

Our Kind of Town?

Critical Cartography and the Struggle for a Just City

This is the second of two articles in which the author considers some of the theoretical and methodological issues raised by critical cartography over the last decade and their bearing to build a just city. The first appeared in Livingmaps Review Volume 1, Spring 2016. The accompanying illustrations are available in the [slideshow](#) which was published with the first article.

Phil Cohen

phil.cohen@livingmaps.org.uk

PART TWO: REMAKING THE CARTOGRAPHIC PACT

The cartographer sucks his teeth
And says - every language, is a partial map of the world...
How much have we not felt or seen
Because there was no word for it, at least no word we knew?
We speak to navigate ourselves
Away from dark corners, and we become
Each one of us cartographers.

Kei Miller *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*

Maps are like campfires – everyone gathers around them, because they allow people to understand complex issues at a glance and find agreement

Johnny Warangkula *Notes from the Territory*

Lines of Desire or psycho-geography discovers Melanie Klein

In the first part of my essay ([Livingmaps Review Volume 1, Issue 1](#)) I argued for the creation of a cartographic commons. In this article, I want to explore the political limits and practical conditions of such a project and look at how far it may be possible to challenge or change the terms of the cartographic pact.

Key to mapping this commons is the concept of a line of desire, micro territories created by improvised patterns of pedestrian footfall or guerrilla action that subverts planified space directing from A to B in the shortest possible time. Lines of desire are not the preserve of flaneurs, place hackers or guerrilla gardeners. They occur where and whenever anyone strays off the beaten track, and as Robert MacFarlane shows in his book *The Old Ways*, many of these unofficial, collectively self-made paths, are what he calls xenotopic, that is they create a landscape of the unfamiliar and the uncanny, the other scenes that unsettle the map/territory relation and reveal the *uncommonplace* buried under the taken-for-granted clichés of landscape design.

In fact many of the footpaths shown on our ordinance survey maps started out life as lines of desire; they are examples of people voting with their feet, creating alternative routes, and inscribing them in the landscape (MAP 52). They are the paradigm of the embodied commons where natural and cultural histories intersect. We don't so much read the choreography of these paths as perform it. They take us for a walk, and sometimes for a ride, like Heidegger's famous *Holwege*, the secret paths known only to woodcutters that lead into the heart of the German forest and then peter out – a metaphor for the trajectory of wandering that for Heidegger is how we dwell in the world. Where there is a will there is a waypoint. Edward Casey has explored this intimate connection between dwelling and wayfaring, roots and routes, cutting it free from Heideggerian metaphysics and their association with Nazi *lebensraum*¹.

The notion of a line of desire is inextricably bound up with psychogeography. It derives from the French Situationists' practice of the drift (or *derive*) as described in Guy Debord's maps of Paris (MAP 53) and thence links to the work of latter day radical pedestrianista such as Michel De Certeau, Iain Sinclair and Will Self.² All in their different ways set out to chart the subterranean histories of the city and explore its secret territories of meaning hidden from the planners and property developer's gaze.

At times, psychogeography is talked about as if there was nothing more to the *derive* than a gang of intellectuals going on an extended pub, or rather café, crawl around Paris and attempting to engage passers-by in intense and increasingly drunken conversations about Marx, Hegel and Lauremont. Or perhaps discussing the need to create a situation in which there is no turning back while crossing a busy boulevard. In fact, for a time the groupuscule

did become seriously engaged in public debates about the future development of Paris and in particular the extension of its *banlieux* into a whole new metropolitan subregion.³ It is perhaps worth noting in passing that *derive* also means leeway; that is the effect of wind in pushing a boat off course so that it deviates in its water track from the course plotted on the chart. In other words, it can be used to indicate the constitutive gap between the (digitally encoded) map and (analogic) territory in any form of navigation, whether at sea or on land. Ralf Rumney, one of the founding members of the Situationist International, applied the Korzybski principle to depict the body politic along just these fault lines (MAP 54).

At this point another caveat needs to be issued. Lines of desire sound fun, and they are indeed distinctly more pleasurable than the daily commute from home to school or work. But they can also set traps by inscribing the lines we draw under our own feet, materialising internal boundaries that we would otherwise ignore. There is the famous story about the boy who is seen running round and round the block by a friendly neighbourhood policeman who stops him and asks him what he is doing; the boy replies that he is running away from home but his mum has forbidden him to cross the road. Equally the transects of many emotional cartographies are graphs of anxiety, fear, envy and frustration, underpinned by various kinds of projective identification. Landscapes of enchantment they are not.

The main problem with psycho-geography is that it is not psychological, or rather psychoanalytic, enough. If the *psycho* prefix suggests to you that this version of geography has much to do with Freud, Lacan or Melanie Klein, you are in for a big disappointment. Debord was influenced by Bachelard's work, *The Psychoanalysis of Space*, but the title is a misnomer. Bachelard's topoanalysis explicitly rejects the Freudian Unconscious.⁴ I think this is unfortunate because, as I suggested in the first part of the essay, the fascination with maps and our basic orientation - both aesthetic and existential - to the landscape, has roots in the psyche which take us back to our earliest ways of exploring the world. The mother's body is, after all, the first territory we explore with its hills, its valleys, its zones of excitement and interdict (MAP 55); how we hold that body unconsciously in mind generates the tacit model for our developing relationship to the environment. Parental arms and lap gives us our first sense of prospect on, and refuge from the world, inform our early making of dens and hideouts and other vantage points, and are later worked up into distinct ways of appreciating the landscape. Michael Balint's theory of spatial object relations provides a valuable approach to mapping contrasting modes of emotional attachment to places⁵. For example,

there are those for whom the world is an ontologically safe place with a few dangerous or exciting hot spots and those for whom it is hostile and unwelcoming with a few safe bolt holes. These scenarios offer very different ways of inhabiting, navigating and narrating the environment, and yield a standpoint aesthetics, a different sensibility about what is ugly and beautiful. In the mapping work I am currently doing with young people and local communities in and around the Olympic Park these concepts are proving very fruitful in understanding where local people are coming from as they negotiate and make sense of this new piece of city.⁶

By the same token psychogeographies are always gendered. Boys have a different relation to the mother's body than girls. There is much more to this than the division between domestic space or the Great Indoors, where girls and women have often been confined, and the street or Great Outdoors, traditionally dominated by boys and men. It is just as much about different patterns of sensibility about what is/is not perceived as good/bad space and the forms of sociability that flow from that. The balance between adventure and precaution, prospect and refuge, autonomy and security is not always easy to strike, and there remains immense peer pressure to code the first term masculine and the second feminine. But we will not be able to construct an alternative mapping unless the underpinning of these spatial practices in psychogeography are addressed.

The In/voluntary Informant: From citizen scientist to denizen cartographer

If the line of desire is one thread connecting different types of commons, crowd sourcing of data is another. I want to look at how this recent phenomenon relates to what is becoming known as citizen social science or sociology, made-by-all and, in particular, consider its implication for developing a participatory mapping of the intellectual commons.

Today we are all involuntary informants. Courtesy of our digital devices we are enrolled whether we like or know about it or not, into a gigantic virtual research apparatus which routinely captures geo-locational data about our habits and habitats, our preferences in eating, reading and sex, where we like to shop and to live. There are also many deliberative ways in which we volunteer information about ourselves, from filling in the ubiquitous online questionnaires to crowd sourced market research. It is in and against this background that citizen social science has developed.

The initiative is in its infancy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it has begun by repeating the project of classical social science, namely to found itself on the principles of natural science. The crowdsourcing of big data sets from volunteer observers of natural phenomena is now a well-established practice. Amateur naturalists do form a distinct community of practice through which they develop and share observational skills and knowledge of fauna and flora. The same does not hold true for the amateur social scientist; we may all be participant observers of the social worlds we inhabit but we do not normally make it our hobby to go around noting the behaviour of our fellow citizens, unless we happen to be writers, visual artists, snoopers, policemen, working for Mass Observation in the 1930s or very paranoid. More seriously, to apply a model which may work for the natural commons to the artificial or cultural commons means that the recording of evidence through observation is treated as a transparent process, and generates accounts based on a naïve empiricism. So while positivistic mapping of the natural commons may yield perfectly adequate data, the sourcing of social statistics from what is, essentially a rather lonely, atomized crowd, possibly united only in its obsession with the research topic, is neither likely to generate reliable findings as defined by the conventional norms of scientific objectivity nor to sustain the democratic spirit of the whole enterprise - the worst of both worlds.

A more nuanced approach has to be grounded in the debates that have taken place over the past decade about the status of the knowledge claims which the social sciences make, the role of interdisciplinarity, and the limits and conditions of dialogic research in the empowerment of informant communities.⁷ The debate has polarised around two positions that both turn out to be unsustainable. In the first case social scientists, by virtue of their professional training, claim to possess interpretative frameworks (or explanatory models) and methodologies (or research practices) which enable them to penetrate beneath the surface structures of social reality and yield privileged access to deeper principles of social causation hidden from the view of ordinary citizens. The educative mission of the social sciences then becomes to disseminate its knowledge, firstly to policy makers, and secondly to the public, in simplified terms that they can understand and act upon it. Sophisticated cartograms are now routinely used for this purpose, often using algorithms which convert digital data into dramatic analogue visualisations as in Ben Hennig and Danny Dorling's London Mapper project ([MAP 56](#)).

According to the second standpoint, groups of citizens - or rather denizens - who are in some way marginalised by the mainstream institutions of civil society, are invested with a privileged insight into their workings by virtue of their direct experience of oppression. Their distance from the ideologies through which conditions of inequality are legitimated and the fact that they have no material stake in their perpetuation, supposedly enables them to see through the veil of mystification which conceals these mechanisms of power and exploitation. The task of the radical social scientist is therefore to validate and give epistemic weight to these perceptions by embedding them in interpretive frameworks which disclose or amplify their full rationality. From this standpoint crowdsourcing might be a way of sampling and validating locally situated knowledge. The use of participatory mapping, for example training local groups to use GIS, is here seen as a practical form of empowerment.

Without going into a detailed critique of both positions, it is clear that, in the first case, the theoretical models developed by professional social scientists are often highly reductive, and at best offer only partial explanations. The metaphor behind the model (deep/surface structure, micro/macro context) reifies the social and hierarchises it as an a priori principle of causal explanation acting 'behind' all manner of things. It leaves their actual mode of functioning in the world quite mysterious. Perhaps that is why sociologists' accounts, both of their own research procedures and of the phenomena they are setting out to explain, are often so thin and opaque, or merely give a statistical gloss to some quite banal understandings. Yet whatever the analytic shortcomings, it has to be acknowledged that social statistics and the cartograms based on them do sometimes reveal counter intuitive patterns that are not otherwise visible. They are certainly not self-evident or available to locally situated knowledges.

On the other side of the tracks, disadvantaged groups frequently produce explanations for their predicament which blame it on other oppressed groups (viz. immigrants) or resort to conspiracy theories which attribute elites with more power to control events or manipulate outcomes than they actually possess. Moreover their experience is never unmediated. It is influenced by all kinds of external information. That is precisely what common sense is - a continually changing mash up of ideas, beliefs, and taken for granted assumptions adopted from a wide range of sources. To simply provide a sociographic platform for such views on the grounds that they are the authentic Voice of the People, is to abdicate from any critical standpoint. Yet without socio-graphic evidence, no grounded theory is possible.

To get a sense of the problem let us look at two recent examples of participatory urban research which aims to support the emergence of ‘spontaneous sociology’ through the recruitment and training of Volunteer Geographical Informants (VGI). One project used VGI’s to count the number of street beggars in different parts of central London and establish their demographic profile. Crowd sourcing this data, in which about 20 people took part was thus a cheap way of carrying out a social survey that might otherwise not have been undertaken for lack of funds. Even if the information produced was trivial and hardly Big Data, you can imagine enquiries of this kind adding critical mass to sociological analysis and hence to the political arithmetic that goes into the calculation of policy options. It could be regarded as a slightly more democratic, and definitely less expensive way of doing cheap and dirty, hit and run urban research.

The second example is much more sophisticated and used VGI’s not merely as sensors to collect data but as interpreters. They were in fact referred to as co-researchers. The project was ostensibly about documenting and analysing patterns of behaviour in public places. It was not apparently informed by any particular conceptual model or previous ethnographic research - roll over Erving Goffman – but it spent a lot of time on training 60 volunteers in the rudiments of field work methodology. It was inspired by a rhetoric of challenging the knowledge power relations between social scientist and citizen informant and making participation in the research process a capacity building exercise rather than an extractive one. The methods used included participatory mapping and diagramming, photography and video documentation, and diary keeping, as well as direct observation. In addition to noting what people were doing in the street, park or shopping mall, the VGI’s were also asked to record their own perceptions so a principle of researcher reflexivity was built into the process.

Now if the VGIs were doing all this what were the professional researchers up to? Of course they were observing what the VGIs were doing, how they were responding to the various tasks, what impact their involvement was having on their attitudes and perceptions, for that was the real, if covert, aim of this piece of work. It was an investigation into the limits and conditions of citizen social science. The study of public behaviour was merely a cover story. And what did these professionals discover about the amateurs? That they were, after all, and despite all the training and support, not professionals. This is what they wrote in their report:

While the VGI observations could record the number and type of people present in public spaces it was not possible to develop explanations for trends or patterns of presence or absence. However co-researchers did offer opinions about the ways different parks, shops and neighbourhoods were frequented or avoided by different social groups, how this had changed over their lifetimes and how they themselves negotiated different public spaces. These insider accounts did propose some explanations for what was observed including insight into the complex territorialities of young people at weekend and after school, and also older people. However some co-researchers were keen to look for the extraordinary in the ordinary or to seek the mundane in the unusual - driven by the desire to produce interesting or relevant data.⁹

It seems then that these amateur social scientists, with their so-called insider accounts, had discovered for themselves the techniques of de-familiarisation which the Martian school of anthropology have developed to enable people to view their own cultures from the outside, and interrupt their taken for granted common sense views of the world. Instead of viewing this as a considerable sociographic achievement, a real action of spontaneous sociology, it is seen as an interference factor spoiling the accuracy of the sociological analysis. The fact that these co-researchers produced a thick description of complex patterns of territoriality is discounted because they did not arrive at a theoretically adequate map or explanation for it. Instead they are made to feel that their locally situated knowledge does not possess the same validity as academic knowledge which they define as objective, impartial, and generalizable: in a word, scientific.

The problem in devising an adequate strategy for participatory mapping of the commons is not how to train up amateur social scientists to think and behave more like professionals, by equipping them with conceptual or technical toolkits. It is the reverse. How can professors of social science or digital cartographers think and behave more like the ways in which people, including themselves, go about doing everyday mental mapping in order to make sense of their common worlds and build bridges of social and intellectual capital to informant communities? I think this requires a shift in both conceptual frame and terminology. Instead of trying to empower people by giving them access to the forms of instrumental rationality normally monopolised by the State or a governing elite, getting them to learn the language of power in order to be taken seriously by the authorities, we need to validate and extend their existing forms of place intelligence. These constructs of personal geography are already

geared to navigating and narrating the constantly changing worlds people inhabit but they need to be built on and enriched so that they have the capacity to map the network of connections between the local and global dimensions of urban transformation. Rather than citizen social science, i.e. a mode of scienticity that extends the discourse of State planification into the heart of civil society, we need a vernacular form of *ethno-cartography*, a translocal framework which enables participants within the widest possible interpretive community to compare and contrast their mental mappings with those of other social groups, cultures and historical periods.¹⁰ This is the only way to engineer a shift from ethnic to civic nationalisms of the neighbourhood and ensure that denizens become fully fledged citizens. But how is this to be achieved?

Finding Common Ground? Towards a pedagogy of participatory counter-mapping

The priority for critical cartography today is to find new, more imaginative and strategic ways of reconnecting personal and political geographies. At the same time it has to go on disclosing the hidden rhetorics of power – and self-empowerment - embedded in mimetic map/territory relations. It is easy to see how these objectives could pull in opposite directions. One way to ensure this does not happen is to develop an appropriate pedagogy of counter mapping.

Some elements for such a pedagogy are to be found in the work of Paolo Freire and those who have followed in his footsteps within the radical education movement.¹¹ The aim of this critical pedagogy is to work against the grain of common sense, as Italo Calvino puts it, ‘to identify that which in the ideological inferno is not inferno and give it space, let it breathe’.¹² And for this purpose to transform learning into an active dialogue between teacher and student, not a one way transmission between professional expert and an ignorant amateur. Such an approach has been developed in the path breaking work of the Centre for Urban Pedagogy in New York, and is implicit in some participatory forms of community asset mapping (MAP 57).¹³ These different threads have yet to be woven together into a single coherent approach and this is what we are seeking to do in Livingmaps.

Actor Network methodology offers one possible point of departure for such a project.¹⁴ In so far as it entails a consideration of what relays are possible, as well as actual, between different elements of a particular ensemble, and looks at why certain networks develop and others do not in terms of a sociology of translation, this approach necessarily unfixes the

map/territory relation and opens up a space to consider the play of a whole set of articulations: displacements, condensations, inversions, replications, substitutions, confluences etc. The postulation of other possible worlds is precisely what counter mapping is all about; it involves challenging stereotypical notions of what maps are for, what they are supposed to look like or do, and who gets located on them by whom. It extends that agenda into examining what alternative plans, or new environments with different priorities, might be possible and what social and political arrangements would have to change as a condition of their implementation.¹⁵

To achieve this, another element has to be brought into the mix: graphic design, because whatever form a map takes, 2D or 3D, an online atlas or a multi-media installation, it always involves a graphic interface and some kind of design process. And this is where issues of knowledge transfer become paramount. Here again the work of the Centre for Urban Pedagogy is exemplary ([MAP 58](#)). Their graphic art teams work with community groups in helping them design and produce leaflets, posters, and other campaign literature to ensure maximum impact. In the course of that work, they also co-construct conceptual maps that unsettle the more insular expressions of common sense geography and develop a critical perspective on urban policy making and planning processes.

There is a precedent for a critical graphics methodology which takes us right back to the beginning of citizen social science. In the 1930s Mass Observation pioneered the use of volunteers for recording observations about social attitudes and everyday life.¹⁶ The aim was to create a popular anthropology by a nationwide network of correspondents, citizen social scientists, recording their perceptions of the world as they went about their daily lives. It involved a form of collective auto-ethnography and perhaps, as Jack Common, a working class writer with Communist sympathies put it rather unkindly as ‘an attempt to get nice young middle class men to penetrate into working class pubs to find out what the workers are thinking’.¹⁷

In my view, the main problem with Mass Observation was not the restricted demographic of its correspondents, it was the instability of its methodology which was torn between a sociologicistic and sociographic approach. Interestingly at the beginning of MO, there was an attempt to overcome this divide by involving artists and writers in training informants to exercise what would now be called techniques of defamiliarisation, designed to disrupt taken

for granted assumptions and stereotypical perceptions. The aim was to allow the collective unconscious to emerge, whether in dreams, social rituals, jokes or stories. Humphrey Jennings in particular was influenced by surrealism and the notion of sociology as a poetics of everyday life made by all. The poet/sociologist Charles Madge was concerned to capture what he called the social *eidōs* – what we would now call mental maps.¹⁸ Unfortunately the third member of the team, Tom Harrison, was committed to documenting social reality using more orthodox methods and under his leadership MO backtracked and treated its correspondents merely as informants in the strictly anthropological sense, approved by Malinowski.

The story of MO is often regarded as a cautionary tale about how an apparently radical experiment in democratising the production of social knowledge turned into an instrument of State surveillance during the war and ended up as a tool for market research with the rise of consumerism in the post war period. But I think the main lesson to be learnt from this experiment was its prematurity. It simply lacked the tools we now have for creating a research infrastructure embedded in everyday life and accessible to a very wide cross section of the population.

Participatory mapping is important for the development of a sociology-made-by-all because its very conditions of possibility involve the creation of a community of mapping practice which is geo-located in a specific site, or network of sites, and this provides a support structure that public sociology requires but has great difficulty in constructing through its own research process. The work of Jean Lave and her colleagues into how communities of practice are organised and sustained gives some idea of why this should be so.¹⁹ She shows that they largely depend on a process of peer mentoring in which ‘old hands’ introduce beginners to the tricks of their particular trade. Beginners start from a position of legitimate peripheral participation, from whence they observe how the more experienced and skilful perform, and then as they acquire greater confidence and expertise through practice, they take on a more active role, until they become mentors in their turn. This is how young people learn from each other to skateboard and to do many other things that are not on the school curriculum.

This apprenticeship model of informal learning can be supplemented by more formal tuition to create a scaffolding that supports learners taking the next steps, but the essential point is

that the educational process is primarily mimetic and only works if it is embedded in a culture of mutual aid. In other words, if it activates a form of intellectual commons. The great difficulty has been to strike the right balance between mentoring and scaffolding, for as we have seen, all the talk about co-researchers and community mapping does not necessarily suspend or reverse imbalances in knowledge/power, and can sometimes hide or justify their persistence. In particular, participatory mapping has been added to the tool kit of narrative planners who use it to win public support for developer's schemes rather than challenging them or proposing alternatives.²⁰ At the very least then, participatory mapping has to be part of building a cartographic commons involving a slow transfer of graphic design, technical and analytic skills from old hands (who may or may not be professional artists, designers, cartographers or ethnographers) to amateurs and beginners.

If mapping the commons involves actively helping to create and sustain them, then this should not be confined to its more politicized versions; it must include the 'actually existing communism' of everyday life as well as numerous subcultural instances. The comparative study of mapping cultures (ethno-cartography) at least provides a research framework for such an enterprise. Counter mapping is its practical implementation.

Counter-mapping is all about cultivating the art of what C Wright Mills called the sociological imagination, and that means not just charting existing social imaginaries but making *new* connections between personal and political geographies, the biographical and the historical and developing multi-perspectival mappings.²¹ The great virtue of ANT in this context is that it reminds us that the relation between map and territory is always contingent and always a process of translation, not only between digital and analogue or between scope and scale, but between the common and the uncommon, between what connects and disconnects the common worlds we inhabit. And this is never not a question of power, the power to format these linkages, to establish fictive concords, or to challenge and change them.

Some of these issues first emerged in a pioneering community mapping project set up by Sue Clifford and Angela King in 1983. It was part of wider movement to rediscover a deep landscape of Englishness which was not compromised and indeed pre-dated the imperialism of Little Englandism and which belongs to a radical vision of England's green and pleasant land embedded in a long history of popular democratic struggle.

The maps were produced by dozens of community groups in the towns and villages of Sussex working with local artists and they were certainly beautiful statements about the importance of small scale attachments to place (MAP 59/60). The aim was to portray through an exercise in participatory mapping the historical individuality of these places, to show their particularity without falling back into particularism.

This is how Sue Clifford herself described the project:

Local distinctiveness is about the conspiracy of nature and culture to intensify variegation. It is about detail, patina, authenticity and meanings, the things that create identity. It is about accumulations and assemblages, about accommodation and change, not compartmentalisation and preservation. It must include the invisible as well as the physical: symbol, festival legend custom, language, recipe, memory are as important as street and square.

‘Parish’ is here offered not to define but to describe the scale at which people feel a sense of familiarity and ownership in their place: home place, your own familiar territory, the neighbourhood to which you feel a sense of belonging, the locality which ‘belongs’ to you. Many have defined their own edge, but others have used the Parish Boundary and indeed discovered much of history and nature by so doing.

Making a Parish Map can help people to come together to chart the things that they value locally, to make their voice heard amongst professionals and developers, to inform and assert their need for nature and culture on their own terms, and to begin to take action and some control in shaping the future of their place. Democratic mapping, maps by and for the people. Indigenous and parish mapping. Taking the map back into the people’s hands.²²

The projects involved school children, residents, artists and researchers, and produced a rich diversity of maps, many addressing issues of redevelopment, environmental stress, pollution and traffic, as well as social/demographic change. It is certainly the case that a NIMBY strain can be detected in some of the maps and this is hardly surprising. These are largely rural communities who want to preserve the countryside and village life against the impact of

globalisation. They do not want to be part of London's commuter belt and lose their local identity. But are they anti-modern in a progressive or reactionary sense?

In terms of cartographic models the project went back to the early 16th and 17th century topographic maps of the English countryside which featured little paintings of buildings and physical features as well as heraldic figures from local folklore and myth. These early maps depict customary usages of space and place, they show a world of the commons prior to the enclosure movement and offer an alternative to the cadastral maps which simply plotted landownership and private property. As such they offer a source of inspiration that looks forward to the Chartists and struggles over access to the countryside in the 19th and 20th centuries.

In the Millennium maps this iconographic style is often used to frame the community portrait with special commentary or contextual interpretation. In quite a few cases both progressive and nostalgic elements are mingled. Perhaps the most interesting map in this respect, and certainly the one which has aroused most comment, was produced by the people of Copthorne ([MAP 61](#)). The village is on the borders of Surrey and Sussex and even more importantly is close to Gatwick airport. The village has an interesting and excitingly disreputable history. In the 18th century its position in the borderlands of two county jurisdictions made it a favourite resort of highway robbers and prize fighters, who took up residence on its common land; in the 19th century a local commentator notes that 'thousands of ruffians descended on the place' making it notorious for drunkenness and vice'. Today Copthorne's oldest farmhouse has been converted into a luxury hotel to accommodate high flying business executives on their way to and from the airport. It is owned by the conglomerate corporate entertainment company Copthorne –Millenium which owns a global network of hotels and casinos. So in effect the village has become a dormitory for the international jet set. No trace of this impact is however allowed to intrude into the composition of the map which shows an oak tree, made up of roads and paths, and chosen not only because of its role as a natural symbol of Englishness, but because 'copthorne' means a pollarded tree. The intertwined roots of the tree are composed of all the names of the villagers, and the acorns contain images of the local community organisations. A map of roots, not routes, although as Sue Clifford notes Copthorne has certainly travelled across the world – there is a Copthorne Orchard in Penang and a Copthorne Anzac Avenue in Auckland - but again, these links are not registered on the map.

As a whole the Sussex atlas exhibits a strong preference for an iconography that stresses organic community, and air brushes council houses, and other inorganic - i.e. modernist - features out of the picture. A properly critical cartography requires a different approach. We need a map that shows the relationships between the picturesque English countryside (and country houses) and the forms of wealth creation linked to the colonies and the exploitation of native populations which made this landscape possible. Franco Moretti's world map of the novel shows the location of colonial sources of wealth featured in English sentimental novels (viz. Africa, India and the South China Sea).²³ Similarly, we need maps to trace the intricate networks of trade and exploitation that connect consumers in the affluent West to producers in the impoverished East. This is what Rebecca Solnit does in some of the maps in her San Francisco Atlas, using a form of montage to juxtapose different kinds of material in a way which suggests new and surprising connections (MAP 62).²⁴ Jameson was wrong to think that these links are unmappable. They are not only grist to the mill of radical cartographers, they have become common knowledge in many diasporic communities. For example these 'glocal' features were present in many of the mental maps drawn for us by the young people we worked with in the Isle of Dogs, whether it was the South Asian diaspora or the Cockney one (MAP63).²⁵

Certainly it was Sue Clifford's intention to make these kinds of translocal links, but I think her project was defeated by the demographic of the areas she chose to work in – the villages and market towns of Sussex in 2000 were not exactly hot spots of multiculturalism. If the project had been located in the inner city or in the newly cosmopolitan suburbs it would have told us a very different story. There is nothing in the methodology itself which pre-empts this, quite the contrary. Common Ground pioneered an exemplary form of non-GIS based participatory mapping.

To sum up: we need a cartography which is adept at exploring the multiple relations of translation between map and territory. We need to map the underside of territory, the invisible, the occluded, the uncommon place, its other scene. Above all we need to avoid reifying the local as an immovable object pitted against globalisation, seen as an irresistible homogenising force.

As for its programmatic development, in the light of the foregoing discussion it should be possible to define some of the working principles and priorities of counter mapping:

1. It involves a process of deep mapping, linking the past, present and future, making visible what has been rendered invisible, making central what has been marginalised.
2. It means putting one's own self-identity on the map (the subject's history, culture, plans, stories, feelings) but also explores dis/identifications with the Other - the other class, other ethnicity, other race, other generation.
3. It is about creating a space of representation for counter-narratives, in particular those which challenge the grand narratives of urban progress and regeneration.
4. It is about mapping lines of desire, and especially the patterns of counter navigation that interrupt the flow of commodities and the compressed space/time of capitalist circulation.
5. It is about discovering and mapping counter-facticities, the projects that never happened and the projects that might be realised under different political and economic circumstances from the present.

I have suggested that this in turns requires a particular kind of pedagogy, whose main features could be summarized as follows:

1. Deconstruction: challenging common sense constructs

Example: mapping safe and dangerous spaces as defined by different groups, and correlating them with maps showing the distribution of traffic accidents, street crime and violence.

2. Defamiliarisation: making the strange familiar and the familiar strange

Example: using diaries of different kinds of journeys (routine journey and exceptional ones, real ones and imaginary ones) to create and compare a series of narrative or audio-visual maps.

3. Decentering: moving from 'me maps' to mapping the Other scene

Example: comparing and contrasting the mental mappings of an area done by young people and senior citizens, men and women, those with disabilities and the able bodied who are all developing specific modes of place intelligence to deal with different forms of precarity.

4. Dialogue: creating a shared framework for negotiating differences of standpoint and experience

Example: working with different social groups in a locality (viz in terms of ethnicity, age, socio-economic status) to map the distribution of positive and negative public encounters.

5. Deliberation: building a common ground of reflexivity and critical understanding

Example: Creating a framework for sustaining the practice of denizen through work in schools, youth projects and community centres, especially in areas undergoing rapid change linked to large scale regeneration.

Livingmaps is attempting to develop, test and evaluate such an approach across a series of projects in London. We are all too aware that this work is in its infancy, and that we are only beginning to glimpse the potential of a different kind of mapping practice. But we also know it is taking place in a difficult political conjuncture deeply averse to any such experimentation.

A Direction Home?

There is now a widespread search for a new political road map which will enable the onward march of labour, if not to resume, then at least to struggle free of the mire into which it has

fallen and connect up with other progressive forces in society. This may take the form of a quest for a new ideological compass, or just for a set of stable co-ordinates for collective thought and action in a world characterised by chaotic synchronicity and implosive individualism. In the midst of a profound impoverishment of the resources of hope, there is a frenetic outpouring of largely vacuous prognoses and prescriptions. Game Changers through the virtual agora and self-appointed political cartographers chart the way forward in the blogosphere. Meanwhile the flow of geolocational information accelerates exponentially and offers the vision of a 'smart city' regulated by entirely dumb algorithms, the so-called internet of things. The twelve-year-old prodigy cartographer in Reif Larsen's novel *The Selected works of TS Spivet* experiences all this as an existential predicament:

I saw a thousand maps rising into the air like ghostly echoes of the twisting city beneath: the ratio of cars to people on each block; the variation of tree species as you moved north through the city; the average number of words exchanged between strangers from neighbourhood to neighbourhood; I could not possibly make all these maps. Their ghosts evaporated into the air just as fast as the city could produce them. All of these maps wasted. Never realized.²⁶

This proliferation of mapabilities and the spatial anomie they engender, what I have called the crisis of legibility, is compounded by the fact that more and more lives are not on any recognisable map and many people feel their life trajectories have become unmappable. Meanwhile the raw data they leak in their traffic with the world is captured and aggregated into ever bigger and more commercially exploitable sets. We are faced with a dilemma. Do we go with the creative flow, exploit the multiplying discrepancies between map and territory to produce ever more imaginative and aesthetic cartographies, or do we dig in around entrenched positions of theoretical critique to develop a realist cartography in the hope that at some point it will open up a framework of political engagement which effectively challenges concentrations of knowledge power? It would be nice if this were not an either/or choice, if we could combine both perspectives and have the best of both worlds...

In *Close Up at a Distance* Laura Kurgan has tried, and largely succeeded in this task. Her maps are both beautiful to look at and issue a powerful challenge to dominant common sense understandings²⁷. In a section of the book called 'Million Dollar Blocks' (MAP64) she shows a series of density maps about crime in Brooklyn over a period of five years. By contrasting

mappings of crime events with prison admissions and poverty indicators, she is able to show that the rhetorical use of crime statistics serves to redefine the city as a mosaic of safe and unsafe space, with consequent impact on real estate values, and secondly that neighbourhood policing interventions only served to displace the problem to the precinct next door. She is also able to show that the geography of crime events, dispersed across the city differs markedly from the geography of incarceration which is spatially concentrated in only a few neighbourhoods associated with poverty and race. Where you live is far better indicator of whether or not you will be arrested and imprisoned than the type of crime you commit. As she puts it 'It is as if by imprisoning residents of poor neighbourhoods, making them disappear from their city, we are simply mirroring the disappearance of the public conversation about poverty'. She goes on to trace the hidden migration patterns generated as large numbers of people move back and forth between prisons and homes, and draws out its implications for urban policy. And finally she contrasts all this with the concentration of wealth in an area of Brooklyn. These maps depart radically from the crime hot spot maps and statistical analyses that fuel models of urban efficiency and renewal. The map is not a top down view. And neither is it a bottom up account. It is both and neither. As she says, 'the result is no longer hard data. It is a soft map that is infinitely scaleable, open to vision and hence revision.' I cannot think of a better definition of what critical cartography is all about.

- 1 Edward Casey *Getting back into place: towards a renewed understanding of the place-world*. Indiana University Press 1993 and Theodore Shatzki *Martin Heidegger's theory of space* Steiner 2007
- 2 Raoul Vaneigem *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (new translation by Donald Nicholson Smith 2013). The influence of Vaneigem's text can be traced in Will Self *Psychogeography* Bloomsbury 2007, Iain Sinclair *Lights out for the Territory* Penguin 2001, Michel de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* University of California Press 1984. For an attempt to rethink psychogeography see Steve Pile *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity* 1996.
- 3 For a discussion of the impact of situationism on critical geography and urban studies see David Pinder *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics*. Edinburgh University Press 2005.
- 4 Gaston Bachelard *Poetics of Space* Beacon Press 1994
- 5 Michael and Enid Balint *Thrills and Regression* Tavistock 1968
- 6 This research is reported in Phil Cohen and Paul Watt (eds) *A Hollow Legacy: London and the Post Olympic Legacy* Palgrave 2016
- 7 Kingsley Purdam 'Citizen Social Science and Citizen data: methodological and ethical challenges' *Current Sociology* 62 Issue 3 2013; Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin 'Crowd sourcing cartography: mapping experience and knowledge' *Environment and Planning A* 2013
- 8 Participatory research using GIS has been pioneered by Mapping for Change at University College, London as part of their commitment to developing citizen science: <http://mappingforchange.org.uk> See Muki Haklay 'Assertions on Crowd Sourced Geographical Information and Citizen Science' *Po Ve Sham* 2014. Also Jean-Claude Plantin *Participatory Mapping* 2013; Dennis Aberley (ed) *Boundaries of Home: Mapping for Local Empowerment New Society* 1993; Lucy Goodson and Jean Phillimore *Community research for participation: from theory to method* Policy 2012; Brian Parker 'Constituting community through maps? Power and praxis in community mapping' *The Professional Geographer* Vol 58 No 4 2006
- 9 Andrew Clark et al 'Learning to see: Lessons from a participative observation research project on public space' *International Journal of Social Research methodology* 2009. A more sophisticated approach using video with young people as reflexive tool in participatory urban research by Melissa Butcher and Luke Dickens is reported in www.hackneyashome.co.uk
- 10 An interesting approach to vernacular cartography is suggested in Joe Gerlach 'Lines, Contours, legends' *Progress in Human Geography* Vol 38 (1) 2014. The concept and methodology of ethno-cartography is developed in Phil Cohen 'The Real Deal? Ethno-cartography and the 'other scene' *Ethnography* available at <http://philcohenworks.com/mapping-the-real-ethno-graphology-and-the-other-scene/>.
- 11 Paolo Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Continuum 1993; Henri Giroux *On Critical Pedagogy* Continuum 2011; Chris McFarlane *Learning the City* Wiley-Blackwell 2011; Griff Foley *Learning in Social Action* Zed Books 1999
- 12 Italo Calvino *Invisible Cities* Picador 1978
- 13 Centre for Urban Pedagogy: <http://welcometocup.org>

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- 14 Bruno Latour *Reassembling the Social: an Introduction to Actor-network Theory*. Oxford University Press 2005.
- 15 For different approaches to participatory counter mapping see: David Turnbull 'Constructing knowledge spaces and locating sites of resistance in the modern cartographic transformation', in R. Paulston (ed.), *Social Cartography: Mapping Ways of Seeing Social and Educational Change*, Garland Publishing Inc. Press 1998; Bjorn Sletti 'We drew what we imagined: participatory mapping and the art of landscape making' *Current Anthropology* 2009; Julie Cidell 'Challenging the contours: critical cartography, local knowledge and the public realm' *Environment and Planning A* Vol 4 Number 5 2008. A participatory approach to community asset mapping is being developed by Giota Alezivou at the Open University.
- 16 See Dorothy Sheridan et al *Writing Ourselves: Mass Observation and Literacy Practices* Hampton Press 2000
- 17 Jack Common *Freedom of the Streets* Secker and Warburg 1938
- 18 Charles Madge *Society in the Mind: Elements of Social Eidos* Faber and Faber 1964
- 19 Jean Lave *Cognition in Practice* Cambridge University Press 1998; Pat Ainley et al *Apprenticeship: towards a new paradigm of learning* Kogan Page 2002
- 20 For a discussion of the narrative turn in planning see Phil Cohen 'Stuff Happens: The making of Thames Gateway and narrative planning' in Phil Cohen and Mike Rustin (eds) op cit. Also Ruth Finnegan *Tales of the city: a study of narrative and urban life* Cambridge University Press 1998.
- 21 C Wright Mills *The Sociological Imagination* Oxford University Press 1970
- 22 Sue Clifford S and Angela King *The Parish Atlas of West Sussex* Common Ground 2002
- 23 Franco Moretti *Atlas of the European Novel* Verso 1999
- 24 Rebecca Solnit *Infinite City: a San Francisco Atlas* University of California Press 2010
- 25 This is discussed in Nora Rathzel and Phil Cohen *Finding the Way Home: class, gender, race and young people's belonging in London and Hamburg* U &E Publications 2006
- 26 Reif Larsen *The Collected Works of T.S.Spivet* Harper Collins 2010
- 27 Laura Kurgan *Close up at a distance: mapping, technology, politics* Zone Books 2013