

Comments on the Background, Programs, and Results of NCGIA

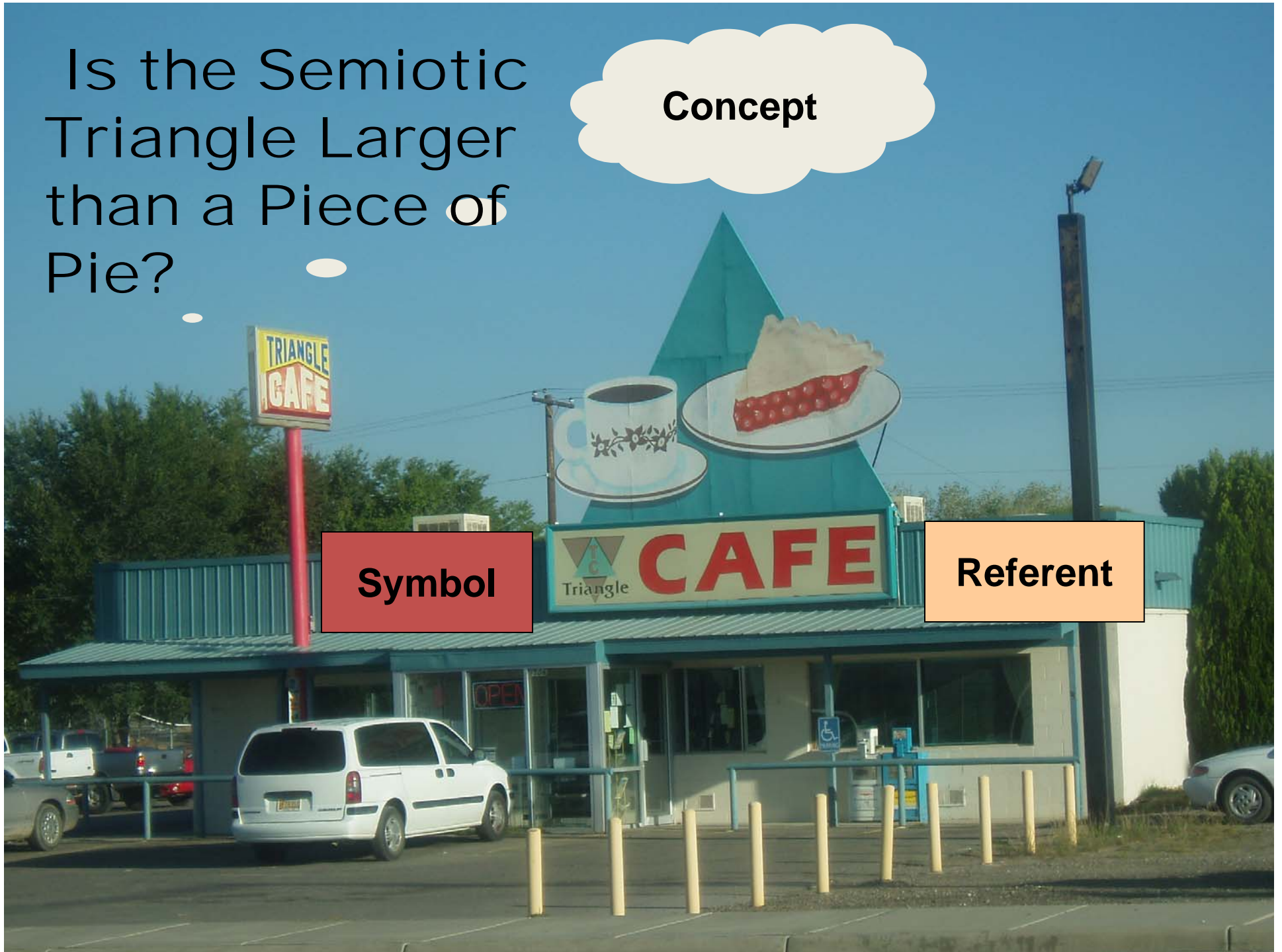
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Is the Semiotic Triangle Larger than a Piece of Pie?

Concept

Symbol

Referent



The mid-1980s, GIS was still fairly primitive...



Early GIS photo taken before NC GIA and color
were invented

A National Center

- ... then, in 1987, the National Science Foundation issued a call for proposals for a **“National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis”**
- One key feature of the solicitation was a bulleted list of important research topics, and a suggestion that the NCGIA should research some of these
- These “Five Bullets” played a role in shaping GIScience

The Five Bullets

- improved methods of spatial analysis and spatial statistics
- general theory of spatial relations and database structures
- artificial intelligence
- visualization
- social, economic, and institutional implications of the technology

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**Initiative 1, and the
"Accuracy of Spatial
Databases" book, "Spatial
Uncertainty" meeting**

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**Initiative 2, and the
COSIT conference
series**

The Five Bullets

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**Initiative 5, and the
“Large Spatial Databases”
conference series**

The Five Bullets

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Initiative 4, "Use and Value of Geographic Information"

A large amount of effort went into writing our proposal!

- June 1987: 3-site consortium formed
- August 1987: 5 days proposal writing in Santa Barbara
- September 1987: 3-day proposal-writing in Maine
- September 1987: 3-day proposal-writing in Buffalo
- November 1987: 3-day proposal-writing in Crystal City
- December 1987, January 1988: proposal-writing in Santa Barbara
- January 1988: Submitted to NSF
- June 1988: Site visit
- August 1988: Announcement
- December 1 1988: Start date



The “NCGIA Proposal Team” (in part)
at work in Santa Barbara, December 1987

David Simonett



Innovation?: Research Initiatives and Specialist Meetings

- The ideas of “Research Initiatives” and “Specialist Meetings” were key innovations
- In Crystal City, Andrew Frank had to work a long time to convince the rest of us
- *An appropriate degree of specificity?*
 - 12 Research Initiatives were defined in our proposal
 - A process for establishing more
 - 19 Research Initiatives in total under the NCGIA grant
- Participants from multiple disciplines, multiple ‘sectors’
- Thesaurus: Expert -> **Specialist**
- A “House Style”
- Adopted in Europe by the GISDATA project

Large Projects Followed

- CSIS: Center for Spatially-Integrated Social Science; etc.
- Two IGERTs in GIScience at Buffalo
 - Supported 62 Ph.D. students in GIScience, in seven disciplines
 - 18 have graduated (5 departments), 32 are still in the program (12 have left without PhD)
- Several IGERTs at UCSB, including “Interactive Digital Multimedia”
- IGERT at Maine, “Sensor Science, Engineering, and Informatics”
- Vespucci Initiative
- Etc.

Impacts

- The people who were involved!
- Faculty at the NCGIA sites
- Graduate students
- Specialist Meeting participants
- Others...
- It is very difficult to measure the effect of this, due to the 'contingency problem'...

Lastly, Alternative Histories

- What if...
- What if there had been no NCGIA award from NSF?
- What if the NCGIA grant had been awarded to a different institution or consortium?
- Of course, we will never know...

Thanks to everyone who made
NCGIA happen the way it did!

