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Google Maps as a Transformational Learning Tool in the Study Abroad Experience

Jessica Stephenson, M. Todd Harper, and Emily Klump

Abstract

This article examines the role that spatial orientation and location can play on a study abroad program. Jessica Stephenson and M. Todd Harper paired a Google Maps project with autoethnography in order to help students understand their own experience of space abroad as well as how they themselves shaped that space. Students were asked to create a personalized Google Map of the sites that they visited in Rome, Orvieto, Florence, and Montepulciano, Italy. Students then added facts about the sites as well as their own photos and personal experience. They were then asked to use their personalized Google Maps as a heuristic for longer autoethnographic papers relating to the themes of pilgrimage and journey. In so doing, students realized that space is alive, constantly changing and evolving.

Introduction

Digital media has impacted, for good and ill, the way students engage with their chosen disciplines of study, not to mention their interaction with the world, especially in the context of study abroad. Try to avoid spending too much time on cell phones was the advice given to outgoing study abroad students by a university Director of International Safety and Security; he shared that he pulled a student who was looking down at his cell phone to safety seconds before being hit by an on-coming ambulance. Those who have directed or taught on a study abroad program have encountered similar situations where smart phones and other types of new communication technologies seem to get in the way of a student being aware or

even experiencing culture; and, yet, it can be productive to work with these new technologies rather than against them.

This article considers how its authors, Dr. Jessica Stephenson and Dr. M. Todd Harper, coupled a Google Maps project with traditional research writing assignments to foster primary research, reflective practices, and transformative learning amongst undergraduate students on a three-week study abroad program in Italy. In 2018, Harper and Stephenson led 17 students enrolled in an honors program on a three-week study abroad to Italy that included an extended stay in Montepulciano (a scenic town in Tuscany), shorter stays in Rome and Florence, and day trips to Orvieto and Siena. The students were part of a year-long first-year Great Books cohort wherein they studied foundational texts in English, political science, history, and art history. For the study abroad program, Harper and Stephenson chose to focus their Art History and English Literature courses, respectively, on pilgrimage and journey. As a joint assignment, the two professors asked students to create a personalized Google Map, pinning the places that they would visit on their field trips and, then, filling those pins with images and texts documenting their experience at each place. Students were then instructed to use their Google Maps project as a resource for writing a pilgrimage paper for Stephenson's class and for writing a reflective paper about their journey for Harper's class. In this article, we will discuss the theoretical underpinning of the Google Maps project and Stephenson's pilgrimage paper assignment, the assignments themselves, Emily Klump's, a participating student, reflection on her Google Map project, and an assessment by Stephenson and Harper on strengths and weaknesses of the Google

Map assignment as a tool for fostering reflective practice in the context of study abroad.

Description and Justification of Google Maps Assignment

The Google Maps project and its corresponding pilgrimage and reflective paper assignments were grounded in three principles: 1). transformative learning in study abroad often occurs as a result of reflective practices; 2). those reflective practices often involve a temporary locating of ourselves in transition or, at least, a tracing of where we have been, where we are, and where we are going; and 3). that some of our best reflection is aided by a variety of multi-media formats, not just writing. In placing a primacy on reflective practices, Harper and Stephenson's pedagogical strategy aligns with Victor Savicki and Michele V. Price's (2015) recommendation: "Reflection can be seen as a fundamental expression of humankind's 'will to meaning' (Frankl, 1962), the desire to make sense of life's events. Reflective thinking has been proposed as an important feature of study-abroad learning; the challenge for students is to construct a meaningful understand[ing] of events during their encounter with a different culture" (588). Like many scholars who champion reflective practices in study abroad, Savicki and Price (2015) define reflection as that which results when the student encounters some difficulty or crisis to their normal way of doing things (See also Hillocks, 1996; Schon, 1984). In the context of study abroad, even a student's most basic activities can seem a struggle as he or she wrestles with a different culture and an overload of new information in the classroom, on field trips, and in their everyday lives. Ideally, this struggle should result in the student reflecting upon and then adjusting existing practices and

behaviors, especially when given effective frameworks and tools with which to process unfamiliar experiences.

Reflective tools in study abroad are numerous, spanning simple debriefing sessions with a director, teacher, or group of peers, to a student's careful positioning of herself or himself as participant-observer through ethnographic study. Common to study abroad is the journal assignment, which may range from a very simple daily recording of activities and impressions to a more rigorous analysis on how the student responded to her or his environment (Craig, Zou, & Poimbeauf, 2015). In terms of the latter, the student might be asked to engage with how he or she reacted to a particular challenge, such as missing a train connection because the train was late. The entry might include a description of the missed connection, the student's initial response (most likely, one of panic), and, then, a careful reflection on how they developed a solution to navigate the situation. More recently, multi-media blogs have begun to replace traditional journaling (Savicki & Price, 2017). These blogs allow students to post images, video, and text in a public space. In terms of the latter, student blogs shift their reflections from something that only the teacher might see to something that a variety of others, including family and friends, or local hosts, might take in. This shift often affects their discourse in that the student's reflection becomes a "lesson" or a "performance" to be shared with a larger audience. In this way, the student may potentially move from mere participant observer to a more sophisticated inter-culturalist, as they analyze and reflect on changes to their understanding of self in relationship to both the host and home culture.

By drawing on ethnographic methodologies, assignments that gauge a student's consideration of their cognitive and emotional responses to situations can make a critical shift, assisting the student garner a greater understanding for how her or his relationship to the host culture changes as their interaction with the culture deepens. This is particularly true of autoethnographic assignments that employ techniques of cultural analysis and self-reflection. Autoethnographies allow students to describe the host culture through the lens of their relationship to that culture as self-reflective participant-observer. Such a practice, when done well, can help the student analyze the social, cultural, and economic differences and similarities between herself and the host culture, as well as how her or his perceptions change as interaction with that culture deepens (Clark, 2004; Clifford, 1997; Reynolds, 2007). Hopefully, through autoethnographic practice, the student comes to think about time and place encountered in new and dynamic ways, since through the study abroad experience students interact across a range of spaces and places, as for example those where cultures are demarcated with clear borders, those where cultures overlap (Pratt, 1992), and ones where "cultures are mixed and mingled and where the borders do not hold" (Reynolds, 2007, p. 28). Ethnographic and autoethnographic exercises allow the student to locate herself or himself within multiple spaces and, ideally, to understand more fully where they have been, where they are, and where they have yet to go.

To engage in reflective practices, whether through journaling, ethnographic writing, or some other form, is, in part, to simultaneously and complexly locate oneself spatially in the familiar as well as the foreign and to realize that that

spatiality is dynamic and ever-changing. In his landmark work, *Thirdspace*, Edward Soja (1996) captures this dynamic and ever-changing spatiality as something that is alive and produced. Soja (1996) theorizes a “trialectics of spatiality” where conceived, perceived, and lived space come together in a dynamic and ever-changing swirl (p. 57). Responding to Henri Lefebvre (1992), Soja’s thirdspace is a place where geometric and mathematic space (the conceived space of maps) intersects with the space we perceive through our senses (perceived space) as well as the space we inhabit with our experiences (lived space). However, without lived space, Lefebvre’s (1992) triad and Soja’s (1996) “trialectics of spatiality” becomes disembodied, abstract, and meaningless (p. 57). Nedra Reynolds (2007) puts the dynamic quality of Soja’s thirdspace this way:

The trialectics of space leaves binary concepts, like insider-outsider, floating in the middle or bouncing from one spot to another: thirdspace means exploding or transgressing binaries, not simply flipping them to restore the undervalued term. Lived, perceived, and conceived space fold into and spin across one another, working together to accomplish the production of space. Our marketplaces, bedrooms, bus terminals, theaters, or schoolyards are not isolated from the process, do not stand separate from perceptions and conceptions, but are the sites where representations and uses are reproduced. (p. 16)

In short, to write reflectively in an effective sense is more than simply representing space and spatial relations; rather, it is to involve oneself in the very production of that space.

Newer technologies, such as digital media as thirdspaces, have the potential to transcend, but they may also easily fall victim to the double-edged nature of binary thinking and the potential to disconnect lived space. As Reynolds (2007) notes, “changing conceptions of space, including the production of new social spaces like

the Internet, result from technologies that allow rapid, almost instantaneous, transmission of information and ever-faster modes of transportation. Twenty-first century technologies have made border crossings *seem*, at least, as easy as punching buttons” (p. 18). These new technologies make us feel as though the world is smaller and that time and space have become compressed: “As space flattens out, time becomes both harder to notice and even more important; the masking of *time* through the changing boundaries for space has consequences for workers, students, women, for all of us who live and work in the everyday” (Reynolds, 2007, p. 19). For example, these new technologies allow for us to carry work home; they force us to respond to all sorts of situations, even when they are miles away. Reynolds (2007) fears that this is especially true of cell phones, where various binaries, such as public and private, are blurred (how many of us have overheard someone’s very private conversation in public?). Simultaneously, they become an electronic tracking device, mapping our very movements throughout the course of a day.

And, yet, where Reynolds is rightly critical of these new technologies, Adam Strantz (2015) sees their ability as something positive, especially within the context of study abroad programs. Strantz (2015) responds to Reynolds’ complaint: “just as concepts of space and place change in response to changes in transportation, architecture, or urban planning, there is abundant evidence that new technologies are also shifting our understanding of space and are ushering in new forms of writing or talking—forms that many users are adjusting to” (p. 165). Newer technologies allow students to locate themselves and, more importantly, to reflect upon, how “people are supported by maps, signs, and other uses in making their

way about a location” (Strantz, 2015, p. 165). Strantz (2015) calls this “wayfinding” and notes that it allows students to trace both their own “representational” and “lived space” by allowing them to focus on “mental maps [conceived spaces] and sense of space [perceived spaces] that people create as they move through spaces [lived space]” (pp. 165-166). He goes on to note,

Our mobile technologies literalize these emplacements, thereby enabling students to see relationships they have developed. While these traces are developed through mapping their own work, the use of GPS-enabled mobile devices allows for a more distinct sharing of space and location with other users. Accordingly, mapping, sharing maps, and telling stories of movement externalize stories we have shared but also allows students heuristic memory and access to visual representations of their movements to which we simply have not had access. (pp. 165-166)

For Strantz then, mobile technologies provide an opportunity for students to gather and then disseminate information, while tracing and reflecting upon their own movement. As such, they also become a heuristic for more immediately accessible student research and reflection and, in the case of Strantz himself, his own research.

Strantz’s own research involved using Google pins that professional writing students on a study abroad created to trace their movement as well as the writing completed in these spaces. From the maps that were constructed, Strantz (2015) arrived at the following conclusions:

- There is a need for cultural fact-finding as students enter into new global contexts for their work,
- GPS-traced maps offer the ability to connect disparate locations together,
- Including non-places in the methods of empirical research is impactful, and

- The *kairotic* aspect of these digital tools enables students to take these methods with them wherever they have a networked connection. (166-170)

Strantz sees digital mapping tools as a place of discovery and invention. The texts that students produce, the images that they upload, and the maps that they create help to generate a new, more complex understanding of space and their positioning of themselves within that space.

In this regard, the Google Maps assignment served multivalent pedagogical purposes centered around active learning and reflective practices. Students realized mapping as a form of invention, contact zone, and place-making; as autoethnography through which to think about space and place encountered in new, dynamic, and challenging ways; and as thirdspace since, through the project, their conceived, perceived, and lived space came together dynamically. Armed prior to departure with lists of monuments and sites to be visited, the pinning of said locations to a mobile map positioned students as active shapers of their study abroad experience. They created visual itinerary maps through which space, place, and time become personalized, inventive processes; they gained foreknowledge of key sites, the temporal and spatial relationship between monuments and their broader contexts, and crafted routes to be travelled.

The mapping project therefore facilitated engagement with study abroad space, place, and time as “contact zone.” Mary Louise Pratt (1992) employs the term contact zone in an attempt to involve the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctions, and whose trajectories now intersect. By using the term “contact,” the interactive,

improvisational, and interpretive dimension of cross-cultural encounters is foregrounded. A contact perspective emphasizes the ways in which relationships, as well as places or spaces, constitute and shape cultures. It treats the relationships not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, and interlocking misunderstandings (Pratt, 1992, p. 6). By pinning historical sites to a city map, students come to see that ancient cultures and monuments exist and cohabit with modern city design: seemingly distant and disparate place, space, and time is pulled into dynamic relationship. Students saw that the Roman Forum and Colosseum exist and cohabit contemporary Italian centers of power and national identity and that the Pantheon resides today within a larger space of entertainment, culinary services, and tourism. The familiar and the foreign collide as McDonald's, Starbucks, and Nike share space and place with the Duomo in Florence, calling the student to reflect from a position of co-presence, interaction, and potential dis-junction. The student is challenged to problematize and problem solve as languages collide in the slippage from English to Italian place names on maps.

While on the ground in Italy, Google Maps served as a form of "wayfinding" allowing students to trace their own "representational" or "lived space" as "thirdspace" since their mental map (conceived space), sense of space (perceived space), and movement through space (lived space) folded in on one another. During field trips students were encouraged to utilize the Google Map in real time to document and reflect upon their experience in situ. Google Maps comprise two features: 1). A function to upload photographs culled from the web or taken by the student; and 2). A notes function in which to pen textual information. Students were

given wide latitude as to how they wished to utilize the Google Map tools. Those with an interest in photography could privilege a visual means of documenting their experiences. Others chose to search images on the web from which they curated a selection then added to individual pins. Note-taking strategies were equally diverse. Some students used the function to didactic ends, recording factual information on history imparted by instructors, or culled from texts located at sites, or from the course textbook. Others favored a journaling approach to reflect upon and chronicle their encounter with each location. The Google Maps assignment thus helped trace the study abroad experience as movement between the realm of the personal, experiential, and educational as engaged “third space” with its co-presence of conceived, perceived, and lived space.

Student Reflection on Google Maps Assignment

The wayfinding, contact zone, and thirdspace potentials of the Google Maps project are evident from the following reflection by participating student Emily Klump, who writes:

I found the Google Maps project to be very helpful in organizing my study abroad experience and learning about all the places we visited. I started the project before leaving for Italy by pinning all the locations on the map. This gave me an idea of what we would be doing and seeing while in Italy and it gave me a visual of where in the country we were going. Since I’d never been out of the country before and didn’t know what to expect, I really appreciated the map for preparing me for what was ahead in those three weeks. I also used my map to plan out my weekend trip to Verona and Venice.

For my project, I uploaded pictures and descriptions for each location on my Google map. I wrote both facts about the location and a reflection of how I felt and what I thought when I was there. The first location we visited was the Baths of Diocletian. I uploaded 10 pictures and wrote, “The baths of Diocletian were created by Maxentius. They were named after

Diocletian because Maxentius wanted a connection to Diocletian. They were social hangouts. Baths were separated by genders.” It’s simple, but just a little description like that, along with some photos, helps me remember things about that location that I would have otherwise forgotten by now.

My favorite location on the map was Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri. For this pin, I wrote, “This church was designed by Michelangelo, but the front doors are modern. I thought that it was really beautiful and I could really feel God. It was my favorite church that I visited.” I also uploaded six pictures that I took, and made sure to get different parts of the church in order to get a complete picture. When I look at this pin on the map, I can remember the experience of walking into the church and being completely awestruck.

One of the biggest challenges with the project was the language barrier. Many of the locations on the map, especially those in Montepulciano, had both an Italian name and an English name. This made some of the locations hard to find because only the Italian name was available on the map to pin. The other challenge was remembering which pictures went with which location when I was uploading them. For example, at the Parrocchia Santissimo Nome Di Gesu, I was very impressed with the faux top on the dome and the overall beauty of the church. I took several pictures but when I went to upload them, I couldn’t remember which church it was out of the several on the map. Luckily my peers helped me, and I was able to put the pictures and description in the right place on the map.

I pinned all the assigned locations on the map, as well as some locations from my weekend trip to Verona and Venice. I went to Verona and Venice with two other girls, and when we were planning, we used the map to find the locations we wanted to visit, and once we found those locations, we used the map to plan out how we would get there. In Verona, we went to the Casa di Guilietta, and in Venice we went to San Marco’s Basilica. Even though they weren’t originally part of my plans for my study abroad, I put them on the map because Venice and Verona became part of my trip and I wanted to be able to remember those locations as well as the ones that were planned since the beginning. This was the first time I traveled anywhere with only people my age, so the map was a good travel companion because it gave us a way to prepare ourselves.

The Google Maps project definitely enhanced my study abroad experience. I was able to better prepare for the trip and plan my own travels. The project helped me organize my travels in Italy and made it easier to remember where I went and what I did. Doing the project also helped me focus more at each location because I needed to get information and pictures for each pin. Without the Google maps project I wouldn’t have remembered which location all the pictures were taken at. Through the

project, I made my own guidebook, unique to my trip and experiences I had. (personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Pilgrimage Assignment

To push Emily and her peers into deeper reflective practices in the interests of transformative learning, the Google Map assignment served as a stepping stone for an autoethnographic formal research paper on pilgrimage. The concept of pilgrimage, as a distinct form of travel, asked students to construct a meaningful understanding of events in their encounter with a different culture in Italy. Phil Cousineau's (1998) text, *The Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker's Guide to Making Travel Sacred*, served to frame the assignment prompt:

I am convinced that pilgrimage is still a bona fide spirit-renewing ritual. But I also believe in pilgrimage as a powerful metaphor for any journey with the purpose of finding something that matters deeply to the traveler. With a deepening of focus, keen preparation, attention to the path below our feet, and respect for the destination at hand, it is possible to transform, even the most ordinary journey into a sacred journey, a pilgrimage. (p. 7)

Here, Cousineau (1998) positions pilgrimage in equally secular terms "as a powerful metaphor for any journey with the purpose of finding something that matters deeply to the traveler" (p. 7). In selecting this quote, the assignment opened up the opportunity for students to engage with spaces, monuments, art, architecture, and experiences that might not fit a traditional definition of pilgrimage as a sacred journey, but instead challenging them to think of pilgrimage as a form of deep reflection.

To that end students read a body of literature theorizing pilgrimage and applied it to their first-hand engagement with several sites or monuments documented using the Google Maps project. Students engaged with historical forms of pilgrimage as

sacred journey through course content; pilgrimage sites discussed included Stonehenge, England; the Temple of Amun-Ra, Luxor, Egypt; Chavin d'Huantar, Peru; the Parthenon, Athens; The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem; and the Great Stupa of Sanchi, India. The classical notion of pilgrimage as a transformative journey by which to connect with sacred spaces and objects, including icons and relics, also formed the focus for the class discussion of Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals in France, Spain, and Italy. Here, cathedral architecture was considered in the light of the medieval visitors' need for transformation, transcendence, and refuge through contact with sacred objects and spaces that offered grounding and escape. The notion of pilgrimage as a defined path linking sacred destinations was also explored through a discussion of the El Camino, the medieval route that connected sacred points in France and Spain terminating at Santiago de Compostela, Portugal.

Set against this foundational knowledge, the core assigned readings sought to expand pilgrimage definitions and entertain secular forms of journey as potentially meaningful and transformative. Peter Margry's (2008) article, "Secular Pilgrimage: A Contradiction in Terms?" considers questions such as: what constitutes pilgrimage in the 20th and 21st century; what elements are needed to make secular journey, including tourism, a potential form of pilgrimage; and what makes pilgrimage a transformative process? Justine Digance's (2006) "Religious and Secular Pilgrimage: Journeys Redolent with Meaning" reflects on the structure of pilgrimage, while Duncan's (1995) "Art Museum as Ritual" introduced Victor Turner's concept of the liminal, applicable here as a temporary state or place that is the antithesis of the everyday. Eric Weiner's (2012) *New York Times* article,

“Where Heaven and Earth Come Closer” offered criteria for identifying transformative places. Weiner (2012) proposes the concept of “thin places” to describe spaces where “heaven and earth meet,” not necessarily in a religious sense, but to describe places that “unmask one, that disorient, that confuse [...] through which we lose our bearings and find new ones. Or not. Either way, we are jolted out of old ways of seeing the world, and therein lies the transformative magic of travel” (p. 10).

In utilizing the Google Map project for the reflective Pilgrimage Research Paper students were called upon to more deeply consider the quality and nature of their educational and travel experience, since individual pinned and documented sites now served as source material through which to reflect upon study abroad as a form of pilgrimage. In this sense, the Google Map project became autoethnographic, embracing and foregrounding the student’s subjectivity as they considered their own responses to situations and peoples encountered in a different culture.

In pulling the Google Map project into the realm of autoethnography, it came to function very much like a medieval-era pilgrimage itinerary map. As early as the Byzantine era, scholars and pilgrims compiled inventories of places to be traversed by pilgrims. Many itineraries took the form of lists, others were interactive and cartographic, as for example Matthew Paris’ famous “*Chronica majora*,” a medieval road map linking London with the most famous centers of pilgrimage, Rome and Jerusalem. Written and illustrated in ca. 1250 CE in the Benedictine abbey of St. Albans, England, the map and inventory is striking in its dynamic and participatory

design. Each itinerary page contains folded flaps of paper appended to the pages depicting Italy. Each flap bears anecdotal information, notes, and points of interest penned by Paris. When opened, each flap, like a pin on the Google Maps, transforms the route and cartographic map, enriching the meaning of the marked places with personalized and subjective reflections penned by the pilgrim (Connolly, 1999).

Student Reflection on Pilgrimage Paper

The interactive quality of Paris' map is not unlike the participatory, performative, contemplative, and subjective "place making" aspect of the Google Map project as is clear from the following autoethnographic account by participating student Emily Klump, who writes:

My Google Maps project also helped me with my pilgrimage paper assignment. For the paper, I had to define pilgrimage and write about three pilgrimage sites--one outside of Italy, one in Montepulciano, and then one other site from our trip. The Google Maps project helped me with this paper because I was able to sort through all the sites I visited and remember those that I had forgotten. I used the Google Maps to eventually choose my sites from the study abroad: St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City and Piazza San Francesco in Montepulciano.

For St. Peter's, I wrote notes on the map including, "pieta, pilgrimage site, many popes buried there, and takes 45 minutes to get to the top." I uploaded seven pictures, including one of the pietas that I took while I was there. The map helped me chose St. Peter's because my notes gave me things to write about in my paper. I wrote about how St. Peter's is a pilgrimage site, and it was a pilgrimage site for me as well as thousands of others. I wrote about how I felt when I walked in and saw the beauty of the church, and my pictures helped to remind me when I was writing.

In that portion of the paper, I really emphasized the size of both the church and the crowd of people coming to visit. My map helped me with this because all of my pictures caught the crowds, and the church was so big that I had to take multiple pictures if I wanted to get the same area from floor to ceiling. I built up the church in my mind, so the size of the actual basilica represented its presence in my head.

Inside the basilica, I felt changed. The church was overwhelmingly beautiful, covered floor to ceiling with artwork. There was also Michelangelo's *Pieta*, and seeing such a famous work of art in person, and inside such a famous church, was an amazing experience. I struggled to get a picture to put on the map that really captured how I felt.

Every part of going to St. Peter's was part of the pilgrimage experience, even the journey by subway and waiting in line. Even the pin on the map showed that getting to St. Peter's was a journey: It was in the Vatican City and quite removed from the other locations in Rome that we visited. We had a longer journey than usual on the subway to get to the Vatican City and then we had a long walk to the basilica. I wrote about waiting in line, "Just getting into the church was a pilgrimage in itself, as we had to wait in a long line and stand in the sun. We had some interactions with strangers as we noticed people trying to cut the line. It seemed wrong that people were dishonestly trying to get into a church, but I guess that wanting to see such an important site does that to people." While waiting in line, I was able to get some great pictures of the outside of St. Peter's to put on my map, so there were definitely some positives to the journey being so long. I was able to reflect on where I was, which made St. Peter's Basilica such a great location for the pilgrimage paper.

St. Peter's Basilica was a thin place for me. In class, we discussed the concept of "thin places" as somewhere where heaven meets earth. They are transformative, and a person leaves different than they came in. Thin places are traditionally thought of as religious spaces such as churches, but they can be secular locations as well. St. Peter's was a traditional thin place. I felt transformed after seeing such a famous church that I had heard about my whole life. I wrote in my paper, "When I left St. Peter's, I felt as if I had achieved a Catholic milestone. I had traveled to a place that was built and rebuilt several times, both inside my head and in real life. I saw a famous work of art and saw many more transformative works that I didn't even know were there." The map serves as proof that I really did go to St. Peter's Basilica, and I will never forget how transformed I felt.

I knew what St. Peter's was when I pinned it on the map before I left for Italy, and it was one of the locations that I was most looking forward to going to. This makes the pilgrimage location I chose in Montepulciano surprising. I chose Piazza di San Francesco, a location that I had never heard of until I got to Montepulciano. Even after the first time I visited the piazza, I didn't know the name of it or how to come back to it again until it was time to upload the pictures. I fell in love with Piazza di San Francesco because it was truly an example of a thin place. Looking out at the sunset, I felt that there was something different about the air out there. It looked like I was looking into a photograph or a painting, not a real place. The experience was unforgettable, and if I didn't have the map, I probably

wouldn't have remembered that it was Piazza di San Francesco where I had that experience.

My pilgrimage paper would not have been the same without my Google Maps project. The map helped me sort through all the locations I visited and was my own personal guidebook to the places I visited. When planning a pilgrimage, it is necessary to use a map, and that is what I did. Being able to put pictures and notes on the map helped a lot because everything was in one place and was super easy to use as a reference. I used the information in my map to help me write my paper. I think that using the map was the best way to organize the information from my trip and use to help me write my paper. (personal communication, October 8, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us return to the three principles that grounded the Google Maps project and its corresponding paper/assignments: 1.) transformative learning in study abroad often occurs as a result of reflective practices; 2.) those reflective practices often involve a temporary locating of ourselves or, at least, a tracing of where we have been, where we are, and where we are going; and 3.) that some of our best reflection can include a variety of multi-media formats, not just writing. Actualizing these principles in reverse order, Harper and Stephenson enabled students to record and analyze their experiences of space and place in Italy as part of their Google Maps project. Their textual and visual postings on this digital map became their primary source of invention for more sustained and thoughtful reflection in their pilgrimage papers, which drew on autoethnographic practices. The combination of mapping and reflection allowed the students to gain insight into how these new experiences of historical and modern space and place, along with the difficulties encountered, brought about a transformation in how they view the world and themselves.

This transformation is subtly revealed in Emily Klump's reflections of first her Google Maps project and then her pilgrimage paper. Her Google Maps reflection demonstrates how she used the Google Maps tool as a source of invention, contact zone, and place-making. By uploading factual information, personal reflections, and photographs, she was able to connect the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects and places previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctions, to document her own "representational" or "lived space" as third space experiences of those sites, and to trace her own wayfinding between those sites. This is movement through space and time is particularly illustrated in her descriptions of *Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri* and the Baths of Diocletian, a Renaissance Church and a bath of the late Roman Republic. The two structures, which Michelangelo connected when he designed the church's cupola to be attached to the large vaults of the former Roman bath, draw together the 4th and the 16th centuries into one space. Both structures stand across from Italy's central train station, *Roma Termini*, originally built during the 1860s and then remodeled in the 1940s, and which houses several modern stores and restaurants, including one of Italy's few McDonald's. Although she simply uploads photos and factual material about the baths (importantly, the students were unable to enter into the museum and thus unable to experience that space), she enthusiastically describes her experience of the church ("I thought that it was really beautiful, and I could really feel God"), revealing a keen sense of self within that space. Moreover, while she does not describe the walk from the baths to the church, her actual map traces the movement between the two structures in much the same way that she traced and mapped out

her free weekend in Verona and Venice. In pulling this together, Emily Klump's Google Map acts as an electronic journal or set of field notes with the important exception that the text and photographs that constitute the notes for each site are connected spatial on a digitized map.

Klump's reflection on her pilgrimage paper, including the role that her Google Maps project played in shaping that paper, reveals how she moved from the simple recording of data and experience to a deeper reflection that demonstrates the transformational learning that took place within herself. Where she was only able to record bits and pieces of her experiences on her digital map, she is able to expand and reflect upon them in the paper. For example, in her discussion of St. Peter's, she was able to emphasize "the size of both the church and the crowd of people coming to visit" in a manner that could not be fully captured in the multiple pictures that she had uploaded to her Google Map (E. Klump, personal communication, October 8, 2018). More importantly, the pilgrimage paper gave shape and meaning to her experience within those spaces. As noted earlier in the paper, Phil Cousineau (1998) reminds us that pilgrimage is "a powerful metaphor for any journey with the purpose of finding something that matters deeply to the traveler" (p. 7). It is clear that Klump initially sees her own journey to and through these two places (the basilica and the piazza) as movement through a series of points on an abstract map. Ironically, she uses a hyper-modern tool to gain a sense of connectedness through history, something a lot of American students lack. While she describes her own desire to see St. Peter's before she even leaves the United States as the beginning of her pilgrimage, she interprets the long wait to enter St. Peter's as an important

part of her pilgrim's experience. Moreover, it is not an experience of immediate gratification; within her reflection of that journey, she moves from mere student to an engaged pilgrim. Not only does she experience the basilica as a student, learning its history and construction, she also interacts with it as a pilgrim, noting that for her, St. Peter's was a "thin place", a transformational experience, "a place that was built and rebuilt several times, both inside my head and in real life" (personal communication, Oct. 8, 2018).

To assess the value of the Google Maps project as a vehicle to engender reflective and transformative learning, it is clear that the project was a success as it was favorably received by sixteen of the seventeen participating students. While one student found no benefit to the assignment, sixteen students noted the positive benefits within their pilgrimage papers and in sharing their Google Map assignments with the class. Students noted that it enhanced visual comprehension of places and their location in space prior to travel; served as a tool by which to document their travel experience, as a form of journaling in real-time, as a vehicle for gathering primary research; for the central repository of information linking textbook, lectures, and fieldtrips; and as a touchstone for autoethnographic inquiry. Students also provided valuable feedback regarding assignment negatives. For some students there were unforeseen technology challenges in uploading images to individual pins; the use of certain programs resulted in images loading sideways, or not loading at all. Students who did not upload many images found that Google then auto-loaded stock images to their personal pins. The time needed to take, curate, and upload images to pins far exceeded expected time projections made by

instructors. However, overall, the benefits of the project outweighed the negatives. Of all the graded assignments, the Google Maps project clearly stood out as most meaningful in enhancing active learning and participation in the study abroad experience. Furthermore, it transformed participants from being individual students to active shapers of the collective study abroad endeavor since students also presented aspects of their Google Map projects to the class. While Google Maps have the potential to be shared widely as open documents on the web, the instructors chose to retain the private journaling potential of the Google Maps feature; in this way students could hopefully record information and form perspectives in an authentic safe space. Towards the end of the study abroad experience, though, all participating students shared chosen aspects of their Google Map work with the class as a whole. The collective sharing of individual responses to the assignment worked to create an inclusive sense of community while foregrounding the diverse and multiple creative ways in which the mapping project can be interpreted. Student privacy was maintained since the Google Map functioned as a form of intimate journaling, yet, it simultaneously engaged the digital media's more public domain as an arena for shared experiences, resources, and research.

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