Exploring the spatiality of a non-modern narrative: mapping myth, tracing connections, linking data. A roundtable discussion with Elton Barker, Flint Dibble, Anna Foka, Greta Hawes and Brady Kiesling

This roundtable takes a critical look at several important themes in the application of Spatial Humanities methods and tools to the spatial exploration of a non-modern witness. It will address aspects of **mapping imaginary dimensions of space**; **tracing mobility** and **spatial connections** through the **network analysis** of place relations in texts; and using common references to places that **link data** to bring text and material culture into dialogue. It will also raise issues related to **gazetteer** development and **public scholarship**, as well as the challenges of **visualising complex data**, such as narrative space. The discussants are all experts in the application of Spatial Humanities techniques for displaying and interrogating the spatiality of texts and archaeological excavation, and run or are involved in a number of ground-breaking Spatial Humanities initiatives.

Our witness whom we consider 'good to think with' for reflecting on current Spatial Humanities practice is Pausanias, a native of Lydia in Asia Minor. Writing in Greek sometime in the second century CE, Pausanias provides a rich, and challenging, spatial account unlike any other from antiquity. His ten-volume *Description of Greece* narrates a tour of the mainland from Attica to Phocis, following a clockwise circuit around the Peloponnese. It not only offers a unique first-hand account of ancient Greece's built environment, including buildings and statues of all kinds; Pausanias also incorporates stories and histories of the places and objects that are described. Confronted by such a complex storied landscape, scholars have tended to mine Pausanias for details on ancient Greek mythology, history and religion. Digital technology affords ways of viewing Pausanias's narrative holistically as a **deep map** of literary history, while at the same time significant challenges to computational methods and tools demand further investigation.

The Digital Periegesis[1] initiative, run by Anna Foka and building on Elton Barker's previous work on mapping Herodotus,[2] is using Pelagios's Recogito[3] tool to semantically annotate the text of Pausanias. Exploiting Recogito's versatility for tagging entities, Foka and Barker have developed, with their team, an extensive typology for anatomising and interrogating the spatiality of this non-modern narrative. For this roundtable, they focus on one aspect of this typology: a method for **tracing mobility** — not only of Pausanias, as he travels through the space of Greece, but also of mythical and historical agents, whose incorporation in the stories of various places or objects intersects with and cuts across that route-based itinerary. At the same time, they also reflect on Recogito as part of a digital publication **workflow**, as well as its dependencies on other resources, notably **gazetteers**. Pausanias's deep dive into the human and non-human geography of ancient Greece has meant drawing upon additional materials to supplement the canonical gazetteer for the ancient world, Pleiades.[4]

Because his work is concerned both with physical description and with mythical traditions, it veers between conventional kinds of geospatial data, such as those collected in gazetteers like Pleiades and consumed by GIS applications, and **imaginary data**, for which digital resources rarely cater. Greta Hawes's MANTO initiative[5] includes places that evade geo-location (like the Underworld) amongst its heterogeneous nodes which together express the richness of Greek myth. Building on, but departing from, Barker's mapping of the spatial relations in Herodotus, Hawes identifies spatial connections as just one aspect of network mapping manifest in Pausanias. Focusing on **modelling assertions** using Nodegoat,[6] Hawes describes the process of capturing **mythic phenomena in texts** that represent the spatial dynamics of Greek myth, and the intricate intersections between historical geo-location and imaginary phenomena which this has revealed.

To fully capture the narrative layers memorialised in historical landscapes, ways of deep mapping that allow for varied connections between heterogeneous nodes must be envisioned.

One important subsidiary aim of both the Digital Periegesis and MANTO initiatives is to create resources that can be used by others. To maximise discovery and reuse, both produce their work according to the principles of **Linked Open Data**. Using MANTO's structured mythographic data, Brady Kiesling, Director of ToposText,[7] has been overseeing efforts by the Digital Periegesis team to align the person data in Pausanias to **Wikidata**, reconciling or creating identifiers as appropriate. This work, which adds a new sourced data statement to a Wikidata item, has often proceeded laboriously by hand. However, by using Wikidata as a simple interface to such data, Kiesling contends that cultural heritage can be restored to its appropriate public context at trivial cost, while making it easier for any future user to disambiguate programmatically. This, the promise of Linked Open Data, is further explored by Flint Dibble. It is precisely because Pausanias attaches description to the places which he records that makes him such an interesting test-case for LOD. Here we have an author whose **textual work describes material culture** and connects it to the various histories of Greece, from a mythical heroic age right up to the present-day of living under Roman rule. Taking a database of over 300 occurrences of religious practice in Pausanias, Dibble **compares the archaeological record** to find that Pausanias tended to focus on unusual or noteworthy points, rather than typical religious practice. Thus, this example of **big data** aggregated across contexts, far from providing an 'average' estimation that flattens out the picture, has the potential to reveal significant fluctuations and differences in the sources of information.

This panel will be of particular interest to anyone working on the spatial explorations of narratives, literary and imaginary places; mapping mobility, spatial connections and networks; and Linked Open (Geo)Data.

1. Digital Periegesis: http://periegesis.org/.
2. Hestia: https://hestia.open.ac.uk/.
3. Recogito: https://recogito.pelagios.org/.
4. Pleiades: https://pleiades.stoa.org/.
5. MANTO: https://www.manto-myth.org/manto.
6. Nodegoat: https://nodegoat.net/.
7. ToposText: https://topostext.org/.