

Counter.Cartographies – Notes towards a future Atlas

C. CRED

It is on the basis of the ‘struggles’ of each age, and the style of these struggles, that we can understand the succession of diagrams or the way in which they become linked up again above and beyond the discontinuities. For each diagram testifies to the twisting line of the outside [...], without beginning or end, an oceanic line that passes through all points of resistance, pitches diagram against one another, and operates as always the more recent. [...] From this we can get the triple definition of writing: to write is to struggle and resist, to write is to become, to write is to draw a map: ‘I am a cartographer’.

Gilles Deleuze¹

WALKS: The Counter.Cartographies project is the overall title of a series of walks initiated by London-based artist collective C.CRED [Collective CREative Dissent] and NYC based artist-run space the 16Beavergroup. Using the simple medium of collective walking, we wanted to explore and intervene into the historical, cultural and socio-political contexts of artistic practice and challenge what we felt were a set of often normative and authoritarian structures put in place by the various cultural and academic industries that seemed to us to govern the parameters of artistic production (art biennales and festivals, art academies, galleries, etc.). These walks, however, did not simply function as a form of critical engagement with these different institutions and contexts, they also worked as nomadic structures where a dialogue could take place around the critical strategies we have at our disposal, and where alternative strategies could be developed collaboratively. Walking thus became a simultaneous attempt at dismantling the narratives and economies that are invested in the spaces and sites we visited and an affirmation of future potentials, alternative economies and forms of collaboration and collective cultural production.

IMPERMANENT COMMUNITIES: In each of the six cities we’ve walked in so far – Tallinn, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Chicago, Zagreb and Berlin – we thus created a transient and impermanent micro-community of walkers; local artists, activists, other interested collaborators, and invited guests we from other localities, walkers from previous cities we’ve walked in, etc.

ARCHIVES: The documentation of each walk comprises photographs of the sites visited along with texts articulating some of the points and issues raised. These photographs and texts are made available as an archive printed on transparencies. Using overhead projectors the walks can then be performed by participants and

contributors, revisiting the sites and discussions by physically editing or remixing the archive live. People can combine photographs and texts, cut sentences or words out, write on top of the transparencies, include or exclude any material, or even destroy the entire archive. This structure is thus 'open' rather than authoritarian, its taxonomy constantly negotiated and performed rather than being fixed, static and authoritarian.

CARTOGRAPHIES: In many ways, our ambition with this project, was to generate a cartography operating through germinal counter points; a cartography, that is, in the sense that Gilles Deleuze reads it into some of Michel Foucault's work, as an unstable linkage of localized struggles and diagrams, a kind of linkage that generates something new, that simultaneously dismantles existing assemblages, space-times, physics, and generates mutations, hybrid formations, that always operate through a kind of shared excess, through a peculiar sense of resistance or struggle, and through an experimental kind of empiricism.

This text will present five proposed models for a counter-cartographical practice – five proposed models for ways of dealing critically with space in the above sense – followed by photographs from a performance of the archive in its current state including printed versions of the texts drawn upon and used for the performance.

Model 1: Walking

To put one foot in front of the other; what does walking mean? Pedestrian; (adj) – dull, ordinary, prosaic (prosaic as opposed to poetic?) (n) – one who walks by foot.

Walking as a dismantling of the given or habitual: What sort of city can we do in three hours?

We walk.

And we stop.

What is there to see?

Heads turning around – 180, 360 – micro-question motion. What is in the concrete, grass, trees; open fields, tower blocks, dark waters, secret passages, subterranean tunnels? What does this site make us think, feel, experience? What memories, affective economies and regimes come into play? What does this site allow us to think, and what does it exclude from thought? What are the counter-positions of thought opened up to by this space we're traversing?

Walking is a kind of irregularity that shoots through the cityscape, generating rifts in habitual patterns of experience, producing future cities from the ruins of the already known and certain.

Walking as choreography: It's a peculiar kind of dance, with R. D. Laing:

The dance begins. Worms underneath fingertips, lips beginning to pulse, heartache and throatache. All slightly out of step and out of key, each its own tempo and rhythm. Slowly, connexions. Lip to lip, heart to heart, finding self in other, dreadfully tentatively, burningly... notes finding themselves in chords, chords in sequence, cacophony turning to polyphonous contrapuntal chorus, a diapason of celebration.

City lights at night, from the air, receding, like these words, atoms each containing its own world and every other world. Each a fuse to set you off...

If I could turn you on, if I could drive you out of your wretched mind, if I could tell you I would let you know.²

Imagine barren land. Barren universes. Only lines, shapes, form; territory and terrain. How do we populate such space? Maybe try and do away with the I – possessions and pronouns, the subject. And even the we, walk away from the we, write away from the we, write away the we, rip the we from the beginning. Just barren land. Capacities, forces – power – we're tangled and untangled, knotted and unknotted, mounted and dismounted. We're shot through with dissonances. We're unformed words. We're pure capacity. Walking as meditation: and we don't stop. Ellipsis. An infinity with meat on both sides.

Perpetual motion – meditative, without subject, without pronoun. If I could turn this walking-body-machinery on, if I could twist this landscape out of its harmonious pretensions, if I could dismantle the sense of the said of the land, there would be no I of the would.

Model 2: Improvisation

Improvised walking, walking an improvisation, walking as improvisation; from Fr. *improvisation*, from *improviser* 'compose or say extemporaneously', from It. *improvvisare*, from *improviso* 'unforeseen, unprepared', from L. *improvisus*, from *in-* 'not'+*provisus* 'foreseen'.

Show me the way to or through a minor city; a trajectory across the city through its sub-sites, alt.sites, non-sites; its irregularities and the irregularities of our movement; through its failures, mistakes, our failures and mistakes in traversing its city-body. Through uncertainties, unstable nexi, virtual knots of historical trajectories intersecting and shooting off in different directions. Cities are tremendous, wonderful; abundances of matter, textures, durations. Let's counter-pose a minor structure to a major one; a new kind of virtuosity against the craftsmanship of patriarchs.

What is the game of the day? With Deleuze: 'If harmonics lose all privilege of rank (or relations, all privilege of order), not only are dissonances excused from being 'resolved',

divergences can be affirmed, in series that escape the diatonic scale where all tonality dissolves'.³

An affirmation of a playful digression, a secret and subterranean dissonance that picks up speed, screeches, a movement that brings peripheries towards a centre, a kind of diagonal that shatters syntax.

Model 3: Dialogue

Traversing, traversal, transversal; to speak across - Dialogue; c.1225, 'literary work consisting of a conversation between two or more people', from O.Fr. *dialoge*, from L. *dialogus*, from Gk. *dialogos*, related to *dialogesthai* 'converse', from *dia-* 'across'+*legein* 'speak'.

A speech across. Across what? Across an existing terrain? A future black market economy of voice, speech and conversation. Dialogue being the main concern of a future cartography – the *dia* being a transgression, a shattering of normative durations and times, the vectors of the given. The *dia* – as in the diagonal – always incorporating a sci-fi dimension, a sense of futurity.

A dialogical cartography. A cartography within, against and across an existing terrain, against a monolithic terrain that so often seems to militate against collectivity, in speech, action, praxis; dialogical cartography as critical permutation of actual conditions and relations.

Model 4: The Question

Cartography as seeking inquiry, as question; c.1300, from Anglo-Fr. *questiun*, O.Fr. *question* 'legal inquest', from L. *questionem* (nom. *questio*) 'a seeking, inquiry', from root of *querere* (pp. *quæsitus*) 'ask, seek.' The verb is first recorded 1470, from O.Fr. *questionner* (13c.).

And cartography as quest; c.1303, 'a search for something' (esp. of judicial inquiries or hounds seeking game), from O.Fr. *queste* (Fr. *quête*), prop. 'the act of seeking', from M.L. *questa* 'search, inquiry', alteration of L. *quæsitus*, pp. of *querere* 'seek, gain, ask.'

To ask a question (as a foreigner, a guest, dependent on the kindness of relative strangers), to keep asking questions to the point where the formulation of a question becomes the question, and a question also of a collective concern. The question, eventually, bringing us together.

We walk. And we stop.

A kind of peripatetics against the academy (the drunken crew, the stray dogs of a minor philosophy); a movement against stasis; a process against teleology and finality; a

question against the answer, against possession of the answer, of the origin of meaning, against propriety.

What questions can we ask, collectively, of each other, of this space, whilst being in and moving through, moving across, traversing this space?

Model 5: Conviviality

Convivium, convivial, conviviality; *from convivial*; 1668, from L.L. *convivialis*, from L. *convivium* ‘a feast’, from *convivere* ‘to carouse together’, from *com-* ‘together’+*vivere* ‘to live.’

Bodies together in space. With Spinoza:

When a number of bodies of the same or different magnitude form close contact with one another through the pressure of other bodies upon them, or if they are moving at the same or different rates of speed so as to preserve an unvarying relation of movement among themselves, these bodies are said to be united with one another and all together to form one body or individual thing, which is distinguished from other things through this union of bodies.⁴

Walking. Full Stop.

These sites are themselves complex networks, fabrics, microphysical textures. Can we define the task of the cartographer in micro-physical terms, as involving the exploration of the complex conditions of the actual – of actual body complexes, extensions and spaces, actual durations and temporalities – but also the exploration of, and experimentation with, the infinity of variations, modifications and mutations that can be engendered by linking, combining, intruding, transgressing, traversing such spaces and times?

With Spinoza: we do not yet know what a body can do.⁵ Or to attempt a paraphrase: we do not yet know our collective capacity.

Can we define the task of the cartographer as being the ripping open of different kinds of space-time, different assemblages of bodies, non-institutional forms of conviviality, collaboration, collectivity; as involving an experimentation on all kinds of levels and with all kinds of bodies; various physical bodies – tables, chairs, bars, humans and animals bodies – but also chemical bodies – drugs, alcohol, cigarettes?

The cartographer, dealing in new forms of critical conviviality; the cartographer, dealing in the physics, toxicology and chemistry of space; the cartographer, dealing with the political task of fighting the stupefying boredom of the normative physics of everyday life.

Walking. Full stop.

Cities 1: Tallinn, 2004



I

In a cab through the increasingly gentrified area behind the railway station – Kalamaja; wooden houses, shifts in the urban terrain – moving toward the bay; the tapestry of dereliction – development; *somewhere between money and erection.*

Arriving in Kopli – an anomaly in the urban landscape that is Tallinn, we are told – walking around the semi-derelict, squatted wooden houses, toward the beach; sites of a possible counter-politics, *somewhere between thought and dereliction* their meaning situated not in tourist information centre syntax but in fragments of sense always at the peripheries.

II

How. To. Enter. Into. Concrete. Molecules. Walking around Lasnamäe and since the singing revolution these Soviet housing estates have become divided along lines of class and ethnicity; working class and middle class estates, Russian and Estonian complexes, there is talk of attributes (property, propriety).

A molecular cabaret: pictures of illegal bars in flats: regular irregularities; or, how to enter into concrete molecules?

Cities 2: Rotterdam, 2004



I

City Centre and the gloomy dread and boredom of steel and glass, multi-national corporations – Cities of Possibility.

Is there a politics that is lodged not in the capitalist culture of possibility but in a different set of capacities? A city physics different from that which capitalism tends to generate? A mutation, perhaps, a twisted and twisting line. Walking a future potential – perhaps this is the site of a politics-as-cartography that no longer plays the role of a specter, haunting the ruins of a geography that since long has ended, a politics-as-cartography as a politics of the yet-to-come.

II

Freezing cold waterfront, the river: a wide gap in the urban texture, we can see the city centre tower up on the other side, building sites and redevelopments just behind us:

- *Regeneration!*
- *Regenerate what?*
- *Whom?*
- *What's that again?*
- *And for whom?*

- *What is the situation?*
- *This situation?*
- *What situation?*

Absurd circularities embedded in glass and steel.

- *At what precise point does re-generation become re-housing?*

Machines, cranes, in vast numbers – animal-like bodies extending towards the horizon.

Cities 3: Amsterdam, 2004



In an Amsterdam squat, sipping beer, recuperation being the recurring theme of the conversation: anti-squats, the institutionalization of radical political projects; dissention allowed, controlled and measured.

Where does this leave us, sip of beer, what does this leave us with? (The risk of getting lost in policy.) The significance of a sense of criticality, the significance of getting lost without losing?

This is Spinoza's city. Spinoza; a cartographer without saying it, a cartographer without knowing it. Thinking cartography through Spinoza and it becomes a question of relations and commonalities, binding and unbinding, different forms of congealing, coagulations and bleeds; relations between speeds and shifts in speed; mutations, unknown capacities, germinal sites; like a physics of the city.

Where does this leave us? What does this leave us with?

An image of something going on at the peripheries of things, a bunch of bodies spinning off in perpetual movement, a community of the broken, a community of the exhausted.

Cities 4: Chicago, 2005



I

Fighting was common among Irish gangs of [the 1890s], who thought nothing of throwing stones and shooting. Groups like the 'Bearfoots', the 'Hamburgs', and the 'Old Rose Athletic Club', organized by a distillery of that name, were formed in this period, and out of them have come many vigorous politicians and some world-famed athletes.

It is said that the names 'Dukies' and 'Shielders' are a heritage from these older gangs. The traditional hostilities between the territories have kept up, however, in spite of the radical changes that have taken place. The Irish and the Swedes in the northern section [east of Halsted] have given way before the Italians who are now the dominant nationality.⁶

A copy of Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, thrown on the grass just outside a new luxury housing development off Lake Shore Drive, next to a sign telling us not to enter the private lawns of the housing complex, and this city seems constantly to seek to localize, define, distinguish, separate, segregate what is 'outside' its 'inside';

what is outside its sense of proper, its propriety, its sense, in fact, of sense. Stars and stripes protecting the sanctity of this border, this grass.

- *Keep off the grass!*
- *What grass?*
- *My grass, our grass.*
- *This grass?*

- *Keep out!*
- *Out of what?*
- *Out of my, mine, me. Keep out of me.*

A couple of days later a car follows us down the street, they shout at us – *faggots!* – and as the stickers in the windows of our next door neighbour says: *Freedom is not Free*, a point well made and illustrated, though if you go far enough west you will always find an east – perhaps we do need a weatherman to tell what way the wind blows.

II

Later in the Hancock Centre: walking around the martini bar which takes up the entire 100th something floor of the building with panoramic view of most parts of the city; blue, red, yellow, orange veins fading out into the distance; colours bleeding into one another. At a table near the windows over-looking Lake Michigan and the developments along the shore we find ourselves back where we started, finding Descartes, insides and outsides, relations and maps:

- Faggots, you do not belong here! Keep off the grass! Keep out of me!

We're not given space. We take place. Counter-positions of cartography.

Cities 5: Zagreb, 2005



I

Walking around the Mamutica in Novi Zagreb, Tito's famous housing project south of the Sava; an entire town in its own right; shattered dreams of *A New Zagreb*; stories of functioning local communities, third-way communism; a degree of nostalgia?

- *Perhaps.*

But this also seems to be about economical dependency – macro and micro scale property investment, what people see as the inevitable entry into the EU.

- *This is a country stuck between two paradigms; that of a dying communism and that of a fierce nationalism.*

- *Where to go from here?*

A set of questions articulated in the concrete and steel of the Mamutica.

II

Later, wading through the rubble of a derelict vegetable oil factory from the communist period, remnants of its active years are scattered everywhere – beer bottles, calendars with pin-up models, documents and books and files of various sorts, and graffiti – elaborate wall drawings, tags, slogans:

*If it's drama,
we gonna start it,
if it's problem,
we gonna solve it!*

Is it abstract, commercial or hardcore?

The very space and the economy that it incorporates (an economy of dereliction, investment and redevelopment) begs the question of a politics of alternatives:

If it's drama we should start it let's start it – If it's problem we should solve it let's solve it.

Abstractly, commercially.

Counter-positions. *Nom de guerre*. It's hardcore.

Cities 6: Berlin, 2006



I

*Limits are what we're inside of.*⁷

A ringbahn picnic.

Borders are explications of the limits we're inside of. Border cities: this is the issue recurring again and again; cities with borders, cities that are borders. Borders and limit-beings.

Concrete walls barbed wire buffer zones watch towers check points. What kind of history is inscribed in the red line tracing this border-cum-no-border through the centre of the city? The train keeps traversing this trace, what is left, and it seems that though there is no concrete no barbed wire no land mines there is an abundance of meanings unfolding in the invisible cracks in the tarmac; constitution constituted by an increasingly invisible border no longer articulating division, its material absence now articulates totalization.

II

Much later, a winter picnic with an open fire at Teufelsberg in the northern parts of the Grönwald forest at the outskirts of the city: an 80m tall hill, with an abandoned sci-fi structure at its peak; radomes as white as the snow erect in the distance, remnants of an abundance of pasts intersecting and traversing the city; the devil's mountain, a point of historical complexity, a nexus.

Teufelsberg: 1937 – Albert Speer builds the Nazi military-technical college at the site. 1950s – the college is buried under 12.000.000 cubic meters of rubble from a war torn Berlin, brought to the site and piled up forming the actual physical hill. During the Cold War the US built one of their largest listening posts – part of the global ECHELON network of spy centres – on top of the hill. 1989 – with the unification of Germany, the US closed its listening post and removed all its equipment. Early 1990s – the site is sold to private investors, building hotels and holiday resorts in the surrounding area, but keeping the structure of the listening post with the intention of

turning it into a spy museum. Late 1990s – due to financial difficulties the redevelopment plans are abandoned and the site is left derelict.⁸

The fire dies out. Photocopied texts by Walter Benjamin are the only things left to burn. Burning books in Berlin, burning Benjamin in Berlin.

Teufelsberg: Burning history, burning as history.

Notes

All etymological citations are taken ‘Online Etymology Dictionary’, compiled by Douglas Harper, <http://www.etymonline.com>,

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Séan Hand (London and New York: Continuum, 1999), p.44.

² R. D. Laing, ‘Bird of Paradise’, in *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), pp.155–56.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p.137.

⁴ Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*, in *Spinoza: The Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley (London: Hackett Press, 2003), p.255.

⁵ Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*, p.280.

⁶ Frederick Trasher, writing about Bridgeport in the late 1920s. Quoted in ‘An Ethnic History of Bridgeport’ (<http://www.uic.edu/orgs/LockZero/IV.html>).

⁷ Charles Bernstein quoting Charles Olson in conversation with Jackson MacLow at lineBREAK, please visit: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/line-break/programs/maclow/> for a recording of the conversation and reading.

⁸ For further information, see: <http://www.ccc.de/teufelsberg/teufelsberg.html>.

C. CRED is a nomadic platform for the development of artistic and trans-disciplinary collaborative projects seeking to link artistic/cultural/aesthetic practice to wider socio-political contexts through various forms of intervention, critical dialogue strategies, and alternative forms of collective learning and non-institutional research structures. The collective has exhibited widely since the late 1990s and worked on projects for several international art biennales and festivals including BIG Torino 2002: BIG Social Game (Turin, 2002), ISEA (Tallinn, 2004), Version 05 (Chicago, 2005) and Urban Festival (Zagreb, 2005).