

Scale: (Dis)embodiment, Possession, and Alienation

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Etymologically scale can be traced to a number of things including: a system for weighing; a means to estimate quantity including distance; to reference a hierarchy; a surface or skin that covers an object, a covering that blinds one physically or morally; and, a means to assess distance and proportion. Cartographic scale primarily references distance and proportion but sometimes mixes with other etymological scalar meanings such as weighing, estimation, hierarchy, and surface. In human geography, the proliferation of different conceptualizations of scale “range across a spectrum of almost intimidating diversity. The scalar debates, for the most part, have failed to address cartographic scale, the cartographic paradox, as well as *the* oldest form of scale: that is, scale a mentifact. My focus in the paper is on cartographic scale or more broadly scale as an agreed upon representational practice and as a mentifact. I begin by focusing first on the representational nature of scale as an analogy. Following this I explore the process of disassociation and how it relates to the removal of the subject as well as how the subject is both alienated from scalar practice and at the same time how the subject is a required part of those practices. In the final section I explore scale’s earliest origins in anthropometric measures and its relationship to humans, the human conditions and social justice.