

Weltkarten—Change the Map

An Introduction

Change the Map is a collection of exemplary artistic approaches that can be subsumed under the heading of world projections and that have in common a reference to cartography. In this connection, reference to cartography means proceeding by means of a confrontation with topological world models to arrive at what is if not an explicitly formulated then certainly a clearly suggested critique of the topographic *Weltanschauung* and patterns of behavior on which it has had an impact. Cartography cannot simply be defined as a method of describing the world. Rather, from a historical perspective—for instance, in the context of how the new sea and land routes provided the grounds for European colonialism—it proved to be a means to an end: opening up a whole new world and determining its subsequent course. The very process of cartographic description itself was connected, to a certain extent, with the appropriation of this world, which, in turn, culminated in a national and/or transnational geography of the economy.

Change the Map thus features projects that call into question this world geography legitimated by the system of nation-states, and, by superimposing upon it the power games and power structures that are actually operative in it, relativize the reciprocities as well as the points of fracture and breakdown in our modern Information Society. This gives rise to topological models that constitute an alternative to (the) mere (politics of) geography—in the context of data and information systems, for instance, *Cybergrafien*, whose meridians become the lines of economic, ecological and political force. When, for example, Peter Fend slices up world maps, the pattern of his cuts is determined by water resources. The Fendian world map does not show direct national zones of influence but rather transnational ecological zones of dependence (and potential disputes, as Fend too draws causal connections between geopolitical sources of conflict and such watersheds).

Klimakonverter (Jauk / Ranzenbacher) utilizes this way of thinking directly for the production of a climate on the basis of a blend of objective global weather data with “talking about the weather,” the outcome of which is another climatically determined world map. *Minitasking* (schoenerwissen), *.logicaland* (Aschauer, Deinhofer, Gusberti, Thönen) as well as *They Rule* (Josh On, Futurefarmers) and *Carnivore* (Radical Software Group) create cybergraphs through the visualization of data flows, of political, economic and social relationships. The group “social impact” maps loopholes and gaps in the barricades surrounding “Fortress Europe” and thus amends the cartographic record in line with its subversive agenda. *Net.flag* (Mark Napier) offers Internet users the opportunity to combine iconographic interchangeable components of the flags of actual countries with one another into individualized flags, and thus urges them to reflect on the distortions between territorial identity and the reality of a networked world. Serving as an intentional model for the approach taken by this exhibition has been to a certain extent Buckminster Fuller’s “Dymaxion Map” (which Ars Electronica 2002 is using as its logo) and the concepts informing Fuller’s depiction of the world according to the criteria of a global, non-centralized perspective that went into his design (never actually executed) for the US Pavilion at the 1967 World’s Fair in Montreal.

Translated from the German by Mel Greenwald