

Else/Where

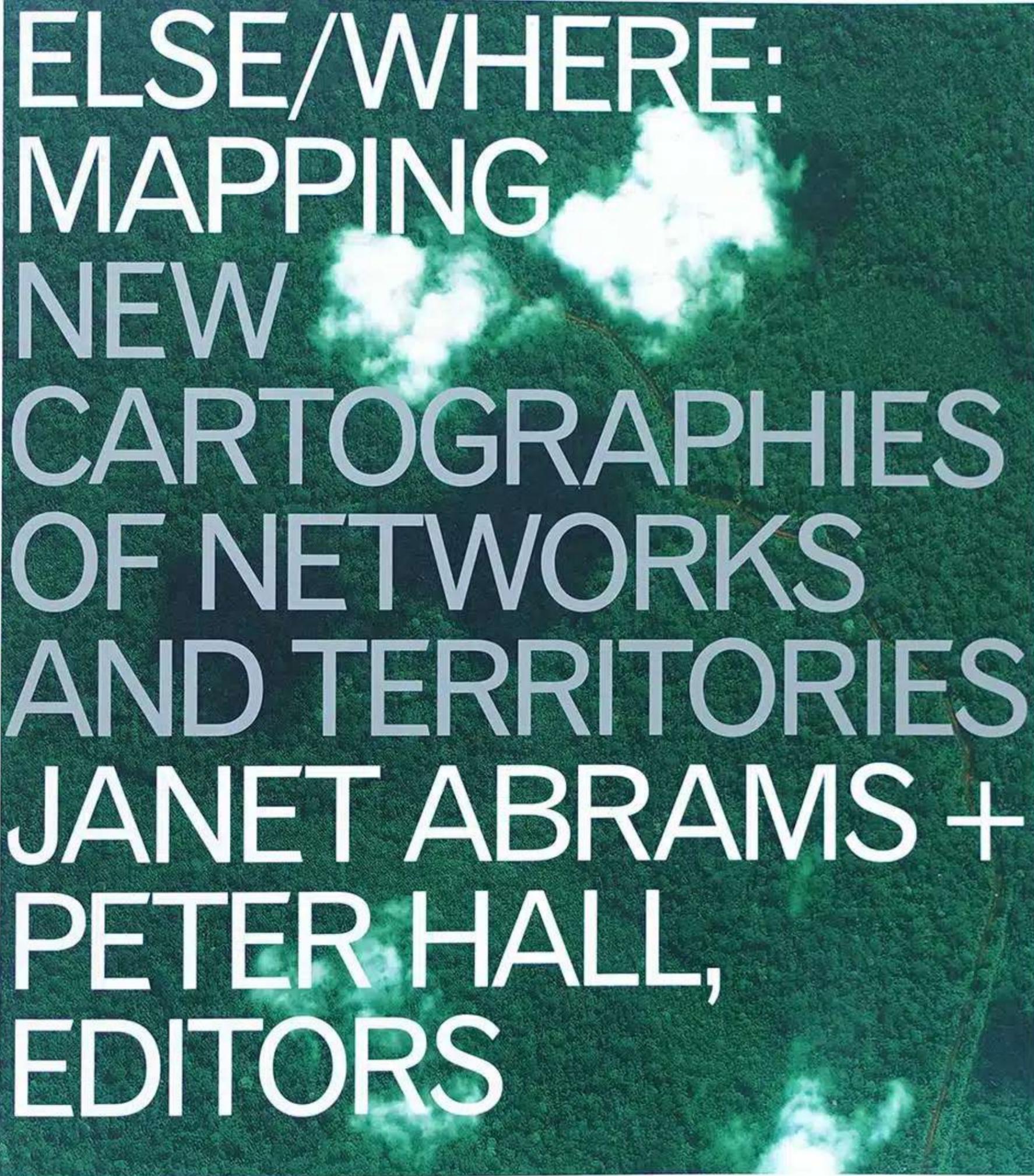
Mapping

New Cartographies of
Networks and Territories

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ELSE/WHERE:
MAPPING
NEW
CARTOGRAPHIES
OF NETWORKS
AND TERRITORIES
JANET ABRAMS +
PETER HALL,
EDITORS

Mapping Networks

Mapping Conversations

Mapping Territories

Mapping Mapping

trails remained pale gray traces, with physical features such as bodies of water made obvious only by black space lined with dense concentrations of foot traffic over the occasional bridge. Every aspect of each image was generated by recent and current activity within the city. The names of participants marked their current locations as they continued to form the map while pursuing their normal daily activities.

The hierarchy presented on this map corresponds automatically with life in the city as its residents simultaneously create and experience it. One participant, training for the marathon, continuously looped the same path, reinforcing his accumulated miles by thickening the lines that define his route as a place on the map. Others wandered more freely about lesser known streets and alleyways, their movements collected as more delicate lines. The form of the map is reclaimed by the same basic paradoxes and gestures that define the city. One notable absence from these images is the contribution of public officials themselves. Both police officers and tram drivers were asked by their employers not to participate.

The project ran in conjunction with an exhibition mounted by the Amsterdam Municipal Archives of a history of maps of Amsterdam, *Kaarten van Amsterdam: 1866–2000*. Maps presented as records of the city as it once was were displayed side by side with maps that served as proposals, alternative diagrams of what Amsterdam might have become. As a collection, they revealed a history of increasing discrete lines and integrated detail. The Amsterdam RealTime images are a sparse inversion of this, more akin to medical X-rays than anatomical illustrations. The pictures generated by Amsterdam RealTime are fuzzy because that is the nature of summaries that encompass many experiences simultaneously. Such blurriness is a counter-intuitive expression of a new potential for vitality in mapping, a new level of honesty about its own limits and capabilities.

According to Polak, the goal of Amsterdam RealTime was to offer participants and spectators a new awareness of their own presence within a city with which they are already so familiar. She commented that after seeing the project, or even just hearing about it, people would become compelled to discuss their daily routines. A participant named Chris became so conscious of the relationship between his movements and the form of the city map that he chose to alter his course in order to inscribe the shape of a pigeon. One could imagine that this duff³ took Chris off his usual path, perhaps to sections of Amsterdam he had never been through before. By

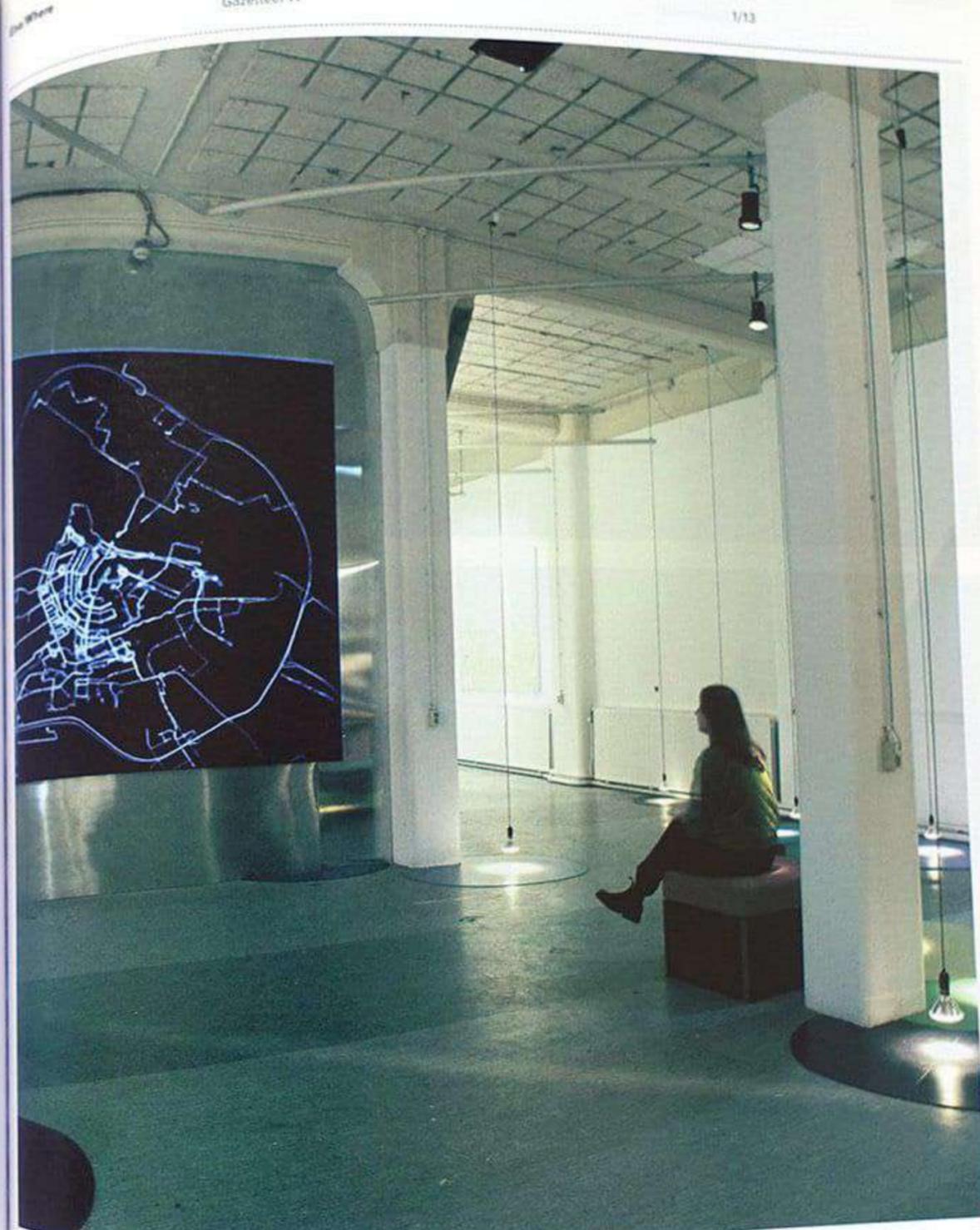
3. "dove" in Dutch.

permitting us to play with the hitherto one-way relationship between map and wayfinding to which our culture is accustomed, the Amsterdam RealTime project encourages us imagine a very different use of maps — to reclaim spatial meaning.

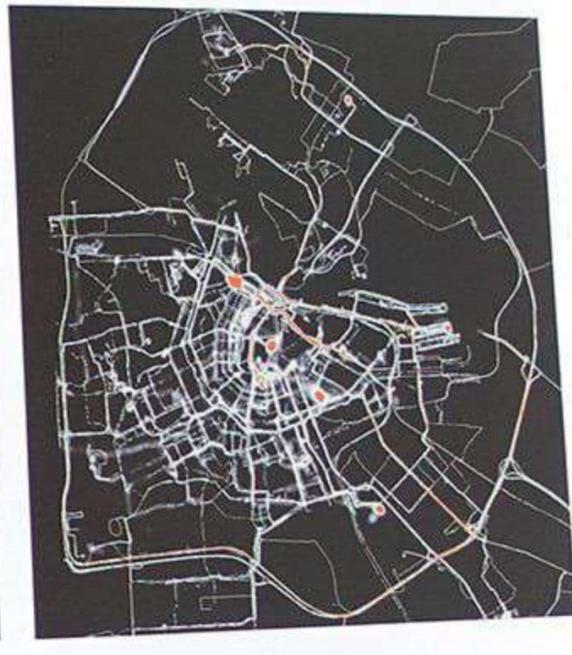
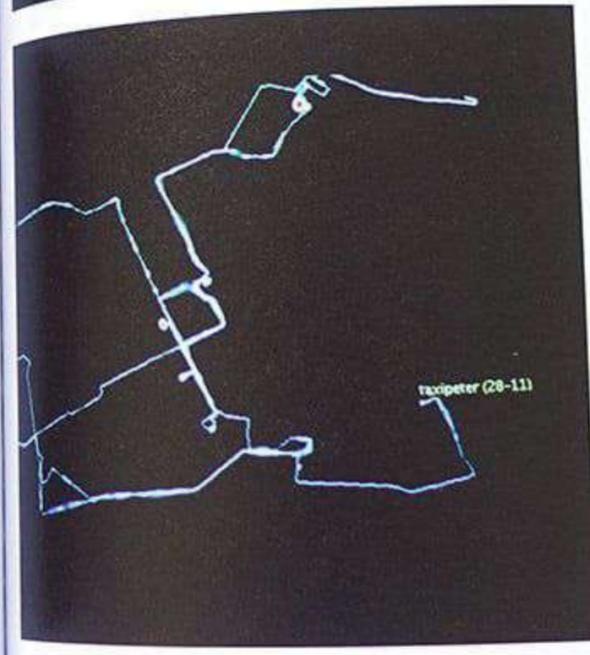
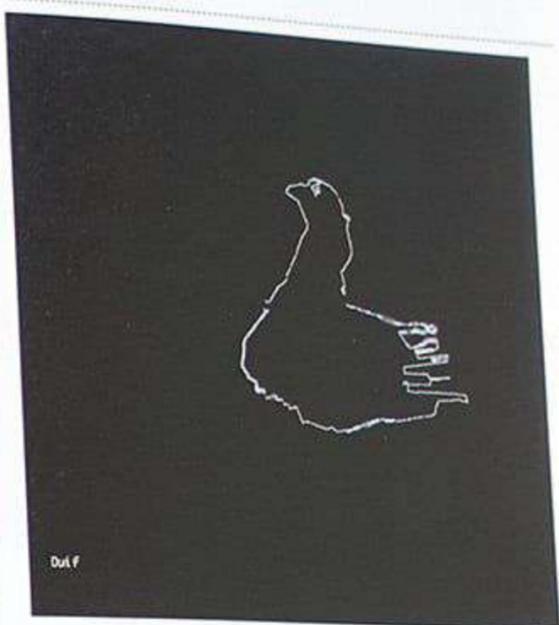
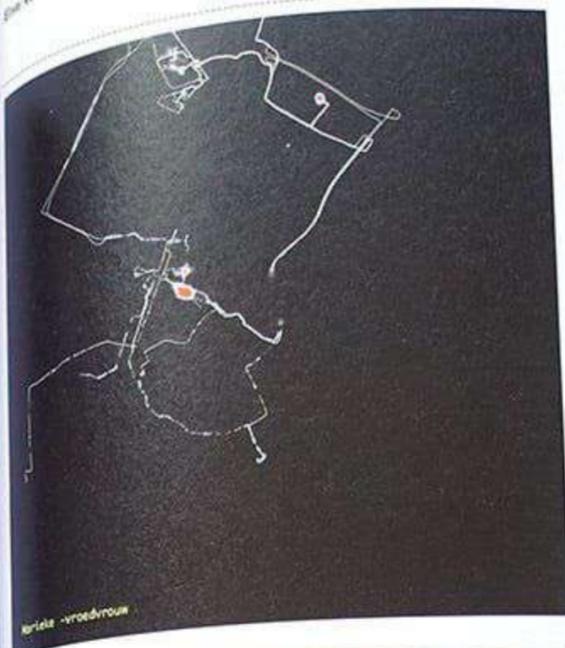
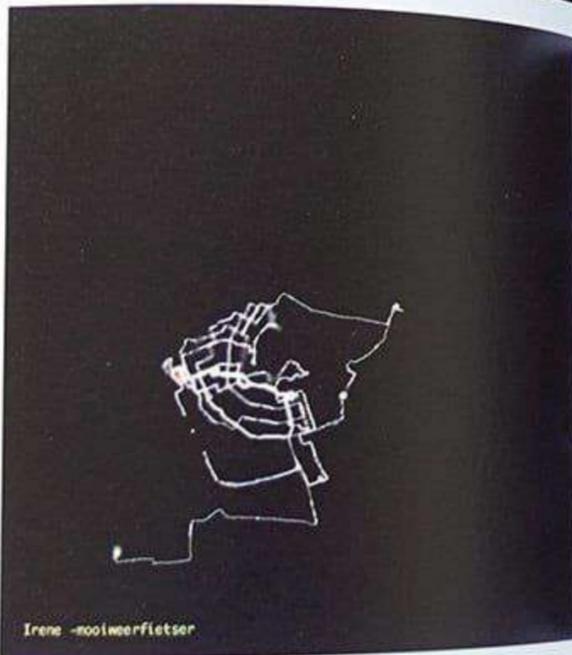
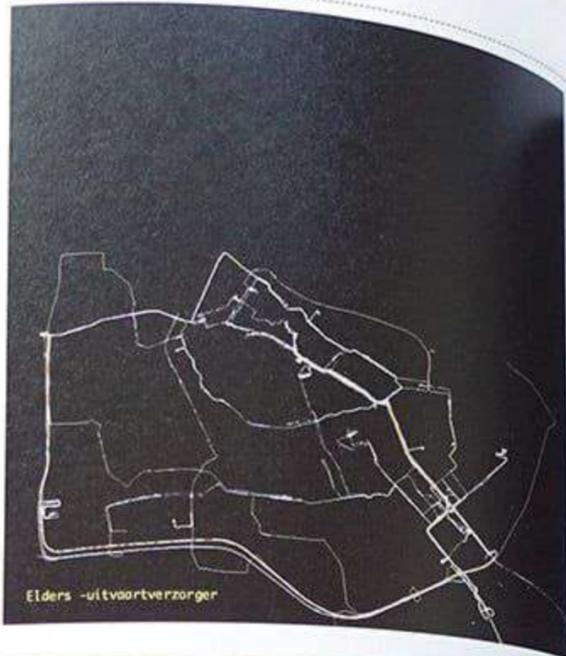
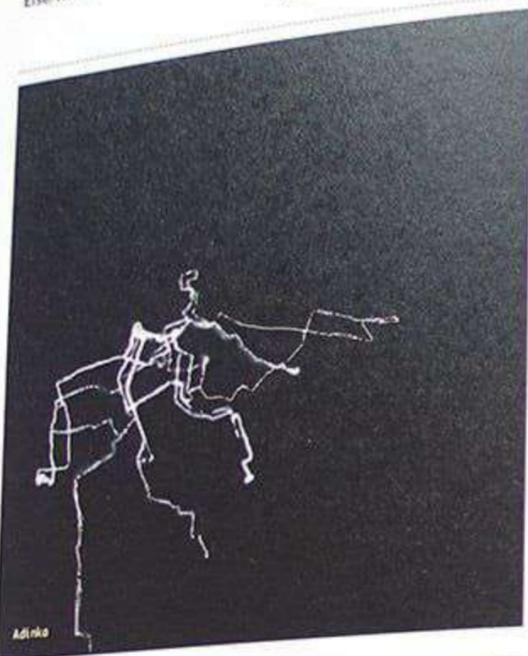
In Amsterdam, before visiting the Waag, I attended a party called De Trut, which doesn't publicize its address — I had to ask around to find out where to go. The party, held in a squat on an anonymous street at a distance from the city center, caters to a strictly gay and lesbian crowd. The bartenders are volunteers and rumor has it that the profits from the bar and cover are donated for AIDS research. Partygoers are advised to arrive well before 11 pm because once the door opens, allowing the crowd to funnel through, it immediately closes. Passersby would not necessarily realize what is happening inside: hundreds of kids dancing to experimental music. This event can be defined purely by its status as "off-the-map" and yet I noticed a trace of it on a few of the Amsterdam RealTime accumulations. I was delighted to observe that an act of "leaving the map" can become a means of defining a new one.

When asked whether this new kind of map could be useful in city planning contexts, Polak commented that reliance on volunteers might be a stumbling block. Participation requires a willingness to be tracked through space but also necessitates having one's own relationship to the city broadcast to the map-viewing public at large: living and mapping become dynamically linked. Embedded in the *Panorama of the City of New York* are Robert Moses' presumptions about what kind of knowledge is meaningful for urban planning and policy, presented behind a façade of precision and expertise that enabled him to concentrate so much civic authority. Amsterdam RealTime, by contrast, demonstrates that it is possible for a map itself to take on dynamic qualities such as diversity, multiplicity and an attitude of participation that also define a city. The re-positioning of maps as spaces for public interaction could lead to an improved flow of information from citizens to decision-makers, and a strengthening of the form of our built environment. But this would require a vital shift in our attitude toward space and the creation of meaning. To take up Latour's idea of human-made truth: what would it mean to say that a map is even more human-made because it incorporates the participation of many people? Might it even increase its claim to accuracy?

See "Counter Cartographies," p. 25.



Esther Polak/Waag Society *Amsterdam RealTime*, 2002 / cumulative map of volunteers' itineraries, relayed to a screen installed at the Amsterdam Municipal Archives, during the exhibition *Maps of Amsterdam, 1866–2000*, in late 2002 / image © Esther Polak/Waag Society / see "Perils of Precision," pp. 184–186.



Esther Polak/Waag Society *Amsterdam RealTime*, 2002 / scenes from a collaboratively-produced map of Amsterdam. Each participant's name appeared next to their location as they went about their daily itineraries, wearing a GPS tracking device, and contributed their "personal" map of Amsterdam to the overall map (opposite page, lower right); the map after 40 days' accumulations, November 2, 2002. Brighter lines indicate more frequently traveled routes; the most frequently destinations such as Centraal Station became progressively yellow, then red / all images this spread © Esther Polak/Waag Society / see "Counter Cartographies," p. 25, "Perils of Precision," pp. 184-186, "Mapping the Homiculus," p. 201.

