors College was named after him until June 2020 – by articulating a counternarrative highlighting Calhoun's ardent defense of slavery as a public good, his racist and nationalistic oratory, and finally his representation today in Clemson University's various communities. By attaching an audio file in the Geotourist locative media application to the physical location represented on the digital map, students were able to pluralize narratives surrounding the Fort Hill plantation house and intervene in its place-based public memory. A second student group focused their participatory counternarrative's attention toward buildings crafted on Clemson's campus from stones taken directly from the 19th-century plantation's slave quarters, including a building named Hardin Hall that now houses the University's Department of History and Geography (Riddle, 2015). Along similar lines, a third group crafted a counternarrative on Geotourist for a banner celebrating African-American history on campus that highlighted a racist vandalism incident that occurred there in 2016 (Collins, 2016). By foregrounding attention to slavery, racism, and public memory on the campus through locative narratives, these participatory counternarratives were a small step toward digitally reshaping the narratives of Clemson University.

Students completing this project rewrote a place in small yet meaningful ways (see Figure 3). By critically reading the histories told about places such as the Fort Hill plantation on campus and then inquiring into which voices and histories were left out or excluded by the dominant narratives, students were able to engage local campus affairs, community-wide histories, and even global conversations about how we remember unjust past events. By familiarizing themselves with histories inherited through the university community they are a part of, students reflected on public memory in their immediate local context: How did their campus community remember its early history as a slave-owning plantation? As students walked the campus following their geotour on their smartphones (see Figure 3), they encountered not only the dominant narratives of the campus conveyed through historical markers, informational pamphlets, and public memorials but also the geotour contributions of their classmates: counternarratives denouncing the naming of university buildings after known slaveowners, critiquing the ways the university community remembers public figures, and drawing attention to a cemetery for convict laborers overlooking the university's famous football stadium. Making a particular story visible is a political, ideological, and sociohistorical act. In this way, construction of participatory counternarratives represents social justice pedagogical work (Berila, 2015; Case, 2016; Inoue, 2015) concerning public memory, place-based narratives, and the social construction of place.

In all of these cases, students made digital placemaking a project that extends cultural, political, and ideological values. Consequently, a primary takeaway from this participatory counternarratives

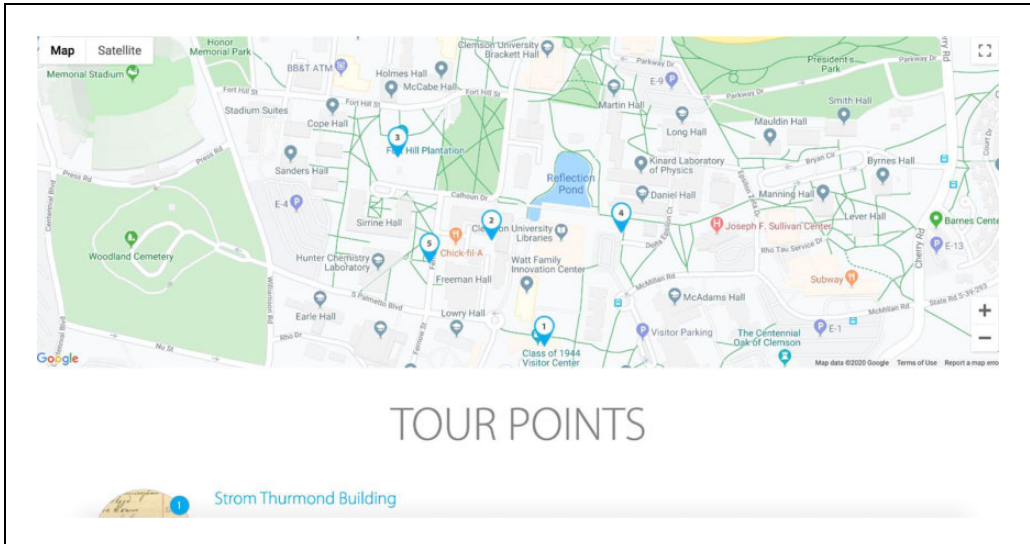


Figure 3. A screenshot of Geotourist browser software that shows a participatory counternarratives project.

project is the realization that, just as digital placemaking can inform pedagogy, pedagogy can in turn inform how we understand digital placemaking's political, ideological, and social justice work in the world. Pedagogical practice affirms digital placemaking's potential for pluralizing narratives, for enacting ends of social justice, and for expanding who gets to define places in public memory. In this sense, pedagogical initiatives help make the process of digital placemaking actionable in particular contexts, affirming that just as placemaking is political, it is also valuable for its potential of enacting justice.

Pedagogical challenges

One fairly obvious challenge of a project like this is a practical rather than theoretical one: It can be difficult to teach media production skills in courses not built around production. Though scholars have long connected the teaching of writing to the teaching of multimodal modes of composing (Shipka, 2011), connections to audio production (Ceraso, 2018) and to location-based composing (Frith, 2015b; Rivers, 2016) are only just beginning to be explored. Consequently, a major challenge can be the time it takes within the progression of a semester to establish dominant narratives of a place, propose place-based counternarratives, write scripts and production plans, learn audio production software, collaboratively record the audio files in small groups, and finally to upload finished products into the Geotourist application for the public to engage with. In a class of media production majors, a short production turnaround time could be more possible, but in a course of mostly first-year general education students, more time to edit, revise, and fine-tune the sound files could have greatly improved their quality. In our case, students learned Adobe Audition or Audacity software in just two class sessions, one of them led by a campus technology specialist. While the audio may not have been professional quality, it was good enough to make the project

work. Teachers who plan to explore a project like this should plan to devote at least a class period or two (and maybe more) to focus on audio production software.

In addition, a robust discussion of collaboration and group work at the beginning of a project could benefit students and instructors alike. Though students collaborated with their small groups on all aspects of the process, some students clearly took the lead in particular parts of the production process, such as researching, script writing, or securing a microphone from the campus library. Lastly, students were not afforded as much time to engage with public audiences after the publication of their geotours to the application we would have preferred. Future iterations of this project will allow at least 8 weeks of total production time, will assign specific roles to each small group member, and will feature a more sustained engagement with public audiences after the release of the geotour within the Geotourist application.

Discussions and implications

Places are, as Doreen Massey has argued (1994), specific collections of flows that end up in certain locations at certain moments. Which flows are preserved as part of the public memory of a place is an inherently political choice (Farman, 2015; Savage, 2009). Participatory counternarratives frame public memories of a place not as something inherited, but rather as something actively or tacitly constructed within public discourses, including those created and sustained with the help of digital media. With this in mind, we locate two primary implications participatory counternarratives might provide to conceptions of digital placemaking as pedagogy.

First, the construction of participatory counternarratives represents a potentially impactful mode of communication that can help students adapt to new media literacies surrounding locative and mobile media. Comparing locative narratives to more traditional media of spatial, public memory also help students understand the affordances and constraints of different mediated mnemonic practices (Farman, 2015). They can also encourage students to embrace the participatory potential of different spatialized narratives that can use digital placemaking to make visible histories of marginalized groups or to draw attention to narratives that had previously been ignored. By producing an array of counternarratives tethered to physical locations, participatory counternarratives make visible in innovative, inventive ways the potentially compelling stories often excluded from narratives sanctioned by powerful actors.

Second, as demonstrated in our pedagogical case study, participatory counternarratives facilitate student engagement in educational settings with the critical and creative capacities required to engage actively with counternarratives of public memory. The case study represented here is only one possible example of what successful participatory counternarratives might gesture toward. For example, students around the world might construct participatory counternarratives documenting traditionally excluded aspects of their local histories. Or they may draw attention to events and historical periods valued by traditionally marginalized groups. These projects can build on existing work on spatial annotations that has explored narratives as diverse as the histories of occupied indigenous lands to the alternative histories of parts of Los Angeles (Knowlton et al., 2002; Oppegaard and Grigar, 2013).

Of course, locative participatory counternarratives also have significant limitations as forms of digital placemaking. For one, at least as of now, their reach is fairly limited. Most people do not have apps like Geotourist on their phone and cannot access these counternarratives. Consequently, while participatory counternarratives can add new voices to the question of who gets to tell a story of a space, they can also contribute to new forms of ‘splintered space’, in which ‘one group will

move through malleable, personalized, digitally infused streets, and the other group will move through streets that remain as impersonal as ever' (Frith, 2012: 146). In other words, while a participatory counternarrative may be more democratic than a statue, only people with the proper applications, digital literacies, and interest levels will even know those narratives are parts of the hybrid spaces people move through.


Another possible limitation is one of infrastructure. Mapping applications may not fully cover streets in certain parts of the developing world, and an application like Geotourist also requires a reliable mobile Internet connection when someone is exploring a space. Consequently, the participatory potential of applications like Geotourist can be differentially experienced and limited by a range of important factors. And as a final point, questions remain about how impactful locative narratives can be as a form of digital placemaking in a more general sense. After all, Russel's *Headmap Manifesto* is now 20 years old; the ability to create locative narratives through smartphones is at least 10 years old. And yet, most explorations of using locative media to create counternarratives continue to focus on limited art installations or niche apps (Farman, 2013). However, as we have shown, there is potential to use these technologies to enact potentially more participatory forms of digital placemaking both in the classroom and out.

Conclusion

Digital placemaking is a valuable concept for understanding how people can use digital media to cultivate both an individual and collective sense of place. This article has focused on how digital placemaking through locative media can work as a pedagogical intervention. As we have shown, the pedagogical implications of digital placemaking could be significant. We have provided just one example, but we hope our explorations of participatory counternarratives can encourage new pedagogical approaches for adopting digital placemaking techniques in the classroom. After all, places are key sites of public memory, and as Philips (2004) notes, public memory is always 'open to contest, revision, and rejection' (p. 2). We have argued that locative media can help pedagogical approaches show students how that contestation and revision can occur through spatial counternarratives.

These types of pedagogical interventions through digital placemaking have only become more important since we completed this project. Everywhere one looks, there are new contestations of the narratives of place and dominant narratives have begun to – at least in some cases – crumble as protestors have targeted dominant media of public memory (e.g. statues and building names). Obviously a participatory counternarrative completed in a class does not work on the same scale as the toppling of a statue. However, these types of participatory counternarratives can work as pedagogical interventions into how students understand the places they inhabit and the histories that are often hidden. In those ways, digital placemaking can become a collective process that has impacts both inside and outside the contemporary classroom.

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