

THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY

A multimedia project exploring East London through maps

This project has developed out of a narrative map produced by John Wallet for a book about East London and the Olympics by Phil Cohen published in March 2013. The book and the online resources that have been developed around it will provide the information and research base for work with schools and community groups in East London, generating content for an exhibition. This will be supplemented with a film and some additional dedicated resources linked to both the educational and curatorial projects.

Some starting points

MAPS

- In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guild drew a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, coinciding point for point with it. The following generations, who were not so fond of the study of Cartography saw the vast map to be useless and permitted it to decay and fray under the Sun and winters. In the deserts of the West, still today, there are tattered ruins of the Map, inhabited by animals and beggars; and in all the land there is no other relic of the disciplines of geography *J-L Borges The Exactitude of Science*
- Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: A hyper-real. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory - precession of simulacra - that engenders the territory. *Jean Baudrillard The Desert of the real*
- A map is in its essence and intent an arbitrary selection of information. An atlas may represent many places in the same way or the same place in many ways, and it is in the myriad descriptions that maps begin to approximate the rich complexity of place, of a place, of any place. *Rebecca Solnit Infinite City*
- The Head of the Air Force had an atlas on his knees and kept staring first at the Atlas and then at the ground below trying to figure out where they were going. The young pilot had been given orders to 'follow the Giant' and hadn't the foggiest idea where they were. 'This place we are flying over isn't in the atlas, he said, grinning, 'that's why they always put two blank pages at the back. They're for new countries. You're meant to fill them in yourself.' *Roald Dahl - The BFG*

TERRITORY:

- People lives not in places but in the description of places (Wallace Stevens)
- Territoriality is how we construct an embodied space in which to feel powerful and at home. Our first territory is the mother's body (Erwin Straus).
- Through rituals of territoriality groups who in reality have little control over their immediate environment assert forms of symbolic ownership over local resources and amenities. Street gangs are thickest on the ground in areas of multiple deprivation.
- Nationalisms of the neighbourhood legitimate rules of social inclusion and exclusion based on distinctions of class, race and ethnicity .

IMAGES OF EAST LONDON:

East London lay hidden from view behind a curtain on which were painted terrible pictures: starving children, suffering women, overworked men; horrors of drunkenness and vice; monsters and demons of inhumanity, giants of disease and despair. Did these pictures truly represent what lay behind, or did they bear to the facts a relation similar to that which the pictures outside a booth at some country fair bear to the performance or show within? This curtain we have tried to lift.

Charles Booth, East London Life and Labour (1899)

People using Bank Machine's ATMs can opt to have their prompts and options given to them in rhyming slang. They will be asked to enter their Huckleberry Finn, rather than their Pin, and will have to select how much sausage and mash (cash) they want. The rhyming slang prompts will be available from cash machines throughout East London. Ron Delnevo, managing director of Bank Machine, said: 'Whilst we expect some residents will visit the machine to just have a butcher's (look), most will be genuinely pleased as this is the first time a financial services provider will have recognised the Cockney language in such a manner. On our cash machines in Wales less than 1% of people opt for the Welsh language, whereas between 15-20% opt for Cockney when given the chance'.

BBC Report 2012

Visitors to the Olympics will be able to join the locals in a 'knees up' or singalong in one of the many friendly pubs, see the funny side of life with stand-up comedians whose jokes are part of the area's traditional cockney sense of humour, be challenged by the visual wit of East End's street artists whose fringe Olympic festival is happening at Hackney Wick, strike a bargain while taking in the ethnic vibe at the famous Green Street market, and round off the day by enjoying an authentic Bengali curry in Brick Lane. With all these hotspots no wonder they call it a world in a city!

Guide to East London and the Olympics (2012)

Key themes and concepts

This project explores the relationship between map and territory in a number of ways. Using video film, cartography, ethnography and photography, it documents the different ways East London is portrayed by a range of groups: by those who live there and by outsiders, by immigrants and 'gentrifiers', by the local gay community and by faith communities, by people with physical disabilities and by those who have moved out into Essex. We will contrast and compare the panoptic maps constructed by civilising missionaries and statisticians, the territories marked by street gangs, the imaginative cartographies created by artists and writers and the locally situated knowledge of long established communities will all be documented. A special focus will be the recent re-description of east London by civic imagineers culminating in the re-invention of the area as a vibrant enterprising multicultural for the Olympic Games. We also hope to explore the de-territorialisation of the East End as a piece of global city and the process of reterritorialising as pedestrian lines of desire are mobilised against the iron cage of planning rationality.

Lights on for the Territory

This is a short 12 minute film directed by Steve Dorrington featuring John Wallet discussing the making of a narrative map about East London and also addressing the map/territory theme more broadly. It will provide an important input for community and student groups working on making maps or halls of fame helping to focus their work on specific issues of representation, and illustrating a possible working method.

A Context of collaboration

The Museum of Docklands is currently developing a new gallery around the theme 'Many East Ends'. The aim is to create a framework of co-creation with a wide range of community groups in East London and to involve them in a process of collaboration around generating new content for the gallery. In this way a dialogue will be created between the process of curatorial interpretation and the agendas of local communities. We are currently in negotiation with the Museum around possible projects with both an educational and curatorial aim.

There is inevitably a distinction to be made between projects whose primary purpose is educational i.e. to provide a framework for learning, skill transfer, and the building of the social confidence around specific issues, and projects that are professionally curated with a view to generating content for public display in a museum gallery. However what is interesting from our point of view in the MoD's approach to the 'Many East Ends' programme is how closely these two aspects of the work are integrated. Our contribution can be to work with the Museum staff to help ensure that this principle is sustained in practice and permeates the whole gallery.

Project Development

5. The educational project will involve local people from different communities in East London creating their own maps and/or halls of fame. A series of short 3-5 minute videos will be made with each group showing them making the work, talking about how they came up with ideas etc. These will be displayed with the maps or via an online video linkup as part of the gallery exhibition.

6. What follows is an indicative list of the community groups we might work with. In some cases we have existing links with them, or work has already been done with them around issues of local representation; some are groups with special interests or needs who have been marginalised or demonised in official cartographies .

- Residents group Carpenter's estate (adjacent to Olympic Park)
- Young Homeless group Stratford
- East London Gay Pride and Gay youth group
- East London Disability youth group
- Cockney Diaspora : Hammers fans living outside the East End
- Brick Lane Music Hall Senior Citizens Reminiscence Group
- Youth and Community Project Royal Docks

7. East London 2062

We would in addition propose to work with two GNVQ groups studying art and design or multimedia, one from New Vic College, the other from Tower Hamlets College. These groups would work in small teams and be given a brief to produce a map of East London half a century after the Olympics. We would work with both staff and students in helping them develop specific skills in relation to map making, photography and video. Each team would make a presentation of its work to a panel of experts and the winners maps exhibited in the gallery. Film students from the two colleges would also be involved in the filming of the community projects.

8. Special Curatorial Projects

There are a number of possible additional professional mapping projects that might be commissioned and funded directly by the Museum of Docklands, with their making being documented on film. The following is an indicative list of projects that might be rolled out as part of an ongoing programme of gallery development over a five year period:

- Dogged! A taggers map of East London commissioned from graffiti artists in Hackney Wick
- An art installation exploring the political role of forensic mapping : open commission
- A rap map : multimedia music map of East London :open commission
- The Sugar Mile : A bomb map of the Royal Docks with Glyn Maxwell reading his poem about the East London blitz, combined with oral history material
- Ganglands : exploring the changing geography of street crime with Dick Hobbs
- Edgelands : a map exploring the interface of rural and urban ecologies in East London with contributions from Richard Mabey and Ken Worpole
- Solid Turbulence : Mapping the impact of regeneration,immigration and gentrification on community relations in Poplar with Anthony Lam

9. Interviews could be made with a number of mapping experts, furnishing a series of short 3-5 minute video clips for use in the exhibition and related to specific projects. The following is a possible list of interviewees:

- Rebecca Solnit on 'Infinite Cities'
- Iain Sinclair on why the map is not the territory

- Ken Worpole on mental maps and edgelands
- Richard Sennett discussing the role of Booth's poverty survey maps and the Abercrombie map of plans for London's post war reconstruction
- Dick Hobbs on east London street gang cultures, and their changing forms of territoriality
- Anna Minton discussing the Olympic Road Network Map and
- Louise Gravers on Hackney Wick Community Map
- Anti-Monopoly Maps :Sarah Carne on the View from BhangraTown and Phil Cohen on Gary's Olympic Game
- Adam Dant talking about his New East End map project
- Toby Butler on the making of the Royal Docks oral history trail
- Anthony Lam discussing his photographic projects

10. Material from the whole project will be drawn on to produce a longer film with a fictional narrative frame directed by Steve Dorrington . What follows is one possible scenario:

Synopsis

It is East London 2062 and the tale of two cities is now about the *sat navvies*, the affluent and mobile who travel about everywhere using their miniature GPS to find their way around and the *homies* or *hoodies*, the poor and marginalised, who never leave their neighbourhoods, spend most of the time on the street and fiercely defend their local territory against rival gangs. The art of making and reading maps has disappeared, since neither of these groups have any use for them, while the authorities regard them as subversive and have banned them from public use. There is however an underground network of *mappies* and *graffers*, artists, writers, academics and rebel pedestrians, who secretly carry on the ancient tradition of cartography.

The film opens with the narrator/hero finding what s/he takes to be a 'map' in a dustbin in Westfield Shopping City Stratford. S/he becomes curious to find out more about how it came to be made, and what its purpose is. In the quest to track down its maker s/he visits various places including Hackney Wick and interviews members of the mappers and graffers network, each of whom discusses a particular map that has special importance for them.

Eventually the narrator is led to the maker of 'Lights on for the territory', an eccentric recluse who explains in detail how and why it was made. The film ends with the narrator setting off in a van for Olympic Park from Hackney Wick following the Olympic Road Network route. As the journey progresses the sat nav issues increasingly bizarre, irrelevant and contradictory instructions in an ever more hysterical voice and starts to argue with itself. In desperation the narrator stops and asks a passing 'homie' for directions, only to get a series of garbled anecdotes.. The van ends up where it started driving up a dead end street to a wall on which the closing credits are being graffed.

12. Lecture Series and book

We might also explore the possibility of a public lecture series co-hosted by MoD and University of East London inviting specialists in the field (see interview list above) . This series in turn might provide the basis for a book reproducing the maps with linked essays.