Do Maps Dream Space?

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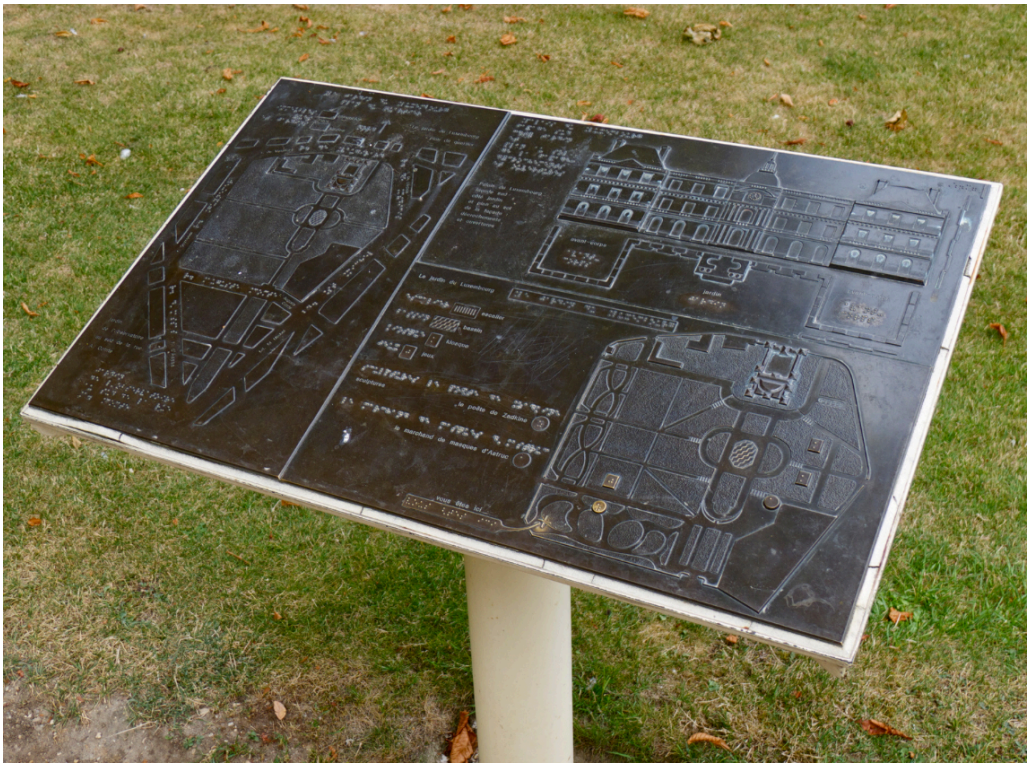
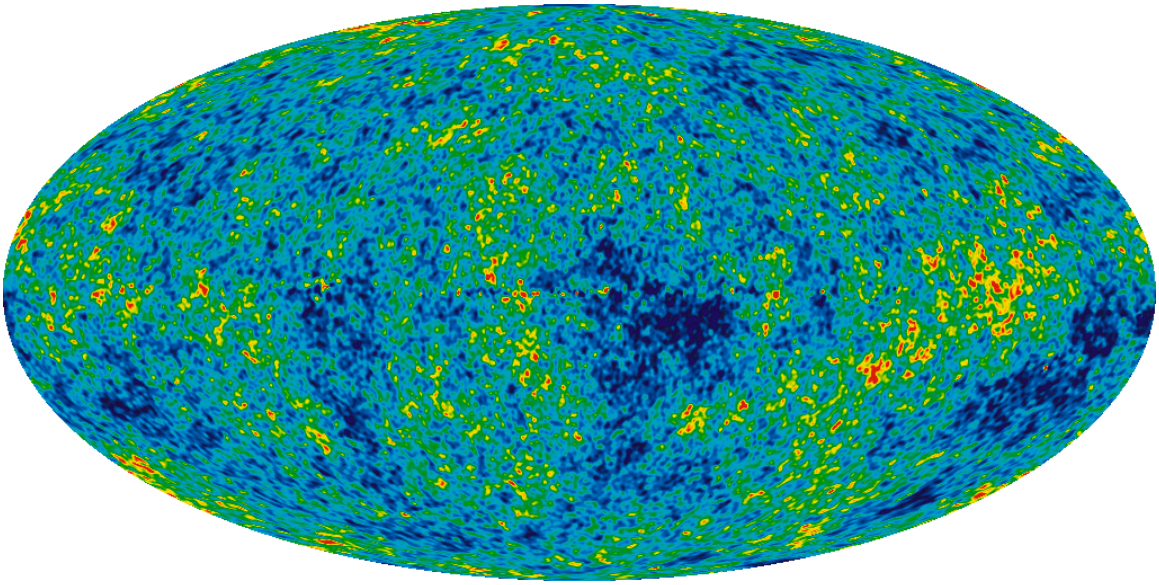
Consider Martin Waldseemüller's 1507 *Universalis cosmographia* above. This map is the first known visualization showing America as a separate continent, and naming it as such, in honor of the Florentine explorer Amerigo Vespucci. Waldseemüller's map is known as the "birth certificate" of America. Now, do such maps construct and dream worlds via human cognition, action, and politics? Or do they simply and objectively mirror a pre-made, independently existing world? Ancient and ongoing philosophical discussions about constructivism and realism provide often-conflicting metaphysical interpretations of the relation between abstract representations and concrete world. Such disagreements can be usefully illuminated—even synthesized—via cartography and map thinking. In particular, consider the ontology of space: how is space domesticated through geographic, architectural, and scientific maps (see below)? How are object and process ontologies simultaneously constructed and represented through the imagination of space?



Braille Map of the Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris. The map shows the entire garden grounds (left), the Luxembourg Palace built by Marie de Medici in the early 17th century (top right), and a close-up of the garden grounds sensu stricto (bottom right). Its raised surfaces are rather worn, from use and curiosity.



The Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe (WMAP) nine-year map. This map shows the tiny differences in different spatial regions of the cosmic microwave background radiation (CMB). It scrubs out all microwave emissions from sources other than background radiation, such as the Milky Way galactic plane (Fig. 12, Bennett et al 2013, 14). This is done by distinguishing different bands of the microwave spectrum and only mapping the CMB spectrum. http://map.gsfc.nasa.gov/media/121238/index.html