

# MAPS OF AN INHABITED TERRITORY

## About “*Atlas de récits d’un terroir habité\** - Walcourt”

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\*Atlas of stories of an inhabited territory

# Introduction

This research project, which has been ongoing for three years, is about cartographic practices and how they convey worldviews. It was developed around a study of cartography as a tool for knowing and sharing an inhabited territory. It involves concrete experience of cartographic production in a situated territory based on commissions from public institutions, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (WBI) and the Cultural Institute of Architecture (ICA), whose results were presented in a variety of “In practice” seminars.

Our research provides support for the hypothesis that the multiple graphic modalities deployed in cartography in different disciplines, as is more generally the case in constructing scientific images, underlie worldviews connected to different scientific and philosophical paradigms. In our view, the way in which we understand and use these graphic regimes, just like the way in which we conceive the inhabited territory and give it expression, have a political impact that could offer prospects for the possible constitution of something in common. This would also have direct implications for the way in which we conceive the expertise involved in design projects.

In the 1990s, the geographer Ola Söderström noted how city maps, which have been graphically frozen for decades, prioritize things that are visible and material at the expense of what is particular and immaterial (Söderström in Cattoor and Perkins, 2014). According to him, such inertia conditions design practices. This is perhaps what limits them too often to problem-solving and management of functional matters.

To understand the inhabited territory, to hear it, to traverse it, to feel it from the point of view of the landscape designer, but also from that of its adherents, of its citizens, in terms of their expertise; delicately to describe it by bringing out the fabric of relations that comprise it, making them exist, is also to take care of it, to maintain it and to make this attention available in common. The emergence of something in common could happen by way of cartographic practices, and cartographic practices are rich as an attentive activity.

Recent recognition of the role of cartography in consolidating power, its participation in the history of colonialism and its ability to manipulate readers has shaken up cartography as a discipline. “Counter-cartography” or “re-cartography”<sup>1</sup> have given themselves the mission of retaking possession of cartographic practices that have been appropriated by the experts. Historically, the advent of the printing press gives rise to the proliferation of atlases, whose dissemination functions like the propagation of a truth: that of showing the world by communicating new knowledge. This dissemination is accompanied by the claiming of an enormous power: the power to say how the world is and how it should be seen. These geographic representations gradually come to inundate the school curriculum. The atlas becomes a mode of inscribing each reader as citizen of a nation or of a continent, and we learn to think that a world cut up into states and into different forms of belonging is the natural order of things (Kollektiv Orangatango+, 2018).

1. The Anglo-Saxon literature speaks of Counter-mapping (Peluso, 1995) or Counter Cartographies (Counter Cartographies Collective et al., 2012), as well as Re-cartographies (Cattoor and Perkins, 2014).

Nonetheless, the dominant Western-centric view of modern official maps is far from having the neutrality and objectivity proclaimed by its authors. Counter-cartography maintains that maps cannot be reality: They articulate temporary states, which cannot but be unstable, since they are the product of social relations, discourses and practices. As Rekacewicz (2006) has suggested, “in the relationship between facts and interpretations, cartographers are both witnesses and actors, creating or even inventing their worlds and thus gradually arriving at this subtle mix, the map, between the world as it is and the world as they want it to be.”

Critical geography deconstructs the mechanisms in play, led by the famous texts by John Brian Harley, “Deconstructing the map” (1989) and Denis Wood, “The power of maps” (1992). The community is calling for new maps. Our analysis of contemporary counter-cartographies suggests that we still need to explore cartographic practices that combine both the sophistication of academic landscape descriptions and the commitment of critical geography and activist collectives to showing relationships, power relations, injustice and forms of collaboration among the inhabitants of the territorial space: the map would thus be a tool that is receptive to the controversy surrounding spatial issues and that could potentially launch the project in a different way.

It is in this spirit that we have carried out cartographic experiments in the framework of this research, in order to explore possible graphic regimes of a map as space of negotiation. The created maps are the graphic outcome of a field study organized around three axes: the walk with residents, the meeting with experts, and drawing.

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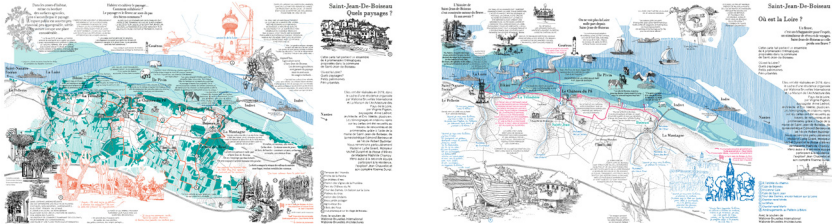
The aim of the “Architects and Illustrators” residency organized by WBA (Belgium) and the Maison de l’Architecture des Pays de la Loire (France) is to examine peri-urbanity and the role of contemporary architecture in the densification and reinvention of these territories. In this context, the proposed multidisciplinary team (Virginie Pigeon, an architect and landscape designer, Anne Ledroit, an architect, and Eric Valette, a visual artist) presents reflections, using maps, on the entity of Saint-Jean-de-Boiseau: a town on the outskirts of Nantes. The initial aim is to represent this place by giving expression to the point of view of the inhabitants: in particular, as concerns the rapid change that their rural region is undergoing due to the pressure on the real estate market on the outskirts of the metropolis.

The study brings out practices, customs and emotions that are anchored in specific territories : in short, all things that official cartography does not show and that are, nonetheless, constitutive of our relationships to space, of our landscapes. It also brings out stances, tensions, questions, and those relationships between fragilities and attachments whose mechanisms and affects the map can reveal.

The first experiment (Saint-Jean-de-Boiseau, 2020) makes apparent the relationships between the map and what we would have in common in our subsistence landscapes<sup>2</sup> : Firstly, maps allow us to see the commons – the landscape – which is revealed and interpreted in a representation that is specific to a situated terrain. Then maps take part in the constitution of something in common: the artefact co-constructs the inhabitants and brings them together. This new cultural object belongs only to them and unites them. Finally, the map can open a space for nuanced and inclusive debate about the future of the site.

2. Charbonnier P. (2019). Abondance et liberté. France: La découverte. In Latour B. (2020). Consortium Ou atterrir ? présentation de la démarche par Bruno Latour. [online video].

By regarding what we have in common as an assemblage open to controversy, the map unites the conditions for it, establishing a framework that it would seem has urgently to be made to exist: a framework that is receptive to debate as the soil for possible negotiations.



Saint Jean-de-Boiseau maps, Virginie Pigeon, Anne Ledroit, Eric Valette, 2020

The second cartographic experiment (Walcourt, 2021) builds on these findings. Its aim is to augment the heterogeneity of the networks of witnesses and disciplinary fields involved, to specify the mechanisms for exploring and raising questions, and to multiply the potential graphic regimes – the postulate being that what is multiple and hybrid encourages the sharing of perspectives, potential debate and an emergent attention to the political field.

The objectives are therefore:

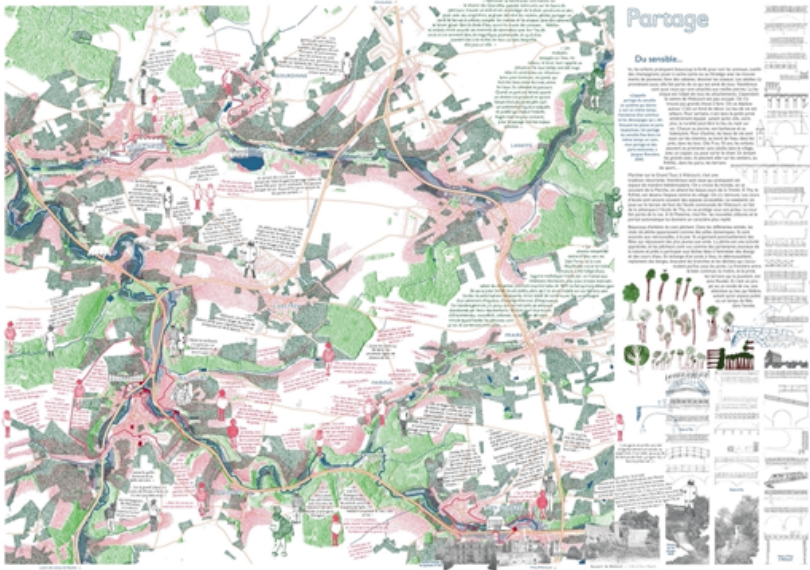
- firstly, to specify the modalities of the constitution of networks of witness-actors of the experiment (*the study*) and to find better ways of making them exist in the map. On the basis of a re-reading of Félix Guattari’s ecosophy (Prignot, 2010), our approach tries to grasp the mechanisms of the “regime of proximity” (Thévenot in Sébastien, 2016) that should make it possible to mobilise things and beings and to see their involvements materialised. The theory of the network actor (Latour, 1991), the ecology of practices advocated

by Isabelle Stengers (1997), and the concept of care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017) round out the reflections.

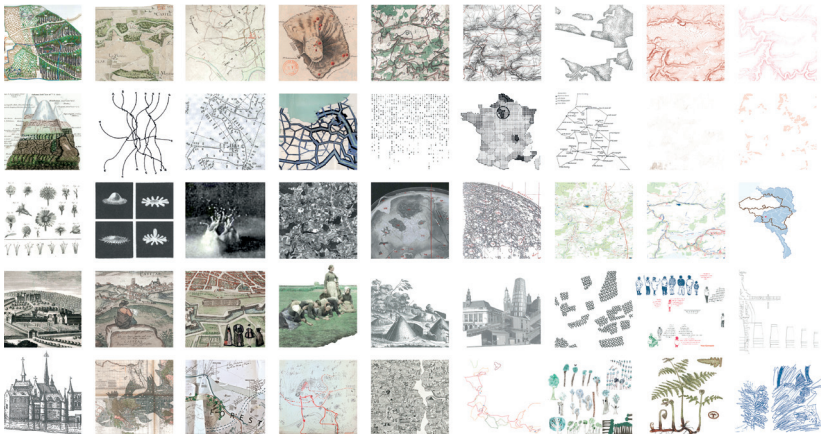
- secondly, to stabilise the topics used for gathering the stories and organising a possible series of maps (*the montage*) (Pigeon, 2021): the study is constructed on the basis of two notions, fragilities and attachments, and then brings out a series of particular sets of relationships to the territory that constitute the themes of the maps.
- Finally, graphically speaking, the initial intuition is that the hybridity of intertwining graphic regimes should allow us to avoid the smoothing that is associated with an overarching and objectifying point of view and should strengthen the capacity of the map as tool to propose a common, shared space. The hybridity of the drawing opens up possibilities of a co-construction of the map as founding practice of a community. In order to avoid smoothing and to bring out the interactions between spaces and things, the significance of the graphic choices made thus comes into play in the mapping process: choices that are constructed via *multiple backgrounds and times*, via *hybrid unfinished collections*, via *borrowed words*, and via *experiential itineraries*. This division does not in any way correspond to a chronological order of constructing the map nor to impermeable categories. It is a structure that can be reconfigured, a narrative thread like any other that emerges in the course of the cartographic experience, during which the elements have been put together and taken apart many times.

Rereading them in the light of a collection of significant images in the history of representations allows us to make them conscious, to make implicit choices explicit, and to link them to other practices. This is the main purpose of the present article.

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The cartography experiment in Walcourt is led by Virginie Pigeon as part of the “Desired spaces” project, which is financially supported by the Wallonia-Brussels Cultural Institute of Architecture in partnership with Walcourt Cultural Centre and the University of Liège. L’Atlas de récits d’un territoire habité - Walcourt (Atlas of stories on the territory of Walcourt) is published in July 2021. Walcourt is a rural township on the outskirts of Charleroi.



Multiple graphic regimes questioned during cartographic research in Walcourt.



# Mapping

## Multiple backgrounds and times

A map is, above all “a graphic representation of spatial relationships between places, objects, phenomena” (Dumasy-Rabineau et al. [eds.], 2019). In this sense, it does not entail precise modalities of drawing or of spatial or semiotic projection; the multiplicity of graphic productions in time and space makes this clear.

Artists are undoubtedly the first to have taken up the contemporary issues raised by critical geography, even before they explicitly emerged. Think of Guy Debord, Robert Smithson, Öyvind Fahlström or Mark Lombardi. Each of them calls into question the metric background imposed by modern cartography and puts forward an interpretation of it in which the persistence of a few conventions allows us to grasp that we are indeed still confronting a cartographic object. Counter-cartography aims to question the order of the world and graphic codes as political practice. It gives itself the mission of producing new imaginaries and showing the dominant structures in a critical light. It thus goes into battle to defend indigenous territories, shared spaces, endangered habitats; it gives shape to practices of resistance and takes up a cause.



The naked city, G. Debord 1957, Sketch for world map, O. Fahlström 1972, IOS to mid 1970, M. Lombardi 1994.

It is the entire cartographic process that entails a form of political engagement in Walcourt, and it is not the sole purpose of the maps to be critical or to dismantle mechanisms of domination. They aim to be, above all, a space of negotiation that reveals multiple ways of perceiving reality. The physical territorial structure of Walcourt may seem complex, and discussions with residents confirm how difficult it is, in general, to describe the organization of the territory simply or to evoke the routes that allow the different places to be connected. It thus seemed important for the maps to allow users to locate where they are and at least partly to respect the normal cartographic conventions, which are regarded as potentially hegemonic or Euro-anthropo-centric, but that offer easy readability based on established usage. Respecting dimensional scales and positioning the north at the top were thus obvious choices.

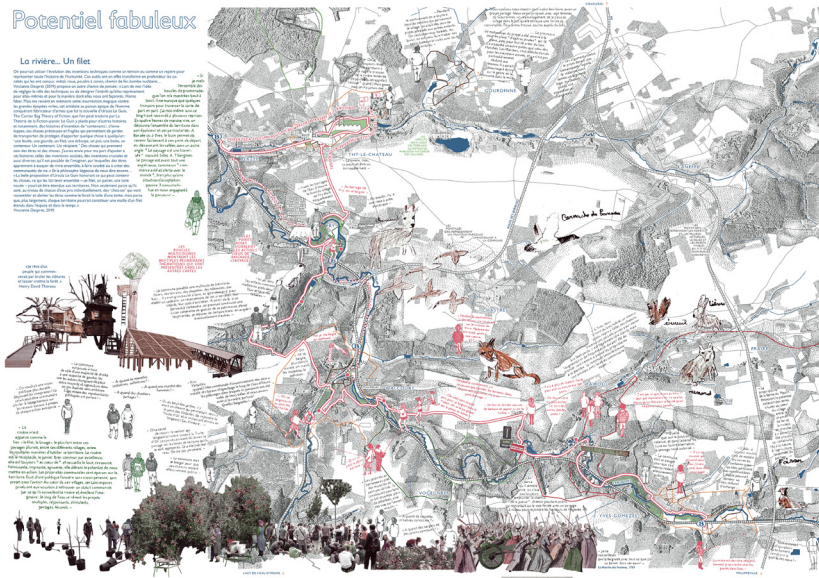
Extensive work on decomposing layers discovered in the available maps for this territory allows us to undertake a reappropriation and a reassembly that varies according to needs.

To be as close as possible to sensible experience, however, certain



Likewise, the idea was not to use a standardizing neutral background, like those of France's official IGN geographical institute, which make all Western regions appear similar and in which the road network and administrative divisions offer the main interpretive grid, thus instrumentalizing the territory. On the contrary, to avoid this homogenization, it would be tempting to produce "landscape painting" maps, giving the terrain an image of an abundance in which we would like to plunge and whose every nook and cranny we would like to explore: a spectacular image that pays tribute to the scenery it presents. But the aim is also to dissect and analyse an underlying structure and landscape systems, and this is what our specific forms of expertise allow us to do, by accepting the blank areas on the map, by helping viewers to feel certain layers that are particularly evocative vis-à-vis certain topics, by selecting what to show. IGN map of Walcourt, Wanderers in the Wilderness, E. Wallis 1844, *Traité du Lavis des plan, planche VII, L.-N. de Lespinasse 1801.*

of these layers are provided with an evocative material, a certain depth. The forests and prairies have a texture, as if the vegetation was being bent by the wind. The topography is reinforced by the areas of shadow, giving it a certain breadth. Some phenomena, such as orchards or quarries, take on an augmented scale, thus accentuating their visual presence. Other, underground and unsuspected, elements have reached the surface. Time enters subtly into the maps via the superimposition of layers taken from old maps, which once upon a time were but are no more, via the expression of phenomena of growth or of transformation or via extinctions, like the past hold of larger forest areas, of orchards, of waterways or railroad lines, bearing witness to dynamics that are unknown to most of the inhabitants (Pigeon 2021). In fact, the layers reflect different graphic regimes: sometime sensible, sometimes more mechanical, depending on their content, which bring out the multiple facets of graphic traditions in the construction of images of knowledge.



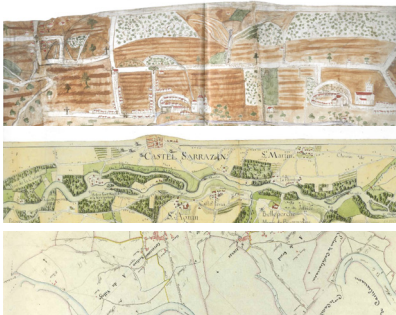


These drawings, which were often commissioned to give legal definition to issues of ownership and entitlement, offer a virtual experience of the place that is negotiated with the protagonists. They combine rudimentary perspective with projection of elevation and provide textures, atmospheres, a typicality, by using a sensible, empirical and experimental method. Taken from Dumasy-Rabineau J. et al. [eds.], 2019.

In our Western societies, graphic traditions of producing territorial maps are marked by modifications in our relationship to the world: notably with respect to the advent of modernity and its tools of measurement. In the High Middle Ages, cartography practices were the responsibility of artists, who were the possessors of a certain figurative know-how, which was the basis upon which the first cartographic styles and traditions were elaborated. In France, topographic maps were to be found on a scale related to observation in situ. Via these maps, artists depicted the state of a territory with which they were intimately familiar, “reducing the topography by drawing it” (Dumasy-Rabineau J. et al. [eds.], 2019, p. 12).

With the advent of the Enlightenment, practices of scientific representation evolve into a collaboration between the artist who “illustrates” and the enlightened savant, who tries to introduce order into the diversity and the complexity of the world and to reach the truth via the production of simplified, purified and idealized images of universal nature. It is regularity that, little by little, serves to organize the chaos of the world.

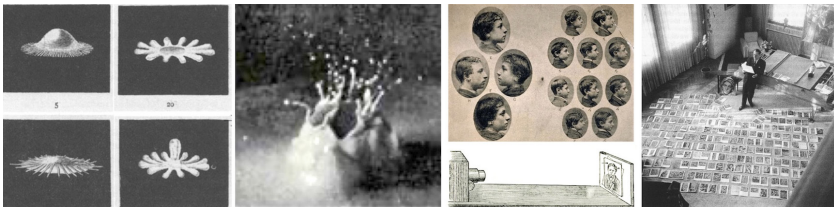
Science attempts to tame the diversity of natural forms, which has been made still greater by the exploration of new territories, by graphically formulating types: “the type of a class that is able to represent all the individual members of the class without however incarnating any of them (Daston L., Galison P., 2012, p.424). The savants meticulously selected what was to be represented, imbibing nature without being slave to its forms and accepting the subjective element of their work. “Art and science converged in judgments in which truth and beauty were closely intertwined” (Daston and Galison, 2012, p.97). In this period, there is new interest in the terrain in light of advancements in astronomy and mathematics: in the earthly pedestal as an object of scientific inquiry and how to represent it on a different scale and faithfully to reproduce it. Cartography thus gradually focuses on how to draw the dimensions and limits of the territory precisely, on a topographical survey of it by way of triangulation, as the maps of Cassini or Ferraris show thus.



Radically different spatial conceptions are in play in these three maps of la Garonne: the map by Jean Lemesque from 1525, the one by Hippolyte Matis from 1719, and the one from the Napoleonic cadastre from 1832. The first, which was commissioned in a judicial context, was submitted to twelve witnesses who were supposed to come to agreement on the accuracy of the space represented. Truth was based on consensus more than on measurement. There is no constant scale; the main areas are enlarged, but the routes are projected vertically, in order to be able to compare distances.

In the second, which was commissioned to evaluate the navigability of the river, the point of view becomes frankly zenithal: the scale is noted and distances are respected, but since the topography is squashed by the projection, the author tries to create depth by including certain perspectival elements according to the same point-of-view principle as the previous map. One century later, when Napoleon normalizes the status of individuals and their property by way of the civil code, he undertakes the creation of a land registry or cadastre in which none of the features of the landscape are emphasized anymore. “The zenithal projection related to the austerity of graphic conventions shows that it is a specialized document in which recognition of the landscape by the general public is not a priority”. (Dumas-Rabineau J. et al. (eds.), 2019, p. 216)

Cartographic productions thus go from being a basis for collective negotiations, which help to reach consensus on the description of the territory and different issues related to it, to being a tool that is monopolized by scientific experts who establish a codification that is exclusively addressed to and understood by other scientists and experts, without having a connection to the sensible qualities of the land anymore. The aim is accuracy and exact measurements. The notion of objectivity that we use today comes into being in the 19th century in response to a dual fear: fear of an excessive reduction of the variability of nature due to simplification or idealization and fear of too strong of an influence of the savant's personal considerations on the production of scientific truths. Instruments for measuring and printing become the guarantors of this objectivity, encouraging the thinker to disappear into the production of knowledge related to his or her object of research.



In *Objectivity*, Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison (2012) recount this key moment. In 1875, the British physicist Arthur Worthington was trying to develop a graphic method for representing how fluids flow: He was producing pictures of drops in free fall, decomposed step by step, and drawn in perfect symmetry. In 1894, when technological progress makes it possible to capture the same decomposition into stages of a drop falling by using photography, the ideal of symmetrical, purified, simplified drawing will collapse, with irregularity taking control of the photographic images. This leads Worthington to wonder how he could have been blinded for so long by the quest for an absent perfection. From now on, he had to try to obtain “objective” images, which are complex and individual, regarding them as a reflection of reality, as opposed to the perfect and imaginary fluids he had been describing for 20 years. (Daston L. and Galison P., 2012, p.11-16)

The new possibilities created by mathematics and instruments of mechanical measurement also allow these risks of subjectivity to be countered in cartography, giving rise to more abstract representations.

It could be thought that these abstractions potentially disconnect us from the real: that they are “bifurcations”. This is the term that contemporary pragmatic philosophers<sup>4</sup> borrow from Alfred North Whitehead to describe the modern reduction of the world to just its “primary”, objectifiable (measured, geo-localized, etc.) qualities and the tendency to forget its secondary – phenomenological, experiential, sensible – qualities.

Photography replaces drawing in the sciences at the beginning of the 20th century and highlights, thanks to the automation of the process of representation, the specific and individual and the multiple singularities of natural objects, in contrast to the ideal types of the Enlightenment. Starting from the notion of objectivity, scientific thought evolves in two different directions: towards structural objectivity, which, to go even further, aims to dispense with images altogether, since they are regarded as too subjective, and to highlight the logical relationships among natural objects by way of a structuralist theory whose goal is universality; and towards what will be called “trained judgment”, a way in which the expert selects and highlights certain information via representation, in order to make an additional contribution to acquired knowledge.

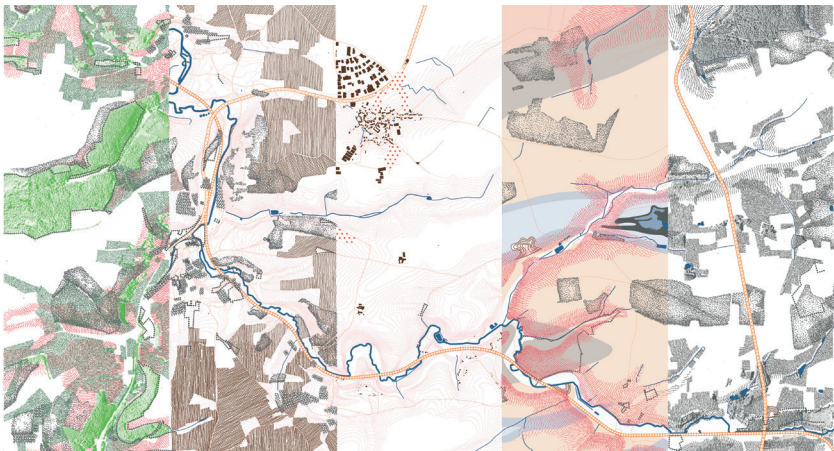
With the advent of modernity, cartography, via the infinite amount of quantitative data produced about the territory, goes from being a tool for describing the terrain to being a tool for mediating and communicating data (Plantin, 2014).

4. Among others Latour B., 2017. *Où atterrir ? Comment s’orienter en politique*. France: La Découverte; Stengers I., 2019. *Résister au désastre*. Coll. Dialogue. France: Wildproject ; Hache E., 2019. *Ce à quoi nous tenons*. Propositions pour une écologie pragmatique. France: La découverte.

The production of maps is marked by structural objectivity, giving rise to conventional systems whose aim is to facilitate information-sharing. The appearance of the remarkable Minard system, which relates quantities and flows, as well as the birth of Bertin's graphic semiology, which notably links maps and statistics, can certainly be related to this.



The use of aviation makes aerial photography possible in the 20th century. The perfect point of view is thus attained, calling into question the role of the discipline of cartography as a realistic and objective description of a territory. IGN cartography puts forward a semiology that, all at once, standardizes information and interprets and explains certain layers of information, as we saw previously, via an underlying anthropo-econo-centric and Western-centric reading. The modes of applying this trained judgment, their appropriation by experts and the underlying reasons for the choice of certain modalities of representing the earth are subjects of debate. Critical cartography takes hold of this debate. Pneumatic postal network, Paul Kertz, 1905; binary language; Flux, Charles-Joseph Minard, 1895; Graphic Semiology, Jacques Beryin, 1967; IGN, 2020.



Virginie Pigeon, taken from the *Atlas de récits d'un territoire habité - Walcourt*, 2021. Starting from operations of drawing and redrawing, of cutting and reassembling, the cartographic research experience brings out different modes of conceiving the map background: from the most conventional to the most sensory. It approximates the hybridity of a geographical language that is sometimes close to direct experience, sometimes mediation, thus uncovering layers of information as a function of the things and relationships that become apparent in the course of the investigation.



## Hybrid and unfinished collections: living and inanimate things

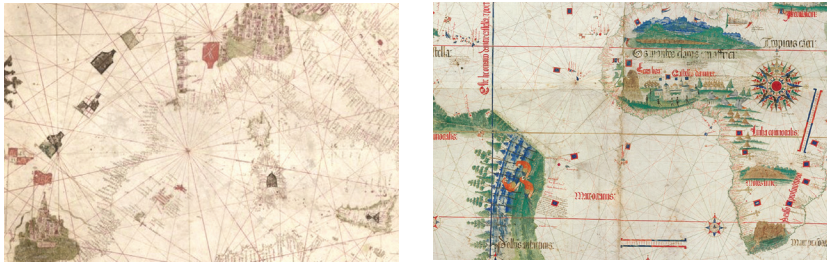
The field study is the soil for the co-construction of the map. The sessions are accompanied by graphic exercises carried out by each individual and that allow participants to move from the universe of practice to the universe of representations. So many things become apparent by way of language and drawing<sup>5</sup> : things that are loved or unloved, fragile or tenacious, things that no one feels concerned by. Such things are agents of transformation of the territory and put the witnesses into political positions: preservation, protection, colonization, exclusion, privatisation, associations, sharing, communalisation or division... They trigger the adoption of stances, of which the most extreme would be those of invaders or of the abused, but they also make apparent those whose voices are not being expressed.



Virginie Pigeon, taken from the Atlas de récits d'un territoire habité - Walcourt, 2021. The representation in the map of fragile, loved and emotionally-invested territorial things related to certain specific spaces, often with a private status in a landscape as common good, could get individuals involved on a common terrain - that of politics; with the process producing social capital as a side effect.

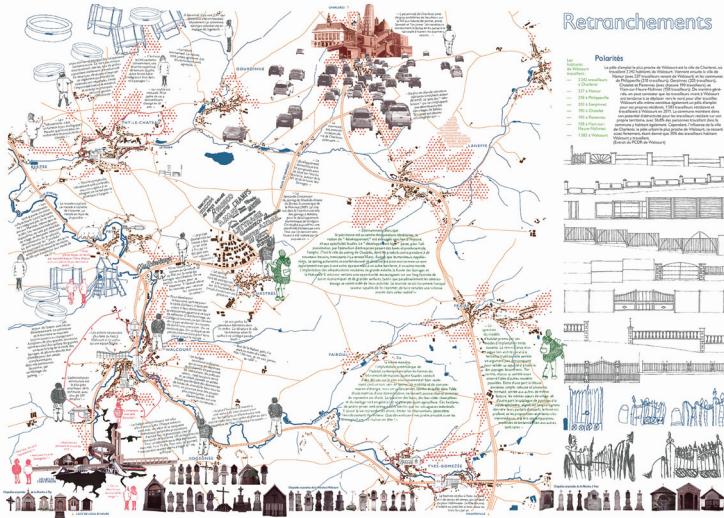
5. Bruno Latour speaks of "things" in his article "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern." (2004) *Critical Inquiry* 30, n°2: pp. 225 - 248. I use each, each being, each thing in the same sense here, the term "thing" encompassing both living beings and inanimate things, as Emilie Hache (2019, p. 22) suggests. It is no longer a matter of taking a glacier for a (simple) reservoir, a car for a (vulgar) thing, a cat for a beast, not only so as not to consider them only as means for themselves, but also for humans, because the latter are also affected by how we address non-humans.

The hypothesis is that, by revealing antagonisms, the communalizing of these attachments in the space of the map makes the actors emulate one another and gives rise to “a collective experience of co-production of the general interest” (Sébastien, 2016, p.35) : the atlas could be the space for this dialogue.



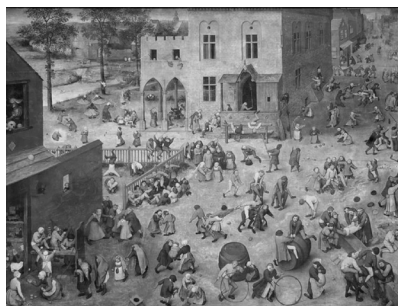
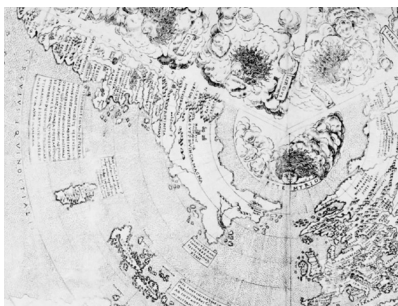
Many historical maps combine heterogeneous graphic modalities and include illustrative inserts: in Gabriel de Vallseca's nautical map of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea from 1447, the cities are represented in elevation and enlarged in relation to the space they take up on the scale. They are situated without any privileged orientation, placed on certain maritime trajectories, thus requiring the viewer constantly to turn the map to look at them. In Cantino's 1502 planisphere, the orientation of the landscape scenery is variable, thus underscoring the geographical line as the limit of what is known – and measured.

Such agents are thus included in maps by way of heterogeneous graphic modalities, which try to bear witness to the process of information gathering (drawings by multiple authors) and of co-construction of the story: animals, cars, roads, architectural heritage, plant settlements, bridges, buildings, practices and installations, both current and vanished, share the space of the maps, are in sketches, in relief, in photographic collage, in excerpts from engravings, in oblique projection or in pictograms. It is hard to fight against the reflex to graphically smooth these drawings from a variety of sources, against the desire to make a fixed portrait out of them. Maps, in any case, aim to be more like a table (Didi-Huberman, 2017) on which things are gathered according to a provisional assembly, which always remains



to be finished, is ready to be disassembled or reassembled in a different way, a sketch that is always a work-in-progress and in which dualisms are not fixed, typologies are precarious and exceptions are celebrated. Think of the figures of Donna Haraway, the philosopher of the hybrid and the impure, which circumvent dichotomies (outside/inside, pure/impure, nature/culture, etc.) and embrace their ambiguities. Haraway's thought is not constructed, according to a structured and panoptical view, on the logics of origin, foundation or classification. "Haraway is tireless and unsurpassed in flushing out the refuges of the divine perspective (also referred to as the "Star Wars perspective"): that position from which one claims to encompass everything and that could be described ... as an impregnable stronghold and as an empty chair where no one is ever in a position to sit." (Hoquet, 2010, p. 153) The Walcourt maps try to avoid ideologies, an overarching point of view, definitive representations, fixity. To show contradictions, to go to heterogeneous territories, where there is not any principle of organization anymore, but only superimposed, intertwining stories. (Pigeon, 2021)

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The witnesses are spread around the space of Walcourt maps, and they connect the reader and the terrain. Such little characters creating a link between represented object and reading subject also appear in historical maps: notably, the little angels whose breath indicates the direction of the wind in certain Renaissance maps. In Contarini's 1506 map, one of the cherubs looks the reader in the eyes, as if his or her reflection, whereas the others are facing the earth, part of the image but looking at the territory like us. (Jacob, 1992) The Walcourt maps allude to this in their own way. They are constructed in such as to avoid both the surreal and inaccessible overarching point of view and the excessively fixed perspectival framing of a window that tells us where and towards what to look. They try to suggest multiple points of view, such as those that can be sensed in classical Dutch painting: like the paintings of Brueghel the Elder for example, in which the canvas resembles "an unframed flat surface on which the world is inscribed" (Alpers in Jacob p. 152), an open space without any precise point of observation. As we see in looking at the angels in Contarini's map and from the multiple characters inscribed in the space of the Walcourt maps, we can imagine that points of view are partial and complementary and that an attentive view of the world requires assembly and a sharing of perspectives (Alloa, 2020). Everyone contributes what they know, knowledge is no longer transmitted by the expert but rather co-constructed in the map.



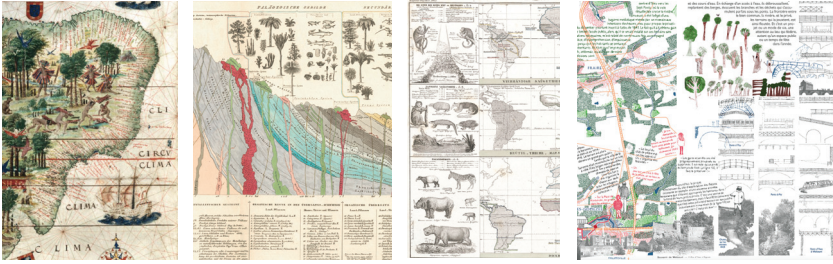
It is also in this way that the position of the author is assumed: a character that finds a place sometimes in the geographical space and sometimes on the edges of it, who comments on the space but also on the map in the process of being constructed, who embraces her involvement in this construction in the same way as the cartographers once liked to represent themselves in their engraving, along with their instruments for drawing and measurement. City of Cabeças, Joris Hoefnagel, 1565.

Landscape things are associated with their relative geographical position, but also find place around the map, like so many collections alluding to encyclopaedic knowledge that allows for an infinite number of combinations. These beginnings of

collections, which are intentionally unfinished, show certain recurring local practices in their creative diversity: a multitude of bridges, from the simplest to the most sophisticated, evoke the link between the banks and the crossing of rivers and routes; assemblages of expressive fences and gates tell about the need to be at home, to protect and distinguish oneself; the innumerable restored shrines and chapels raise the question of the strength of the relationship between walking and spirituality... Such heterogeneous ensembles let us see the singularities as a catalogue of curiosities rather than as a list governed by a universal classification or an intrinsic order.

“The image is a mnemonic matrix that allows for the deployment of a culture of curiosity, of the surprising fact, of what is unique, and, at the same time, to generate pathos and emotions.” (Jacob, 1992, p. 221)

Historically, cartographic imagery has regularly resembled the cabinets of curiosity of the classical age: presenting novelties, showing in still unknown spaces a kind of Noah’s ark to the glory of a God who gave us this abundant and strange, elusive and indomitable nature (Jacob, 1995). On the other hand, we also find on the edges, in other contexts, the foundations of the taxonomic project of classification: When naturalists were at the same time travellers, geographers and physicists, as the career trajectories of Alexander Von Humboldt or Carl Von Linné show, the map is a means of communication and of memory, in which different forms of knowledge are gathered according to a rigorous and hierarchical principle of organisation. Where Goethe swore only by the sensibility of genius, they try to bring rigor and order into the observation of living things, while combining multiple modalities of representation.



“One of the evolutionary paths of cartography will involve disciplining this iconography of the particular and the specific, in order to transform it into a code of uniform symbolization, eliminating or repressing the vertiginousness of the unique, in order to allow an organised knowledge of a certain level of generalisation to emerge.” (Jacob, 1992 p.221). This is undoubtedly how we got from disciplinisation to confiscation by experts.

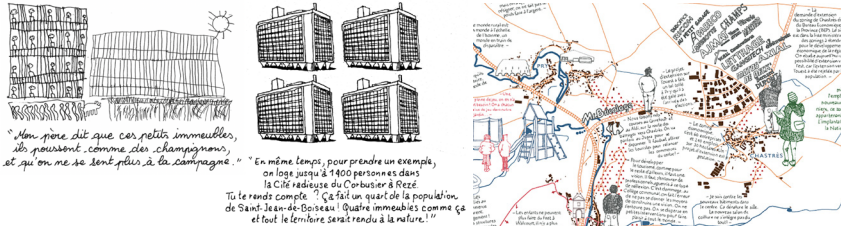
Atlas Miller, 1519 by Lopo Homem, Pedro Reinel, Jorge Reinel and Antonio de Holanda, (bnf.fr); Comparative Chart of World Mountains and Rivers, 1823, and Diagram of a cross-section of the earth’s crust, 1841, taken from *Physikalischer Atlas* by Heinrich Berghaus; and Virginie Pigeon, taken from the *Atlas de récits d’un territoire habité - Walcourt*, 2021.

## Borrowed words

“The process of mimesis ends where writing begins, and toponymy is just a step towards other forms of commentary or enunciative intrusions. The cartographer creates a world: not the natural world, but a cultural world, which is occupied by one language among other possible languages that bears witness to an organized space, punctuated with significant and constructed places ...” (Jacob, 1995, p.269)

The field studies have revealed so many unsuspected things, and the words used to bring them out were, for the most part, simple, strong, powerful. The question of having recourse to language in a map thus arose. Was the drawing on its own enough, by way of mimesis and description, to make written language superfluous? The text occupies the void. The graphic work consists in manipulating the placement and shape of the blocks to reinforce their structuring effect. They follow the course of the valleys, become denser around built-up hubs, underscore and reinforce the elevations and the infrastructures. The writings placed on the map give greater vibrancy to certain forms and certain connections.

## MAPS OF INHABITED TERRITORY



We again opted for hybridity, allowing for the combination of different modalities of representation and the inclusion of text as a complementary means of sharing. By way of careful winnowing amidst the transcribed mass of collected testimony, key phrases were selected and grouped into discussions around topics, related to things in question in the cartographic space. A text like an archipelago reconstructs a debate, it breaks up the unitary page but makes the map autonomous, the comments being included in the product, their origin being embraced and explained. Writing tries to amplify drawing, in order to obtain another level of interpretation and meaning for it. The use of colour codes intentionally did not aim to identify each group of differentiated actors nor to categorize them. The idea was not to reinforce dualisms or polarities. Only the children's comments were distinguished by the attribution of a colour (pink), calling attention to their insight, whereas the comments as author, who is both immersed and involved in the process and the context, but is able to step back from them a bit, also have a specific colour (green), which is associated with a drawn character whose interventions most often consist of making connections between the different points of view, of bringing out assemblages and interdependencies in the form of an open question.

Words themselves and their usage are also an opportunity to rethink the world around us. Using a given vocabulary is never an innocent matter. To make certain terms – such as collaboration, partnership, non-human, interdependencies or social inventions – exist in space also serves as a lever for rethinking how we conceive our actions.

### Experiential itineraries

A substantial amount of time is devoted during our research to making the connection between sensible experience and political engagement, based on the hypothesis, which is notably supported by Catherine Grout's (2012) approach, that the physical experience of the landscape involves us in a common mode. (Pigeon 2021).

Moreover, this is why the interviews with the different witnesses who participated in the field study were conducted while walking through the Walcourt landscape, following an itinerary suggested by the inhabitant we met.



Maps are a tool that in a certain way separate us from the concrete experience of the terrain, offering us the possibility of discovering the territory via this mediation, this representation. In order to continue to encourage experience as a necessity, each map thus proposes a walking route that invites the participants to discover or rediscover the territory in situ, to physically encounter the things comprising these assemblages, their traces in the real space, these markers that allows us to make the territory itself a map to be read. Each map presents a thematic itinerary that can immerse the interested reader in a different layer of the landscape via the path taken by the other. The size of the maps is conceived, moreover, to be able to take them with you on the walk.

A dual voyage is thus proposed: the physical one of the suggested routes, getting close to the landscape by following an itinerary, a circuit that is practiced and commented on by the other; and the intellectual one, of discovering the words and stories of each participant, which invite you to reconsider your own point of view, to grasp the limits and the levers for sharing other perspectives, which is perhaps what Jacques Rancière is describing in “The Distribution of the Sensible”: “I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts.” (Rancière, 2004, p. 12.)



# Conclusion, continuations

The cartographic experiment carried out in Walcourt confirms the plurality of graphic regimes that can be called upon and their potential. It likewise validates the ability of the map to open up a space for debate and to disclose an ecology of practices.

This cartographic experiment was made possible by the particularity of the context of the commission, which comes from a cultural agency and offers the liberty of expression that is essential in a critical approach.

It also became clear that as much as the printed result, it is the whole process of investigation, of narration and of mapping that amounted to a form of political engagement giving rise to something in commons. When getting feedback from the public, it is especially people who participated, whether close-up or at a greater distance, in the field study who were and are still motivated and convinced by the tool, who disseminate and share it, who regard it as providing impetus to go even further in the discussions about common projects, since the maps suggest new conceptions of the territory and new projects.

This makes us think about what could follow. If the possibility of redoing maps elsewhere should emerge, greater energy could be put into making both the process and resulting object exist. Mapmaking is a long-term performance, which could constitute the core of the proposal: a cartography workshop implanted in the territory, regular collaborative work, letting-go of the total control of the finalized tool, a space in which participants would really

meet around a common, political activity, i.e. that of mapping the inhabited territory.

Ten maps are printed today, but we could have done a thousand. Each of them pronouncing not certainties, but the multitude of potential combinations as foundational value, opening up the perpetual possibility of a redistribution of meanings, of a re-discussion, of a deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). So many imagined assemblages, so many imaginaries to be reassembled.



If the experiment confirmed this potential, it also made cartography's enormous power of manipulation apparent, as well as the importance of the moral apparatus that underlies cartographic operations.

For the philosopher Yves Citton<sup>5</sup>, we live in a society in which imagination has triumphed: It has gone over to the side of power, "by way of advertisements and television series, virtual images and media agendas, it immerses us in small problems and small vanities whose 'iconic and rhetorical expectations',

5. Yves Citton is a philosopher and professor of literature. He has published numerous articles and volumes devoted to the political imaginaries of Western modernity and, more recently, to economies of attention.

by ‘deforming reality’, prevent us from clearly seeing what is around us and what constitutes us.” (2013, p.8) Making connections between Daston and Galison’s (2012) Objectivity and objectivity in the recording arts, audio and cinematographic among others, he suggests conceiving a return to the demand for objectivity, in order to counter the colonizing power of “imaginary programmes”. If mechanical objectivity consists of letting oneself be surprised by the real, one can also begin to perceive how the concept encompasses the abandonment of a control and sovereignty of the author or creator. Citton evokes the political character of an *echology*: a conception of the world in terms of echoes or resonance, which consists of wanting to be “receptacles of sensations” and “recording devices” (Gasquet in Citton, 2013). This development would directly confront us with the totality of the relations constituting the *milieu* in which our being is constituted, it would invite us “less into a large totalizing whole than into a multiplicity of small taking-sides on the part of nature”, cultivating our attention for them, teaching us to “let ourselves be taken by them, instead of always trying to recruit them and control them in our imaginary programmes”. Thus, the new objectivities that Citton proposes would not try to suppress interpretative activity, but to subject it to an overriding constraint of “sincerity”. (2013) Referring to cinema, Benoit Turquety finds at the very foundation of objectivist art “a necessity that is both poetic and moral, namely that of not altering the objects that it considers or that it borrows” (in Citton, 2013, p.7). “The sole obligation for someone who makes films is not to falsify reality and to open people’s eyes and ears with what is, with reality” (Straub in Citton, 2013, p. 7)

The two movements, objectivity and imagination, abstraction and figuration, are always complementary. An interesting mechanism for rethinking critical cartographic operations as interpreted assemblage of stories or revelation of collected practices.



“The originality of the objectivist theory of art is to affirm that abstraction (objectification) and figuration (sincerity) are not two antagonistic movements, but rather complementary: that sincerity is required for objectification, but also, in return, that it is only objectification that allows for the precision – the detail – that is at the very heart of sincerity”. (Turquety in Citton, 2013, p.7)

In the maps of the atlas produced by Denis Wood and his students (2010), “everything sings”, as the title of the volume suggests. Each map represents a raw survey of a layer of information patiently gathered from the lived experience of the studied neighbourhood, in order to discover and reveal some of the routines of its inhabitants. It is the radicality of the process that makes the information poetic.

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