Designing an Experience
Maps and Signs at the Archaeological Site of Ancient Troy

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ARMA VIRUMQUE CANO...
Fiction
3,000+ years of stories
Reality is Mediated by Maps and Signs

Aliquid stat pro aliquod
Maps
……but also signs!

Identification
Information
Directional
Regulation
Indirect
What is at stake for Troy?

An opportunity to design an experience which enhances visitors’s understanding of our shared human past

Continued funding to preserve Troy and other ancient sites for future generations

More jobs for Trojans who depend on income from the tourism industry
Unfortunately…

“You will not learn history by coming here.”

“As ruins go, this site is seriously ruined.”

“The site is ugly.”

“The horse is a vulgar distraction.”

“I was hoping for the movie story… so I guess the bar was waaaay too high!”

“The horse at Çanakkale is more authentic.”

“Letting your imagination free license does the site more justice than an actual visit.”

“There is nothing here but bricks and stone.”

“A waste of a day.”

Quotes from Trip Adviser from tourists without a tour guide
Or, more formally stated by a UNESCO needs assessment as the two greatest challenges faced by Troy:

“Poor and confusing wayfinding”

“Visual clutter and chaos”

Hmm…

Sounds like a job for a cartographer!
Or, more formally stated by a UNESCO needs assessment as the two greatest challenges faced by Troy:

“**Poor** and **confusing** wayfinding”

“**Visual clutter** and **chaos**”

Hmm…

*Sounds like a job for a cartographer!*
Hidden regulatory sign
A Failure of Semiotics?

Content analysis of signs, paper maps and tour books available on site.

- 152 total objects coded
- 108 signs
- 42 maps in books
- 2 paper maps

Coded on 52 semiotic aspects

All materials in English, German and Turkish.

Sign Type: Informational

Shape: Rectangular

VV: Texture, Qualitative

VV: Color, Qualitative

Knowledge: Declarative, Configural

Info Content: Attribute, Historical, Geographic

Font: Roman

Case: Normal Orthography

All Caps

Style: Normal

Bold

VV: Color, Quantitative

Other issues noted
Semiotics: Triadic Model

Sign vehicle
Vehicle for communicating sign

Referent
Real World Object

Interpretant
Meaning of the sign

Semiotic Triangle can be ‘spun’ to understand interrelationships
Referent as Mediator

Info Content
- Historical / Temporal
- Attribute
- Geographic

Knowledge
- Procedural
- Configural
- Declarative

Info Content: Historical
Info Content: Attribute, Historical
Info Content: Geographic
Info Content: Configural
Knowledge: Declarative
Knowledge: Configural
Referent: General Sample

Media by Information Content

- **Signs**: Little geographic information on signs = few maps
- **Maps (tour books)**: Lots of geographic information on maps, but little attribute or historical information

Attributes:
- **Attribute**
- **Historical / Temporal**
- **Geographic**
Referent: General Sample

Media by Knowledge / Instruction

- Signs
  - Procedural
  - Configural
  - Declarative

- Maps (tour books)
  - Procedural
  - Configural
  - Declarative

Very little procedural / declarative knowledge on maps in tour books.

...this means the maps are not showing visitors how to navigate the site and there's very little thematic information.
Referent: Signs

Sign Type by Information Content

- **Directional**
- **Identification**
- **Informational**
- **Regulatory**
- **Ad Hoc**

**Historical / Temporal**

**Attribute**

**Geographic**
Referent: Signs

Sign Type by Knowledge / Instruction

- **Directional**
- **Identification**
- **Informational**
- **Regulatory**
- **Ad Hoc**

- **Procedural**
- **Configural**
- **Declarative**

22/28 info signs have maps — but the configural relationship is superficial
Intrepretant as Mediator

Iconicity
Modified Robinson Taxonomy
  Geometric / Abstract
  Associative / Iconic
  Pictorial / Iconic
  addition: image / realism

Sign Taxonomy
Sign Libraries

ISO  AIGA
Interpretant as Mediator

Iconicity – General Sample

- **Signs**: Geometric / Abstract (dominant)
- **Maps**: Realism (2nd most common)
- **Maps in Tour Books**: Geometric / Abstract

Geometric / Abstract representations dominant

Realism 2nd most common Strategy used
Interpretant as Mediator

Iconicity by Sign Type

Directional

Identification

Informational

Regulatory

Indirect

Geometric / Abstract representations dominant except for regulatory signs

Geometric / Abstract

Associative

Pictorial

Image / Realism
Interpretant as Mediator

Sign Libraries

ISO symbol used was **associative**
(male / female silhouette for bathroom)

AIGA symbols used were either **pictorial**
(cigarette with a circle and bar)

or **geometric** (P for parking)

**Iconicity:** Pictorial / Iconic

**Part of Sign Library:** AIGA
Sign Vehicle as Mediator

**Visual Variables**
- Hue
- Saturation
- Value
- Texture
- Orientation
- Shape
- Size

Order of Measurement collapsed to qualitative / quantitative

Coding **ONLY** if VV carries semiotic meaning

**VV:** Orientation, Qualitative

**Color,** quantitative (time)

**VV:** Orientation, Qualitative

**VV:** Color, Quantitative
Sign Vehicle as Mediator

Visual Variables and Media Type

- hue, qualitative
- hue, quantitative
- value
- texture
- orientation
- shape
- size

Average 2.25 variables with semiotic weight per object
Conclusions

Referent as Mediator
Underutilization of procedural knowledge
(Where should the viewer look?)
When procedural knowledge is present, it is frequently incomprehensible

Interpretant as Mediator
Reliant on extremes of abstraction and realism
(what does this mean?)

Sign Vehicle as Mediator
VV greatly underutilized – most VV do not add semiotic meaning
Is... Is that sign in Comic Sans....!?  

University of Wisconsin – Madison  
Molecular Archaeology Lab  
Dr. Robert Roth  
Dr. William Alyward  
Mustafa Askin (THE Troy guide)  
Evren Isiniak Bruce  
Tasia Williams and Cora Betsinger  

You!