

## Research Ecologies

Notes by Annefleur Schep on presentation Marlies Vermeulen

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*present: Marlies Vermeulen, Nienke (research at DAS. studies new forms of organising artistic practice. Researching an co-developing new ways. How to map these new ways. What is mapping?), Alice (2<sup>nd</sup> year das. Projects in public space. Researching mapping), Gabrielle (designer. Research and performance. How design is used to articulate power), Hilde (scenographer. Works with performative structures. Systems of value. Systems of measurements. How are spaces measured), Julian (Sandberg, academic), Ulrike (PhD anthropology- artistic research. Bodily practices. Bodily knowledge), Annefleur (inaccurate mapping, IOOTCP)*

### DESCRIPTION

Marlies seeks for ways to work in between different fields. In between art and science. In between cartography and anthropology, hence the self pronounced workfield: carthopology. Her presentation contained 4 parts: The field. The practice. The project. The PhD.

#### The Field - Cartopology

Marlies started out as an Interior Architect. In this work she became frustrated by the worldwide standardisation of the elements that are to be put in a space. Next to this, in her perspective architects don't take enough care in observing the environment in which the buildings are constructed.

# *Cartopology.*

*(from khartēs. "papyrus, sheet of paper, map"; from ánthrōpos, "man, mankind, human, humanity" + -logy)*

*is the study and practice of making anthropological maps. Combining cartography and anthropology within a artistic research practice it builds on the premise that hidden knowledge can be discovered, transferred and modeled into space and time on maps effectively.*

Her practice of cartography links to the practice of medieval and renaissance mapmakers. On these old maps the spaces and routes on land and sea were depicted together with what was to be found there. Examples of these are to be seen in Chet van Duzer's *Sea Monsters. On medieval and renaissance maps*.

### **The Practice- *Dear Hunter*<sup>1</sup>**

In 2014 Dear Hunter was established, together with Remy Kroese.

From their website: *Dear Hunter is a spatial-anthropological research practice, managed by Marlies Vermeulen and Remy Kroese. Referring to the behaviour and methods of hunters, they produce alternative maps and atlases through qualitative fieldwork which incorporates relatively long periods of living and working on-site.* Dear Hunter offers its services to local municipalities, mapping its territory from the perspective of an outsider with a trained eye. Much time is taken for observing surroundings when mapping a field. When hired, at least 3 months are spent on the premises, mapping how people make use of the architecture and pointing out lacks and pluses in the design of the public spaces in cities or towns.

### **The Project -*Drawing instruments* – research project**

This project is an attempt to map the artistic process. Marlies took on a metaphor in order to create insight in the 'magic' that happens during the work at *Dear Hunter* and during other processes. She started by drawing two conveyor belts with a box in between: something goes in and something comes out. But what happens inside this box? How does the instrument work?

In collaboration with Veerle Spronck from Maastricht University (researcher at UM, connected to Marlies' PhD) and students from Jan van Eyck academie Marlies depicted the workings of the instrument in detail. Part of the instrument still being a mystery, but having figured out its workings and still tweaking and updating it till this day.

### **The PhD - *The S.M.m.m.R.I. (Sea Monster map making Research Instrument)* has been invented by the IoC (Institute of Calibration)**

The work at Dear Hunter and the research in understanding how the instrument works is being mapped by Marlies in the form of a PhD at *Research Centre for Arts, Autonomy, and Public Sphere, Faculty of the Arts, Zuyd University*<sup>2</sup>. She is doing artistic research in to the workings of her own practice. It is artistic research on mapping through mapping.

## **METHOD**

### **The Field – Cartography**

In her own field of cartography, Marlies had to understand how to map. When is a map a map, when a drawing and when a cartological map?

A lecture by Prof. Timothy Ingold at symposium *Artistic Research in the North* in 2017 on 'good anthropological art' brought her these criteria:

1. generosity – you have to give something back to the place where you found your information.
2. open ended – it doesn't come up with final solutions, rather it reveals parts to maintain other points of views.

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<sup>1</sup> [Http://dearhunter.eu/About-Dear-Hunter](http://dearhunter.eu/About-Dear-Hunter)

<sup>2</sup> <http://lectoraataok.nl/projecten/>

3. Comparative – no approach to life is the right one. A map documents the surroundings as perceived at a certain time, through a specific perspective.
4. Orientation, shifting between multiple realities – others should be able to use it. People should be able to compare your map to another one of the same area.

At Dear Hunter effort is put into making the maps accessible for the reader to literally find their way on the map and simultaneously misleading them with new info. This balance is hard to achieve. A map shouldn't be too complicated to read and the ways in which the map is presented is of influence.

5. Critical- isn't satisfied with the world we live in today

# Cartopology.

*the Field.: the Cartopological map.*

**Generosity**, give something back.

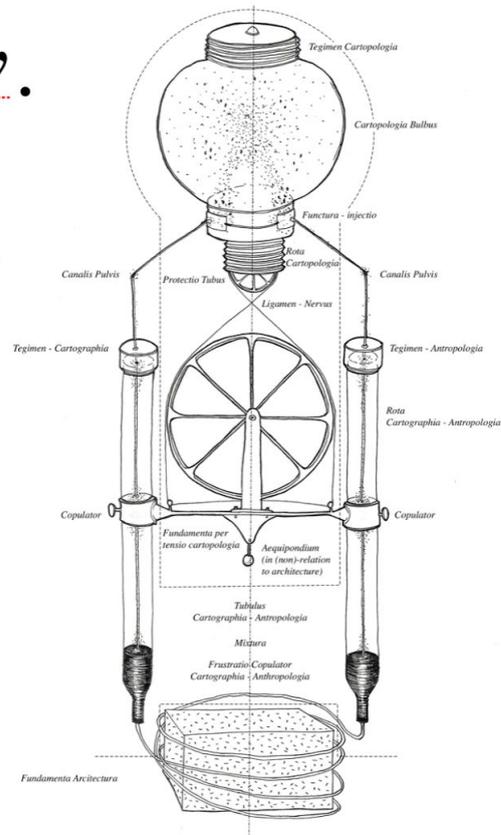
**Open ended**, in doesn't come up with final solutions, rather it reveals parts to maintain other points of views.

**Comparative**, no approach to life is the right one.

**Orientation**, shifting between multiple realities

**Critical**, isn't satisfied with the world we live in today.

**documentation - reflection - process**



## The Practice – Dear Hunter

Marlies and Remy shared a fascination for hunting cabins. In these one observes differently. The eye is framed. The circumstances of cold and humidity improve consciousness of the environment. Part of their working conditions is to stay on site for a long period. They spend in total between 6 and 9 months a year observing, working and living from-out their version of a hunters cabin: a shipping container. It has been transformed into a tiny house where they live and work. Each city gives them an assignment to work on. They only accept it if they can live on site. Often this involves them bringing the containers (there is a second container, which is used as a residency<sup>3</sup>). They stick out in a city environment, so municipalities prefer them bringing the containers.

<sup>3</sup> <http://dearhunter.eu/Dear-Euregio-1>

In search for a way to structure the work, they focussed on the region of Meuse-Rhine, which is a cross border region (spreaded over Belgium, The Netherlands and Germany). Due to the practicalities of having to switch between national systems (public transport ending at a national, but not regional border for example) this region struggles to be a whole. *Dear Hunter* started out mapping on a 5x5 meters paper, in 10 days. Their question was how to document and communicate (with municipalities, clients, designers) what is there? They have changed this map 3 times. This is updating of maps is a practice that stayed. No map is finished when handed in. Maps need constant re-working. 'Perceptions change, we change. Our relation with the place changes'. The maps are being drawn on site. Their time in the hunting cabin involves part time living there and part time documenting. They live inside the work. Go to bed and wake up in the work. They root at places and then leave again. At this moment the containers are situated at a parking lot of a second hand shop where the interior was made as well.

*Dear Hunter* is a commercial practice. They started out offering their service for free to the municipality of Aachen. The containers were made and placed with the help of funding. Often at the start they had the impression to have been hired more as a performance than for the advice they give. It takes time for municipalities to understand what it is that *Dear Hunter* does and what it brings them. After arriving with their containers, some challenges re-occur. The container being places in public space, makes people assume it is a participatory project. But it is not. They are not trying to make a map with the citizens together. Yes, by talking to people they use their expertise of how these work and live. But the work is about observing, citizens are not invited to participate in the process of mapping. Another misunderstanding: they only map what is there. It is not about imagining with citizens what *could* be there. They are often being asked for numbers: 'how many people did you speak to?' 'We don't know. But we lived here for 3 months!' At the end of a cycle, Marlies and Remy give the back an (unfinished) map, an atlas, a presentation of the map and often a mini-exhibition. The presentation helps the receivers to understand how to read the maps and makes it possible for them to make use of them.

### **The Project – Drawing Instruments**

*Drawing instruments* is part of her lectorate at *Zuyd University*, Maastricht. She had always seen herself as an instrument during her artistic work. She started by drawing this instrument, with it's input and output. 'What is happening inside this instrument, in me when I do a project? Is it a machine or an instrument? Am I the instrument or am I using it? Do I have buttons? An on off button? How to put it on and off? Does it need maintenance?'

Students collaborated with her on this project. Starting off with a visit to *Teyler museum*, which has a collection of instruments. Then a meet-up with a guitar maker. How does he choose the wood? When is the tree cut? How thin should the wood be on the inside? The maker couldn't answer these questions, it was all done by intuition.

Drawing the instrument made her able to articulate how they work at *Dear Hunter*. They can now use the metaphor to communicate within the process and to tweak the work. Drawing turned out to be the filter system of the instrument. The instrument first takes in information, once it is full, it turns upside down and gives output. The model of the instrument is, just like the maps, still being adjusted. After the drawing, models were made. Parts of the instrument have been constructed in real life. And exhibited. The drawings were animated and given sounds.

### **PhD**

Marlies reflects on the practice of drawing instruments and on the practice of mapping with *Dear Hunter* in her PhD. In her view artistic research is being done not by reflecting on it from the

outside, but from within. Researching it by doing it. 'As a researcher, how do I stay an observer? How do we look at maps. How do we get information out of it?' This process too, is being communicated in a map.

## **MOTIVATION**

### **The field**

Her work as a cartologist sparked from certain frustrations in working as an Interior Architect. Maps in this field all use same standards and norms all over the world. By using these 'we lose something'. It is practical to calculate how things will work and fit, but information is being lost. Architecture is about winning competitions. Only who wins you can have it build. The whole research of an architect might have been done in vain. So architects don't take time. Architects seemed to have a total lack of interest in cartography and in making alternative mappings. By now there is a shift going on, but there is no knowledge. She wanted to exaggerate the moment before starting to design. To go on site and look. Practice oneself at other ways of designing and drawing, so this all would influence the design.

Hirschauer said that ethnography and anthropology should move from descriptions based on recordings to descriptions in site. Trying to describe what is not being seen or heard. A recording device won't capture important elements. Marlies quotes Ingold: 'apprehending the world is not only of construction, but of engagement, not of building but of dwelling. Not of making a view *of* the world, but of taking a view *in* it.' (Ingold's ontology of dwelling)

Marlies wanted to create her own field and discipline. Making herself in-between. It was a way for her to simultaneously function in the academic world, to create work and to have a commercial practice. Looking at Staphenhorst maps and cartography she saw the privileged position of these being both art and science at the same time. In old images of the practice at the Leids Anatomic Theatre, students used drawing as a technique in order to see better. Drawing was used as a way to understand. To her drawing is another way of being in the in-between position: that of observant-participant.

### **The practice**

The work with *Dear Hunter* started out with the mission or question is: how can we document places as they really are?

### **The project and PHD**

*Drawing instruments* could help to define and contextualise her ways of working. But in applying for the PhD program, she had to fill in a standardised form. 'Could I 'map' my PhD proposal?' and so she did. Mapping is a different process from writing and it asks to be read differently. Whilst reading the map one starts to understanding how to take it in.

## **'RESULT'**

Marlies asked the participants to bring a map of Amsterdam. Most of these were prints from Google Maps. All had printed out different parts of Amsterdam, different centers from which to perceive the city. Google 'knows where you live' and prints the map from where you were last. Someone brought an historical atlas, in which houses were drawn in 3d. No people on it, but boats. The

decisions of map makers and map users came up: the extent of zoom in, composition water-land, naming streets in English, and not in the local language (Google Maps in Palestina). The participants had also brought maps they made themselves. On these the use of standardised icons stood out. Marlies asked all to document the afternoon whilst it was happening, by mapping it on paper sheets. <sup>4</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Questions that were shortly discussed:

what are you losing when you make a map? When you focus, something else gets out of focus. By focussing you also produce. Ask yourself: what is not there?

How to work with something that is constantly changing?

How to deal with a map or instrument that can never be finished?

How to adapt a map to a changing reality and to a changing perception of this?

How to add and erase? *Sometimes by layering in a drawing, other times by cutting out parts of it and replacing them with new paper. Sometimes a mistake is important to communicate, but when a mistake is confusing and blurring the map, she erases it. Scanning it and digitally adjusting it is also an option.*

when is it a drawing, when a map? When does drawing become mapping? *When knowing turns into getting an opinion. Mapping implies the adding of a vision.*

How can drawing and text complement each other?

When it comes to the map as critical document: to what extent do you need to use other media to communicate it?

Why do we use grids in maps? How did we get to the division of space and time? *(most of standardisation started in Maritime industry. It helped ships to orientate. Getting a grip on time gave sailors a grip on distance)*

## CONCLUSIONS

It was too early for conclusions. We could have used much more time!

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<sup>4</sup> Photographer Thomas Lenden has captured these