

Cahier on Art and
the Public Domain

Open

Hybrid Space

*How wireless
media mobilize
public space*

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(IN)SECURITY



(NO)MEMORY



(IN)VISIBILITY



SOUND



(IN)TOLERANCE

Amsterdam REALTIME (2002)

Esther Polak,
Jeroen Kee, and the
Waag Society

WHERE ARE YOU?

A number of active artists have become concerned with 'locative media' art, a form of art which makes use of environmentally conscious media and to be found particularly in urban space. Esther was one of the artists to participate in her imagination project *Amsterdam REALTIME*. *Dagboek in sporen/Diary in Traces* dating from 2001.

Sixty Amsterdamers spent a week wearing a GPS tracker which used satellite data to determine their geographical position. The project was given visual form by feeding this data into a computer, so that light traces appeared on a screen. The basic idea behind the project was that every Amsterdammer has an invisible

map of the city in his head. The routes followed by a dog walker, a cab driver, a midwife or a parking attendant are very different, and form individual 'mental maps'. The realization dawned that each Amsterdammer creates a subjective map of the city on the basis of the fixed routes that he or she follows on his or her way to work, to the shops and to the café. But however personal all these light traces may be, in *Amsterdam REALTIME* they combine to form a recognizable map of Amsterdam.

GPS technology is often used in 'locative media' in a different way from that in which it is used in Esther Polak's project, namely to follow the artist involved himself. Even people who are not artists feel the need to publish details of their pattern of mobility on the Internet. All kinds of sailing and cycle

routes can be found uploaded there. Even skating maps, which zoom in on the suitability of road surfaces. But what is the motive behind all this publication of and reflection on one's own routes? Is there more involved than simply 'this is where I have been'?

Amsterdam REALTIME is a piece of research into the relationship between mobility and space, a fascinating opportunity to follow other people, to tail them and get a picture of their movements through urban space. It is one of the first intelligent applications of orientational systems in art and at the same time a contemporary representation of mobility in the urban landscape. Reason enough to bring the cd-rom *Amsterdam REALTIME. Dagboek in sporen/Diary in Traces* once more to your attention.

Nathalie Faber

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