

# [Research proposal on lost in gps: augmented spaces and drift](https://assignbuster.com/research-proposal-on-lost-in-gps-augmented-spaces-and-drift/)

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The urbanization and globalization of our lives have changed the way we look at and feel about spaces; landscaping and man's mastery of our environment has allowed us to shape it according to our will. The introduction of technology has furthered this ability to create and change the way we interact with the world around us; GPS, Foursquare, Google Maps and other social networking and electronic media heavily shape how we move through a space and interact with it. My goal is to create a project that brings out the connections between technological advances and our movement through landscapes, linking the two concepts to show how we move in our interactive, technological world.
Lost in GPS is to make a video on the invisible and non-audible electromagnetic radiation from all kinds of multimedia/electronic devices. Apart from recording and analyzing the measured results I want to bring attention to how serious the electromagnetic pollution is in our life. The methodology involved in this project is heavily inspired by Drift (or derivé). According to Situationist Theorist Guy Debord, drift is “ a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances”(Debord). Debord was obsessed with urban geography and the way we wander through it, either getting from point A to B or through aimless strolling, as well as how we characterize certain places. This drift can also be politically motivated; the design of technology to promote Drift might stem from a need to take the drifter on a certain journey to highlight poverty, classism, or the modern reliance on technology to drive our own wanderings (DiSalvo, 2012).
In derive, playful and constructive behavior is heavily involved, and differentiates itself from the concept of the normal stroll or journey by the wanderer being fully aware of the psychological and geographical effects of the practice itself. When one goes on a derive, an individual or a group abandons their other life concerns (work, family, hobbies) and simply allows their environment and the events they experience to drive their movements and their interests. While this may seem like leaving a journey up to chance, derive depends on the notion of psychogeographical contours to an environment; these contours drive us from one place to another along a certain path. This helps to shed some light on the things that push and pull us from place to place, and the manner in which an urban environment, in particular, controls our " drift" through its streets and alleys.
Most of us now carry the equivalent of a sophisticated computer in our pants pocket - the sum of human knowledge at our fingertips at all times. To that end, there are few places we go where we are not directed in some form or another - GPS technology allows us to go wherever we feel we want or need to go. Our reality and our understanding of it is now enhanced; we know more than we could ever store in our brains about the places that surround us. Does this dilute the effectiveness of derive, as there are so many other factors that now compete for the attention of the individual? Conversely, does this enhance derive, as this augmentation can just become yet another part of the way we interact with the urban landscape that surrounds us?
More and more, physical spaces can be overlaid with information, augmenting these spaces with various multimedia forms, thus enhancing the way we view these spaces themselves. This changes our experiences of these spatial forms; we suddenly know more, understand more about the history behind a particular building, the specific products that are in a certain shop, the customer reviews of a restaurant that we pass. All of this information flows over us, within us, through us due to this augmentation. By experiencing these augmented spaces, we enhance our own sense of reality with a greater knowledge and understanding of the environment in which we exist.
At the same time, it can be said that there is something vaguely unnerving about the concept of augmented spaces that might detract from the sense of derive we might get through simple wandering; because of this augmentation, some of the mystery is taken out of the wandering itself. Because we know what kind of food is at the restaurant that is ahead of us and to the left, we make a much more informed decision about whether or not we might like it there, but it also robs us of the mystery of what we might find when we get there. We already know before we arrive, and so our minds are already made up.
Information tends to guide our derive in the context of this augmentation, instead of instinct and the architecture itself. Since we understand and receive everything that is coming before us, there is a much larger amount of planning that goes into the journey itself. Instead of allowing the unconscious to absorb where the environment will take you, it is far too necessary to make conscious decisions in the presence of said augmentation. For example, while carrying a cell phone, you must make the choice to ask for directions for a particular place, or information on an establishment or building - this denotes a conscious effort to direct your journey, instead of allowing derive to take over.
At the same time, there are other ways in which augmented spaces do , indeed, drive derive - when augmentation is inlaid into the space itself (e. g. a video display on the wall of a building) instead of being carried around as a tool (e. g. a smartphone), this augmentation enhances the space itself and contributes to derive. Furthermore, the presence of these electronic devices themselves shows the trend toward the increase in electromagnetic pollution in our environment, as constantly running computerized and electronic media bombard our senses, from LCD ad displays to interactive maps, to IPads with menus and shopping cart apps provided in stores and restaurants. To that end, the measurement of this electromagnetic radiation is an interesting pursuit in and of itself, to show just how much it has invaded the concept of derive, and how it informs and fuels our own wanderings.
For this project, the walk starts in Robson Street and it is as well unplanned. Solely based on my instinct, I will observe the surrounding environment and walk towards where I predict it has a high level of radiation emission. It is easier to perform the electromagnetic measurements in some crowded residential area, and there was the recording of the statistical analysis for the electromagnetic sources that cause the pollution. I will record the walk and measure the radiation emits from the electric devices, which are invisible and non-audible. The meter was quite used to indicate the level. Fuzz TV visualizations will be added to incorporate with the noise from the meter when editing the video. The higher the radiation level of the multimedia or the electronic devices, the more the noise the device produces, the fuzzier the TV visualizations will be. This will have the effect of showing just how much our own electronic devices invade our experience, and whether or not that has a relationship with how we " drift" through the city. I was inspired by Manovich's " Augmented Space", which is there is the overlaying of the physical spaces with the dynamically changing information and the Drift, which can be defined as the way in which urban landscapes can direct tourists and those traveling through these augmented spaces, allowing a completely new experience to be found. Augmented spaces, according to Manovich, are spaces enhanced by the ability to access infinite, localized and mobile wireless information through whatever technology individuals have on hand. In the case of this project, the wireless information provided by mobile phones and the like will constitute the 'augmented space' explored by this project, and will be measured through the electromagnetic radiation I will be searching for.
Manovich refers to the increase in augmentation in architecture to be mostly thought of as 'information surface' by many contemporary architects, like Venturi - these spaces effectively just become moving billboards and advertisements (Manovich 236). Venturi, for instance, states that the surface is often likened to the architectural element of ornament, having the capability to enhance the aesthetics of a place through video and moving media (Venturi). However, they can be used for so much more, as they have the ability to create a new invisible extension of information from the architecture itself.
In the search for electromagnetic radiation, I will be attempting to note just how much of our modern architecture and daily lives are affected by this increase in technology. Everywhere we go, spaces as a whole are being augmented; to a great degree, everything we know is being enhanced and outfitted with LCD screens, GPS maps, faster and faster means of buying and shopping and learning. The extent to which this technology is, for good or for ill, infecting us is often invisible; the ideal goal of an augmented space is to be nearly seamless and to blend in perfectly with its surroundings. The transition from analog experiences to digital ones is meant to be as streamlined as possible, to permit maximum absorption of the technology into our own experiences (Dunne, 1999). This has now crept into our sense of derive, which I wish to illustrate in the project itself.
The nature of derive has changed due to the presence of augmented spaces - these new electronic billboards and invisible extensions of architecture reach out to us from miles away, and draw us toward them, consciously or unconsciously. While the poetics and aesthetics of augmented spaces are certainly a concern, the pervasiveness of this technology is also something to note. Using the same technology to note the spread of these augmented spaces (and technology in general) is meant to further illustrate this point, as technology designed to pick up electronic interference is used to pick up the presence of other technology, while video technology is used to display its results.
This project also demonstrates the increasingly overlapping encroachment of technology with our spaces, fixed augmentation interacting with mobile augmentation to guide us through urban landscapes and spaces, creating a new kind of derive which makes this guidance more overt. In this way, our instincts are supplemented as much as the space itself is - using these new, dynamic resources, we become more dependent on them, their information replacing our gut feelings when navigating a space. By replacing our own human senses with data, or at least supplementing them, we become more post-human every day; new ways of life spring up from our ability to make manifest these augmentations, and make our lives easier, faster and brighter. It is, however, all the more necessary to acknowledge this increasing dependence by noting how it affects our derive and our sense of spontaneity within a space. Furthermore, this notion opens up concepts of the ‘ ex-designer,’ and the possibility of the drifter also becoming an author of the design as well (Swartz, 2011).
In many ways, this project involves art examining art. By examining the presence of this video art in an art piece itself, we gain a better understanding of the effect this more vibrant, kinetic art on the derive itself. What drives us to drift from one place to another? Is it the environment and the layout of the city itself, or is it the rapidly encroaching use of technology that tells us where to go and how to get there the fastest? Are we attracted by brighter, LED-lit billboards that move and change according to the time of day, or our own interests? These questions and more are worth exploring, and can determine the outcome of man's relationship with both technology and the spaces it inhabits.

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