
Affective Territories

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“But what can the geopolitical lens reveal, when it’s a matter of artistic invention?”
(Holmes, 2008a)

“Has the ideology of our time not become an erratic, wavering pattern of crisscrossing footsteps, traced in secure metric points on an abstract field? The aesthetic form of the *dérive* is everywhere. But so is the hyper-rationalist grid of Imperial infrastructure.”
(Holmes, 2003b)

1. Geopoetics.

The figure of map¹, historically associated with colonial imperialism, has gradually grown into a privileged trope of contemporary art which articulates it either as personal cartography (singular trace)², as an ethnographic map of a community or institution³ - thus revealing the

¹ This paper is based on my own article “Mapas Imaginários” published by online magazine *Virose*, section b#21, in October 2008. Available at: http://virose.pt/vector/b_21/carvalho.html (Accessed 7 March 2009).

² As is the case of artist Jeremy Wood and his GPS drawings. Quoting from his website: “Jeremy Wood is an artist who started GPS drawing in 2000. He maps his daily movements with GPS to express a personal cartography, and generates new work as he travels.” Available at: <http://www.gpsdrawing.com/jw.html> (Accessed 24 February 2009).

³ The unavoidable reference here is to the often quoted chapter “The Artist as Ethnographer” from the book *The Return of the Real* by Hal Foster. In Foster’s own words: “These developments also constitute a series of shifts in the *siting* of art: from the surface of the medium to the space of the museum, from institutional frames to discursive networks, to the point where many artists and critics treat conditions like desire or disease, AIDS or homeless, as sites for art. Along with this figure of siting has come the analogy of *mapping*. In an important moment Robert Smithson and others pushed this cartographic operation to a geological extreme that transformed the siting of art dramatically. Yet this siting had limits too: it could be recouped by gallery and museum, it played to the myth of the redemptive artist (a very traditional site), and so on. Otherwise mapping in recent art has tended toward the sociological and the

complexity of the relationships within these -, or even by evoking its constitutive power, a map of becoming that traces a people to come⁴.

This notion of map as an artistic trope evokes, for example, the work of Lothar Baumgarten, a German artist whose conceptualist work is shaped by a subtle social critique manifested in a particularly poetic and political way of molding ethnographical and historical materials. In this respect we recall specifically the 2001⁵ exhibition that the Fundação de Serralves (Porto) dedicated to this artist, titled "By water brought collected broken buried", in which the first room displayed a vast map spread out on the floor and partially hidden by a net (*Voo Nocturno*, 1968-69) next to a small pyramid of blue pigment (*Tetraedo*, 1968). Cartographies, photographs, names, drawings, sounds, feathers, masks and charms populate the universe of Baumgarten, but always filtered by a reflexive gesture: there is always a mirror, an object of daily use abandoned in the jungle, a name beyond the code, a disorienting index on the map which all betray the presence of the artist, of his gaze, of his system of values. In the words of Hal Foster:

"Such reflexivity is essential, for, as Bordieu warned, ethnographic mapping is predisposed to a Cartesian opposition that leads the observer to abstract the culture of study. Such mapping may thus confirm rather than contest the authority of mapper over site in a way that reduces the desired exchange of dialogical fieldwork." (Foster, 1996: 190)

Trevor Paglen, a Californian artist, refers to such a cartesian opposition as "God's Eye"—thus justifying his hesitation in working from a cartographic point-of-view—during his conversation with Visible

anthropological, to the point where an ethnographic mapping of an institution or a community is a primary form of site-specific art today." (Foster, 1996: 184-185)

⁴Such is the stance of Brian Holmes in "Imaginary maps, global solidarities": "My conviction is that we need radically inventive maps exactly like we need radical political movements: to go beyond received ideas and orders, in fact, to go beyond representation, to rediscover and share the space – creating potentials of a revolutionary imagination." (Holmes, 2003a)

⁵Concerning which I wrote a short text published by the online magazine *Interact*, #4, November 2001. Available at: <http://www.interact.com.pt/interact4/> (Accessed 7 March 2009).

Collective/Naeem Mohaimen regarding the map co-authored with John Emerson for project *CIA Rendition Flights 2001-2006* (2006), and included on the book *An Atlas of Radical Cartography* (Mogel, L. & Bhagat, A., 2008)⁶. In fact, this fascinating *Atlas*, composed of ten maps created by artists and activists, as well as an equal number of essays which query and analyze these irreverent and unsettling cartographies, brings together reflexivity and activist gesture and may be read in agreement with the notion of "*tactical media*," just as described by the Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA) on its short essay "Tactical Cartographies," which examines the map *Routes of Least Surveillance* (2001-2007) by the IAA and Site-R. As the collective puts it:

"At root, tactical media is an interventionist practice that creates disruption within existing systems of power and control. Less a methodology than an orientation, it is fundamentally pragmatic, utilizing any and all available technologies, aesthetics and methods as dictated by the goals of a given action. Tactical media are often ephemeral and event-driven, existing only as long as they continue to be effective. They vanish into thin air once their utility has been exhausted, leaving only traces in the form of memories, documentation and journalistic accounts. (...) Extending these notions to spatial representation, 'tactical cartography' refers to the creation, distribution, and use of spatial data to intervene in systems of control affecting spatial meaning and practice." (Institute for Applied Autonomy, 2008: 29-30)

Thus, this concept of "*tactical cartography*," which in many ways transverses the numerous creative contributes of the *Atlas*, calls into play a re-invention of territory, an heterotopic⁷ enunciation, in which artistic experimentation merges with activist guerrilla, and thus the notion of map appears in its full pragmatic breadth, re-drawing what's hidden, suspended, repressed and denied, a geology submerged by the voracious fluxes of neo-liberal globalization from which may, nevertheless, emerge new networks, affections, concepts and alliances

⁶An excerpt of this interview can be accessed at: http://www.an-atlas.com/contents/pag_em_vis.html (Accessed 24 February 2009).

⁷Crucial concept introduced by Michel Foucault at the conference "Des espaces autres" which took place at Cercles d'Études Architecturales, on March 14th 1967. Available at: http://virose.pt/vector/periferia/foucault_pt.html (Accessed 28 February 2009).

under the aegis of a desire for a complex social bond of solidarity⁸. We may recall here the words of Brian Holmes in "The Affectivist Manifesto", where we witness an enunciation of affect⁹, in the deleuzian sense, allied (implicitly) to Foucault's concept of subjectivation¹⁰:

"Artist activism is affectivism, it opens up expanding territories. These territories are occupied by the sharing of a double difference: a split from the private self in which each person was formerly enclosed, and from the social order which

⁸ We are referring here to the notion of solidarity in the sense meant by Brian Holmes in "Imaginary Maps, Global Solidarities", which is: "Conceived in these terms, solidarity means something quite tangible: the very cohesion of social relations, which demand a limitation of sovereignty (adherence to common laws and norms) as well as a transfer of property (redistribution). Solidarity is thus a modern name for the complex reciprocal relations, both material and symbolic, which anthropologists attempt to decipher as the diverse elements of a single social tie. In this sense, solidarity can be conceived as a gift for the survival and well-being of others: but a redoubtable and even dangerous gift, one that is most often forced upon us, extorted or imposed. It remains that at the best moments in modern society (which sometimes are almost inevitable, given the disasters that preceded them), the solidarities prefigured in the social imaginary can be actively reshaped, replayed in both psychic and social space, even as their concrete forms are reinvented and more-or-less freely chosen. In this way they can give rise to a better, more equalitarian system, a progress in civilization". Available at: <http://pzwart.wdka.hro.nl/mdr/pubsfolder/bhimaginary/> (Accessed 28 February 2009).

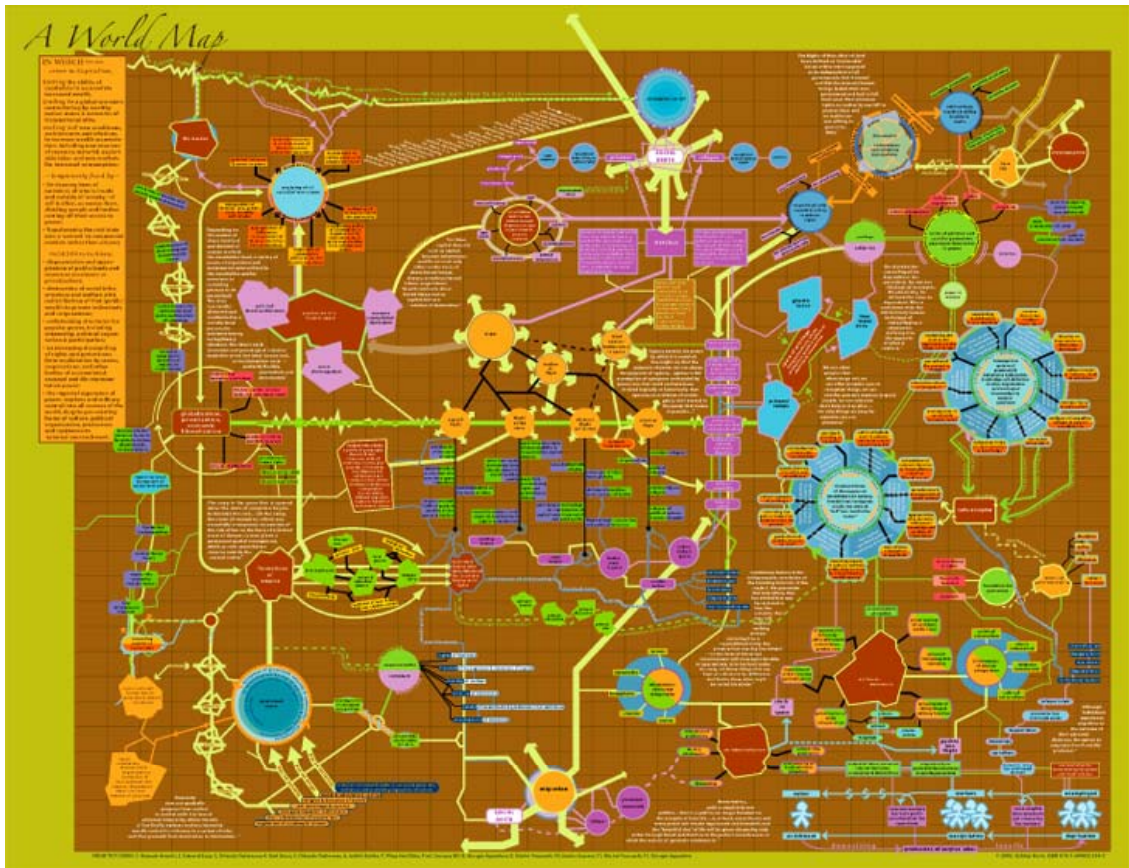
⁹ Quoting Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie?*: "L'affect ne dépasse pas moins les affections que le percept, les perceptions. L'affect n'est pas le passage d'un état vécu à un autre, mais le devenir non humain de l'homme. Achab n'imité pas Moby Dick, et Penthésilée ne 'fait' pas la chienne: ce n'est pas une imitation, une sympathie vécue ni même une identification imaginaire. Ce n'est pas de la ressemblance, bien qu'il y ait de la ressemblance. Mais justement ce n'est qu'une ressemblance produite. C'est plutôt une extrême contiguité, dans une étroite de deux sensations sans ressemblance, ou au contraire dans l'éloignement d'une lumière qui capte les deux dans un même reflet. (...) C'est une zone d'indétermination, d'indiscernabilité, comme si des choses, des bêtes et des personnes (Achab et Moby Dick, Penthésilée et la chienne) avaient atteint dans chaque cas ce point pourtant à l'infini que précède immédiatement leur différenciation naturelle. C'est ce qu'on appelle un affect. (...) Seule la vie crée de telles zones où tourbillonnent les vivants, et seul l'art peut y atteindre et y pénétrer dans son entreprise de co-création." (Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F., 1991: 163-164)

¹⁰ Just as Deleuze states in "La vie comme oeuvre d'art": "Et, conformément à sa méthode, ce qui intéresse essentiellement Foucault, ce n'est pas un retour aux Grecs, mais *nous aujourd'hui*: quels sont nos modes d'existence, nos possibilités de vie ou nos processus de subjectivation, avons-nous des manières de nous constituer comme 'soi', et, comme dirait Nietzsche, des manières suffisamment 'artistiques', par-delà le savoir et le pouvoir? (Deleuze, 1990: 136). In an interview with Toni Negri, Deleuze notes that "on peut en effet parler de processus de subjectivation quand on considère les diverses manières dont des individus ou des collectivités se constituent comme sujets: de tels processus ne valent que dans la mesure où, quand ils se font, ils échappent à la fois aux saviors constitués et aux pouvoirs dominants. Même si par la suite ils engendrent de nouveaux pouvoirs ou repassent dans de nouveaux saviors. Mais, sur le moment, ils ont bien une spontanéité rebelle." (Deleuze, 1990: 238)

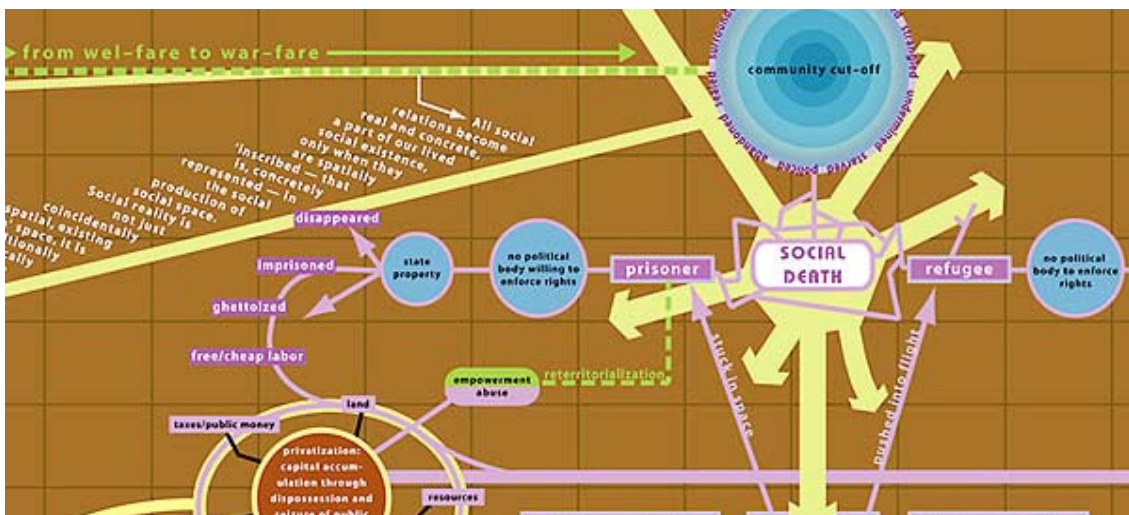
imposed that particular type of privacy or privation. When a territory of possibility emerges it changes the social map, like a landslide, a flood or a volcano do in nature. The easiest way for society to protect its existing form is denial, pretending the change never happened: and that actually works in the landscape of mentalities. An affective territory disappears if it isn't elaborated, constructed, modulated, differentiated, prolonged by new breakthroughs and conjunctions. There is no use defending such territories and even believing in them is only the barest beginning. What they urgently need is to be developed, with forms, rhythms, inventions, discourses, practices, styles, technologies – in short, with cultural codes. " (Holmes, 2008b)

The collective volume *An Atlas of Radical Cartography* reaches into this "affectivism", as Brian Holmes calls it, creating new territories of possibilities by casting different looks into existing territories, illuminating areas of darkness, indetermination and marginalization, but also analytically scrutinizing the complex networks that support the geographies of contemporary capitalism. The theme of *Atlas* is introduced immediately on the cover, which shows an inverted map of the world; subtly, ironically, it's right at the surface that we plunge into an "upside down" world in which an extraordinary complexity entails a growing opacity in obvious contradiction with the proliferation of discourses on transparency and the immediacy of the society of information (in fact, the current worldwide financial crisis is an unmistakable proof of this opacity).

Reminiscent of the urgent need for an "aesthetics of cognitive mapping" capable of challenging the perplexity and incomprehension of the postmodern individual in face of the complex (multinational and communicational) networks that traverse his/hers experience— suggested by Frederic Jameson, in 1984, on his famous article, later turned into a book, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*—, the Ashley Hunt map, titled *A World Map: in which we see...* (2005), is perhaps, of all the maps in this *Atlas*, the one that most openly takes on an analytic and didactic approach.



Ashley Hunt. *A World Map: in which we see...*, 2005. Image kindly supplied by the artist.



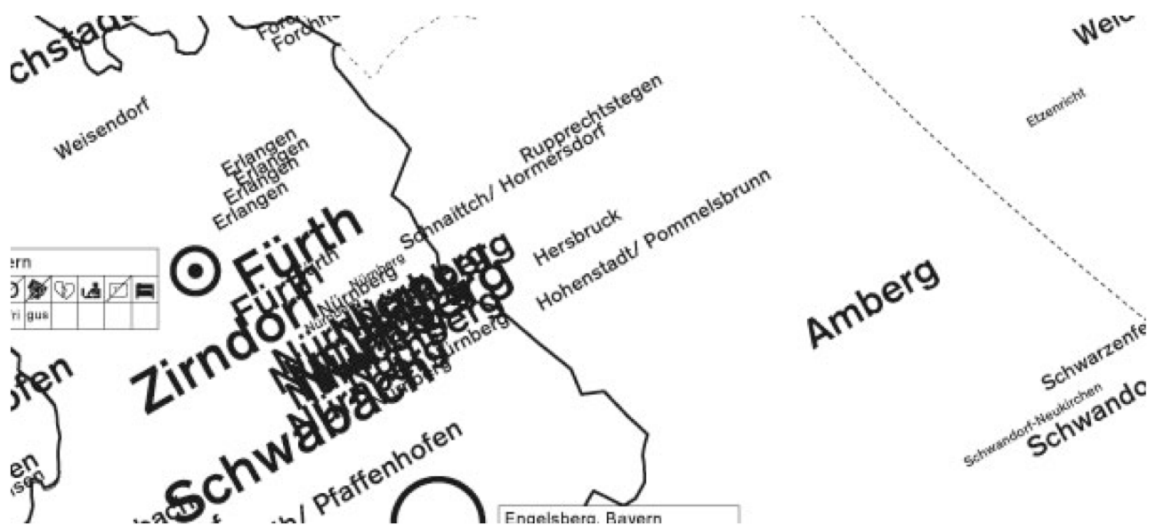
Ashley Hunt. *A World Map: in which we see...*, 2005 (detail). Image kindly supplied by the artist.

Quoting Ashley Hunt:

"A World Map In Which We See... traces our contemporary modes of power and powerlessness, through which positions of wealth and privilege always exist in

connection to the work or subordination of another. (...) Primary research for the map came from years of cultural and political work within activist and reform movements against the United States' prison system, and emerged from a perceived need to expand the analytical basis for that work beyond the limitations of nationally framed legal, institutional and civil discourse. Especially after September 11, 2001, a condition of *statelessness* appeared to increasingly define the nature of imprisonment and mass prison expansion (which is now a global, albeit US driven phenomena), making the figure of the prisoner less and less discernable from displaced figures the world over whose resources and power are progressively seized and expropriated." (Hunt, 2008: 145-146)¹¹

The figure of the placeless, namely the clandestine immigrant and the refugee, is mapped by the collective An Architektur¹² through a detailed cartography of the *Departure Center* at Fürth (a center for illegal immigrants with no passports or similar documentation) in the German Bavaria, as well as by visualizations of the center-mediated relationships between the asylum seekers and the several institutions involved (medical, juridical, law enforcement, among others), as well as the procedures for seeking asylum in Germany.



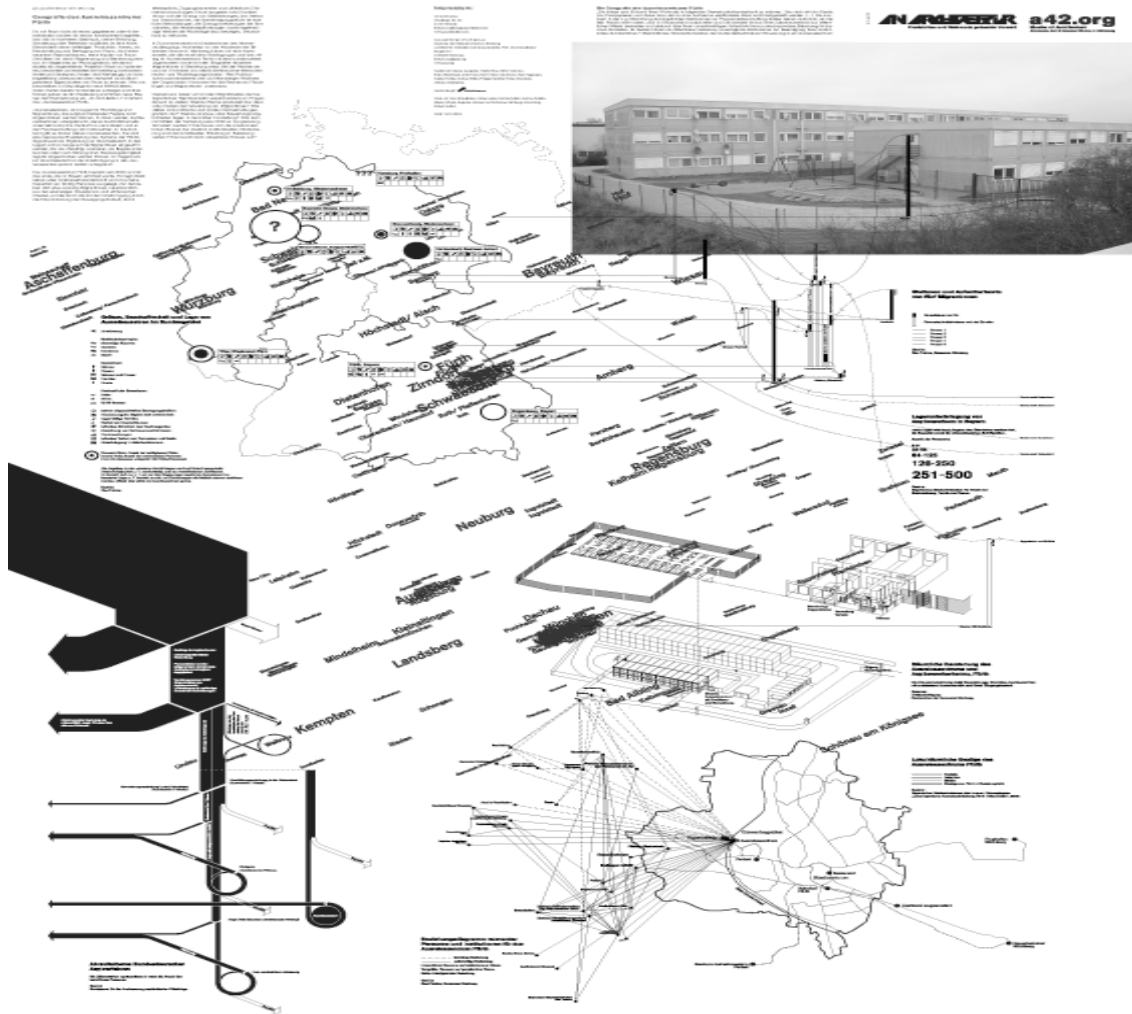
An Architektur in collaboration with a42.org. *Geography of the Fürth Departure Center*, 2004 (detail). Image kindly supplied by the collective.

¹¹ For more information see: <http://aworldmap.com/> (Accessed 28 February 2009).

¹² In collaboration with the students of the Master's Program in Architecture at Nuremberg's Fine Arts Academy.

For more information on the collective see:

http://www.anarchitektur.com/aa_news/aa_news_en.html (Accessed 1 March 2009).



An Architektur in collaboration with a42.org. *Geography of the Fürth Departure Center*, 2004. Image kindly supplied by the collective.

Quoting from the *Geography of the Fürth Departure Center* map:

"*Ausreisezentren*, or, 'departure centers', are camps for refugees and migrants that, due to missing papers, cannot be deported. Asylum seekers held in these camps are accused by authorities of concealing their land of origin and resisting obtaining passports. So far there are seven departure centers in Germany. (...) Collectively, we have experimented with cartographic representation in order to pose these questions: What kind of spaces does the German system of the administration of migrants produce? How do political and social circumstances appear geo-graphically? Which potential for analysis or evaluation is offered by a spatial representation? How can a critique of exclusion be formulated by means of mapping? How can the varying levels of state and institutional structure be brought into relation with those of individual experience? How is subjective knowledge transmitted by this?" (An Architektur with a42.org, 2008)

In fact, and as Maribel Casas-Cortés e Sebastian Cobarrubias point out so well on their analytical text derived from this map and titled

“Drawing Escape Tunnels through the Borders: Cartographic Research Experiments by European Social Movements”¹³, the notion itself of “frontier” has been changing over time to a point where the current “logic of frontier” largely exceeds the geographic boundaries of the State-Nation, fractured into “internal frontiers” that segregate work, institutional and familial relationships, to name only a few, intensifying social inequalities and accentuating feelings of mistrust and social discrimination.

Targeting this climate of suspicion and fear that transverses the contemporary experience by creating an ideological context for an expansive application of surveillance devices—namely through closed circuit TV networks (CCTV)—, the Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA), in collaboration with Site-R, counterattacks in this *Atlas* with the ironic and activist map *Routes of Least Surveillance* (2001/2007), based on the online application *iSee*¹⁴—developed by the collective for several cities since 2001—which displays, in real-time, maps of the routes least exposed to surveillance cameras.

¹³ It's worthwhile reading the excerpt of “Drawing Escape Tunnels through the Borders: Cartographic Experiments by European Social Movements” by Maribel Casas-Cortes and Sebastian Cobarrubias derived from the map *Geography of the Fürth Departure Center*. Available at: http://www.an-atlas.com/contents/anarch_casascobb.html (Accessed 1 March 2009).

¹⁴ For detailed information on the application: <http://www.appliedautonomy.com/isee.html> (Accessed 1 March 2009).



Institute for Applied Autonomy in collaboration with Site-R, *Routes of Least Surveillance*, 2001/2007 (detail). Image kindly supplied by the collective.

The *iSee* project lays emphasis on a dynamic cartography in which localization and route are combined into subversive maps that highlight the creation of experimental, communal and creative strategies for appropriation and transformation of both *media* and new technologies—namely those that are central to the current “surveillance society”—as a means to enhance the sharing, creation and free flux of signals, things, people, actions, and affections. In an interview with Erich W. Schienke, published in 2002 by the *Surveillance & Society*¹⁵ magazine, the IAA called attention to the potential of the *iSee* application when combined with *locative media* (on which they were already working), as the intersection between the two would eventually transform the application into a general purpose mapping instrument, open to the creative intervention of its users, specifically through GPS-enabled PDAs, who would thus be able to insert multiple data and narratives onto the maps.

2. Allegories of the Surveillance Society.

¹⁵ Available at: <http://www.surveillance-and-society.org/articles1/iaa.pdf> (Accessed 1 March 2009).

In fact, with the development of systems such as the *Geographic Information System* (GIS), which combines geographically indexed databases, satellite imagery, and GPS, as well as the proliferation of cell phones, laptops, and wireless technologies, the artistic and activist practices associated with *locative media* have become more prominent within the contemporary cultural and artistic scene, suggesting a “locational humanism” (Holmes, 2003b) and imagining the potential for collective action of the “smart mobs” (Rheingold, 2002) of the 21st Century. In his article “Open Cartographies: On Assembling Things through Locative Media”, Michael Dieter writes:

“While explicitly framed as speculative, exploratory and anarchic, the close link established between a kind of materialist ontology and political emancipation has become a recurring trope in the commentaries on locative media. To a certain extent, the trend corresponds with a desire to transcend the limits of postmodern theorization and the apparent “elitism” of net.art, however, a range of competing motivations and influences have emerged in the diverse fields that have converged around the topic of augmented reality. For researchers Anne Galloway and Matt Ward, new archaeological techniques developed in conjunction with photography, GPS and cartographic mapping coincide through locative media as social platforms. This correlation is identified with the activation of static architectures in order to restore ‘hope’ through the transformation of urban landscapes.” (Dieter, 2007: 198)

The activation and “rewriting” of the urban landscape brought about by the artistic practices associated with *locative media* must be considered in conjunction with a tendency to develop a cinematic and interactive architecture capable of creating a total immersion effect on the digital set¹⁶. This urban allegorization is translated into street culture and intervention, as is the case with the laser graffiti proposed by the Graffiti Research Lab, *L.A.S.E.R Tag* (2007); narrative and playful networked city in which space is mapped with messages recorded by cyclists who, alone, explore the city streets in search of “hideaway places” where to leave their stories and listen to those of others, in *Rider*

¹⁶ Manovich, L. (2004). The poetics of augmented space. [Online]. Available at: http://www.manovich.net/nnm%20map/Augmented_2004revised.doc (Accessed 25 September 2008).

Spoke (2007) by Blast Theory; approximations to the situationist *dérive*¹⁷ as is the case with the singular traces superimposed onto the urban cartography as those put forward by Hugh Pryor and Jeremy Wood (*GPS Drawing*), and Ester Polak in *Real Time* (2002); conversion and activism in the case of the *Makrolab* project (1997-2007) by Marko Peljhan, and the *Transborder Tool for Immigrants* (2007) by "artist" Ricardo Dominguez.

However, if the tendency to modify technical devices, intervening in their purpose and liberating them from private appropriation through an allegorization¹⁸ that layers them with new meanings, intersects these artistic proposals, there is nevertheless an ambiguity that traverses and surpasses them. In the words of Jordan Crandall:

"What we are witnessing today, however, is not a one-way delocalization or deterritorialization, but rather a volatile combination of the diffused and the positioned, or *the placeless and the place-coded*. Perhaps nowhere has this been more apparent than with mobile GIS and location-aware technologies. (...) Tracking has played a primary role in this shift. Its landscapes of inclination-position fuel the geospatial interfaces -- such as evidenced in Google Maps and the C5 GPS media player -- which are becoming important modes of access to any phenomenon." (Crandall, 2006)¹⁹

¹⁷ Quoting Sadie Plant: "One of psychogeography's principle means was the *dérive*. Long a favorite practice of the Dadaists, who organized a variety of expeditions, and the surrealists, for whom the geographical form of automatism was an instructive pleasure, the *dérive*, the drift, was defined by the situationists as the 'technique of locomotion without a goal', in which 'one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there'. The *dérive* acted as something of a model for the 'playful creation' of all human relationships." (Plant, 1992: 58-59).

¹⁸ We are referring here to the notion of allegory in the sense meant by Craig Owens and derived from Walter Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen trauerspiels* (1928). Specifically: "Allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery: the allegorist does not invent images but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses as its interpreter. And in his hands the image becomes something other (*allos* = other + *agoreuei* = to speak). He does not restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured; allegory is not hermeneutics. Rather, he adds another meaning to the image. If he adds, however, he does so only to replace: the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one; it is a supplement. This is why allegory is condemned, but it is also the source of its theoretical significance." (Owens, 1984: 205)

¹⁹ Crandall, J. (2006). Precision + Guided + Seeing. *Virose*. [Online]. Available at: http://www.virose.pt/vector/x_05/crandall.html (Accessed 7 March 2009).

In effect, if the aesthetical form of the *dérive* has made a strong come back in our contemporary experience, be it under the guise of the individual in transit, freed from geographical constraints and available for new encounters through the always-on digital technologies, or through the nomadic navigation on the *World Wide Web*, never before have wanderings, routes and behaviors been this registered, stored and controlled²⁰, true to the deleuzian concept of “*dividual*”²¹ – the current condition of the individual when reduced to a “data subject” (the result of an endless split between an individual’s physical self and his/hers data representation) ²². We may thus say that today, more than ever, the imaginary maps, the ones that trace singular trajectories or create a people to come, are drawn in relationship to (and in tension with) a cartography of an overexposed territory, monitored by a gaze that never ceases to calculate and evaluate.

²⁰ Quoting Jordan Crandall in “Precision + Guided + Seeing”: “While tracking is about the strategic detention and codification of movement, it is also about positioning. It studies how something moves in order to predict its exact location in time and space. It fastens its object (and subjects) onto a classifying grid or database-driven identity assessment, reaffirming precise categorical location within a landscape of mobility. Rather than being fully about mobility on the one hand, or locational specificity on the other, tracking is more accurately about the dynamic between. We might call this *inclination-position*. (...) This is a landscape in which signifiers have become statistics. It is how computers think, and how we begin to think with them».” (Crandall, 2006).

²¹ Quoting Gilles Deleuze in “Post-scriptum sobre as sociedades de controlo”: “Il n’y a pas besoin de science-fiction pour concevoir un mécanisme de contrôle qui donne à chaque instant la position d’un élément en milieu ouvert, animal dans la réserve, homme dans une entreprise (collier électronique). Félix Guattari imaginait une ville où chacun pouvait quitter son appartement, sa rue, son quartier, grâce à sa carte électronique (dividuelle) qui faisait lever telle ou telle barrière; mais aussi bien la carte pouvait être recrachée tel jour, ou entre telles heures; ce qui compte n’est pas la barrière, mais l’ordinateur qui repère la position de chacun, licite ou illicite, et opère une modulation universelle”. (Deleuze, 1990: 246).

²² According to Robert W. Williams in “Politics and self in the age of digital re(pro)ducibility”: “For Deleuze, the data gathered on us through the new technologies did not necessarily manifest our irreducible uniqueness. Rather, the very way that the data can be gathered about us and then used for and against us marks us as *dividuals*. For Deleuze, such technologies indicate that we as discrete selves are not indivisible entities; on the contrary, we can be divided and subdivided endlessly. What starts as particular information about specific people – or selves – can be separated from us and recombined in new ways outside our control. Such ‘recombinations’ are based on the criteria deemed salient by those with access to the information, be they government officials or corporate marketers.” (Williams, 2005).

Thus, as David Lyon notes on «The End of Privacy» (Lyon, 2007), the contemporary “surveillance society”²³—where location-aware corporations such as Digital Angel and VeriChip²⁴ arise, along with the omnipresence of closed-circuit TV networks (CCTV) in urban spaces and the development of a new penology based on the prediction of risk and on the identification and management of the categorized groups according to different degrees of danger (Ericson, R. & Haggerty, K., 1997)—has been progressively replacing the criteria of public benefit with that of risk minimization in what concerns the assessment of public policies, a tendency which only gained strength since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11th 2001. To question this new condition, to confront the technical apparatus, to subvert and experiment, to rise above its time, this is what we can and should expect from contemporary art.

“In order to work, surveillance systems depend on their subjects (indeed, as Foucault observed a long time ago, subjects become ‘the bearers of their own surveillance’ 1979). Although there is a sense in which the subjects of surveillance become ‘objectified’ as their data doubles become more real to the surveillance system than the bodies and daily lives from which the data have been drawn, their involvement with surveillance systems often remains active, conscious and intentional. People comply (but not as dupes), negotiate and at times resist the surveillance systems in which their lives are enmeshed.” (Lyon, 2007: 55)

*Faceless*²⁵ (2007), a film by Manu Luksch, is an excellent example of this resistance to the contemporary apparatus of surveillance in that it appropriates closed-circuit TV networks, deviating from their explicit purpose and endowing them with an experimental, artistic and activist dimension. Shot in London—the city in the world with the highest density

²³ On which it would be worthwhile reading the *Report on the Surveillance Society* prepared by the *Surveillance Studies Network*:

http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data_protection/practical_application/surveillance_society_full_report_2006.pdf (Accessed 7 March 2009)

²⁴ Suggesting the use of technologies like RFID and GPS for the purposes of monitoring, identifying and locating people, animals and objects.

²⁵ Available at: <http://www.ambienttv.net/pdf/facelessproject.pdf> (Accessed 5 March 2009).

of CCTVs—as part of the *Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers*²⁶, *Faceless* is entirely made from surveillance camera footage obtained by the artist under the *UK Data Protection Act* which gives the individual captured by the CCTVs the right to request a copy of his/hers footage. In “Faceless: Chasing the Data Shadow”, Manu Luksch and Mukul Patel, who collaborated on the screenplay, state:

“*Faceless* treats the CCTV image as an example of a legal readymade (*objet trouvé*). The medium, in the sense of ‘raw materials that are transformed into artwork’, is not adequately described as simply video or even captured light. More accurately, the medium comprises images that exist contingent on particular social and legal circumstances – essentially, images with a legal superstructure. *Faceless* interrogates the laws that govern the video surveillance of society and the codes of communication that articulate their operation, and in both its mode of coming into being and its plot, develops a specific critique.” (Luksch & Patel, 2007: 74)

Just as in the project *Video Sniffin’*, developed by the collective MediaShed²⁷, which includes the videos *The Commercial* (2006), *Minä Olen* (2006), *The Duellist* (2007), and *Spy Kitting* (2006-2007), in *Faceless* the city is transformed into a permanent film set and the act of creation becomes a gesture of appropriation and transformation of the omnipresent gaze of the surveillance cameras. In this context to create is to affectively populate a territory, to rescue it from the barrenness and lethargy in which the non-reciprocated gaze of the surveillance cameras had plunged it.

Faceless is the result of not only a brilliant conceptual intuition but also of a subtle artistic work, manifest on the visual and the narrative ways in which Manu Luksch appropriates the circles superimposed on the faces of the recorded individuals, except for the artist herself, the only visible face (an artifice legally imposed to owners of surveillance cameras, for the screening of CCTV captured images, with the intent of protecting the citizens’ privacy).

²⁶ Available at: <http://www.ambienttv.net/content/?q=dpamanifesto> (Accessed 5 March 2009).

²⁷ Available at: <http://www.mediashed.org/about> (Accessed 7 March 2009).



Still from the movie *Faceless* (2007). Image kindly supplied by the artist.

In this Orwellian fable the fabulous voice of Tilda Swinton narrates the story of a strange city whose inhabitants have no face and live immersed in an eternal present, the real time, dictated by the scrutiny of the New Machine which has abolished the past and the future, and along with them guilt and unrest, but also any possibility to experience the real. Suddenly, one woman regains her face and with it the consciousness of herself and others, rediscovering the city and its areas of affect and freedom, just like the ones populated by the 'spectral children' with their colorful and clandestine dances to the sound of which the main character will regain, for brief moments, her memories, reuniting once more with those who are dear to her.

It is perhaps on the dance sequences (choreographed by Ballet Boyz), which take place in several of London's public spaces, that

Faceless best expresses its strangeness and poetic activism, evoking the contradictory forces that connect us to the spaces we so often cross and forget to inhabit.



Still from the movie *Faceless* (2007). Image kindly supplied by the artist.

Monitored, assessed, controlled, divided and owned: such is the complex condition of contemporary space which may nevertheless become *our territory* if traversed by affects, bodies and gestures that inhabit it and make it communal. It is this possibility that, in different ways, movies like *Faceless*, the photographs and cartographies of Baumgarten, and the maps of *An Atlas of Radical Cartography* address. In their singularity and difference, these works of art offer evidence that the creation of this emerging territory, this labor of *geopoetics*, can't relinquish a relationship with technology and the media. On the contrary: this is a political relationship and therefore an imperative one.

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