

The Hollywood earthquake fault: geology as a matter of opinion

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In a case that could reset the parameters of reality, the developer of a mixed-use development under construction in Hollywood has asked the state geological service to change the earthquake map of Los Angeles.

In January the state Mining and Geology Board issued updated California Geological Survey maps with a surprise for Tinseltown developers. They showed an earthquake fault underlying the massive Blvd6200 project, which is currently under construction on Hollywood Boulevard. In a hearing of the same Mining and Geology Board last week, lawyer John M. Bowman, representing developer Clarett West, told officials the fault line “is not clearly detectable... and therefore is not sufficiently well-defined to be included on the map.”

Much rides on the determination of the actual fault line on the Geological Survey. In addition to the \$200 million Blvd6200, which is a multi-building development, the same fault could conceivably imperil the multi-tower Millennium Hollywood project, planned for parking lots surrounding the famed Capitol Records building. A third project, a 535-unit apartment complex planned on nearby Argyle Avenue, could also be affected.

To avoid damage from the fault as newly mapped, it has become crucially important to change the map.

As is well known, the physical behavior of the earth and surrounding celestial bodies depends largely on the maps that people draw of them. This phenomenon, known as map-to-reality conversion, first became evident in the early 16th Century, when Copernicus drew a map of the solar system with the sun at the center, rather than the earth. This map caused the earth, which had been the center of the universe up until that time, to suddenly begin orbiting the sun. The upshot for the publishing industry was dramatic: Remainder houses were suddenly full of books like the *Summa Theologica* by St. Thomas Aquinas and the *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri, both of which had been written under the previous cosmology and were now obsolete.

This map-to-reality conversion is a special feature of a philosophy I invented as an undergraduate that I call “concrete idealism.” In essence, it holds that the earth is real, but can take any form that I find convenient at the moment. Although the paper was poorly received at an academic conference, I do recall that a distinguished professor of philosophy, well known for his chronic depression, suddenly perked up and made loud whooping noises with his throat while slapping his thighs in an excited way. I don’t recall his exact comments afterward, although he did mention that my work was “the best medicine.” I do hope my theory can play a helpful role in rescuing an important real estate development, and, in so doing, finally convince my brother-in-law that I did not waste my time in college.

As for the case at hand, geologists testifying on behalf of the developer have suggested the actual fault lies elsewhere in Hollywood, rather than directly beneath the soon-to-be-completed building.

In defense of the developer and his geologists, I’d like to point out that nobody really knows exactly where the earthquake fault is located. That means the location of the fault is conjectural in the absence of established fact. Insofar as the location of the fault is a conjecture, that means reasonable minds can disagree on the subject. Thus it may be *not unreasonable* to locate the fault elsewhere than underneath this valuable real estate. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

Of course, there are legal matters of great moment here. If (heaven forbid) the project were to be built on a currently mapped fault and a seismic cataclysm were to ensue, the owners might be sued by any persons emerging from the rubble thereof based on said owners' alleged awareness that the project had been built on a fault. (Assuming, of course, that the project would not simply have vanished into the bowels of the earth, much like a little plastic hotel from a Monopoly game that has slipped through a storm drain, never to be seen again.)

If the map were to be amended, however, the developers could distance themselves from the fault. "The official map showed the fault to be elsewhere," they could say in retrospect, with a shrug. "Who knew?"