

# ‘Community’ between map and territory

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# Map reading as an organic community of practice



# BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: The Livingmaps Network: 2015 - ?

- Creating an information and support network for diverse mapping practices within a framework of theoretical debate about critical cartography.
- Bringing together academics, artists and activists and encouraging their practical collaboration in mapping projects.
- Challenging Eurocentric perspectives in the dominant geo-narratives while supporting alternative counter-hegemonic cartographies
- Mapping the inter-connectedness of urban and environmental inequality
- Working with groups marginalised or dispossessed within global power structures to strengthen their capacity to develop alternative mappings of the past, present and future.
- Widenng 'interpretive community' by including citizen mappers in the co-creation of platforms of public dissemination.



# Young **CitYzen** Atlas



Putting young people at the  
centre of mapping urban futures

# ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is a set of research methods and writing practices for studying the everyday life of people, places, society and culture.

The aim of ethnography is to study the unique characteristics of a place and then compare them to our overall knowledge of society and other places.

For example, you could use ethnography as a way to study your house, street, local park, school or shopping centre and then compare this with other households, streets, parks, schools and shopping centres around the city.

By doing ethnography you can understand how your local area is similar and different to other local areas.

walking

taking notes

What does this data tell me about my local area, and what it is like to live and work there?  
Do they tell me something that I didn't know before?  
How could I use this data to tell a story about my local area?

Observe what you see around you and write descriptions of it.  
Talk to people about what they do in the local area.  
Write down or record what they say.



Take photographs and make sketches of your surroundings.  
Build a collection of the materials that you find around you.

photography



drawing





# MAPPING OUR KIND OF TOWN





# De/constructing Community: Are we that Name?

- A portmanteau term with innumerable applications
- A literature survey carried out as part of the AHRC Connected Communities programme identified 87 different usages, and concluded that it was the word's versatility of meaning that made it such an enduring feature of public discourse.
- Community' implies commonality, continuity, cohesion, connectivity and contexture. Or maybe just conflation and confusion?
- If 2 is company and 3 a crowd how many is 'community'?
- 'Is 'community' merely a nice PC name for populations which might otherwise be designated as a crowd, a gang, a mob, a herd or a swarm ?



# THE COMMUNITY ROMANCE

- The more instrumentalised , affectless and individualistic sociality becomes under capitalism, the more 'community' is invested as a countervailing source of expressivity and empathy.
- Subsistence and peasant economies come to be idealised as 'organic communities' living in harmony with each other and the natural world.
- The defence and extension of 'commons' against the invasive and destructive impact of 'accumulation by dispossession' via land grabs, gentrification, privatisation of public amenities and resource.
- The desire for a more authentic and less ecocidal life style by going 'off grid' and setting up communes.
- The soap opera as the narrative form of the everyday community romance

# COMMONING



# Community mobilisation ? Or the lonely crowd in flight from social contagion ?

The crowd we need is the dense crowd, in which body is pressed against body, so we no longer notice who it is that presses against us *Elias Canetti Crowds and Power*





# Wholly communing !

All is One, One is none, none is all -*Zen saying*  
Communitas is Anti-Structure –*Victor Turner The Ritual Process*





# Performing Community : THE TRIBE

one for all and all for one

Affinity group pledged to assert a sense of shared singularity against a suffocating and homogenising individualism

*Michael Maffesoli The Neo Tribe*





# PERFORMING COMMUNITY :THE MULTITUDE

## for the many not the few

Strategic solidarities uniting people across bio-political boundaries, sustaining collective resistance to common subjections  
*Hardt and Negri*

The multitude, though it moves towards a common goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to the Other  
*Martin Buber I and Thou*





# THE LONDON STREET COMMUNE: between tribe and multitude



# GLASTO: THE SPECTACLE OF COMMUNITY

Mass Ecstasy? Pop up Utopia? Or a hundred thousand people standing in a field?

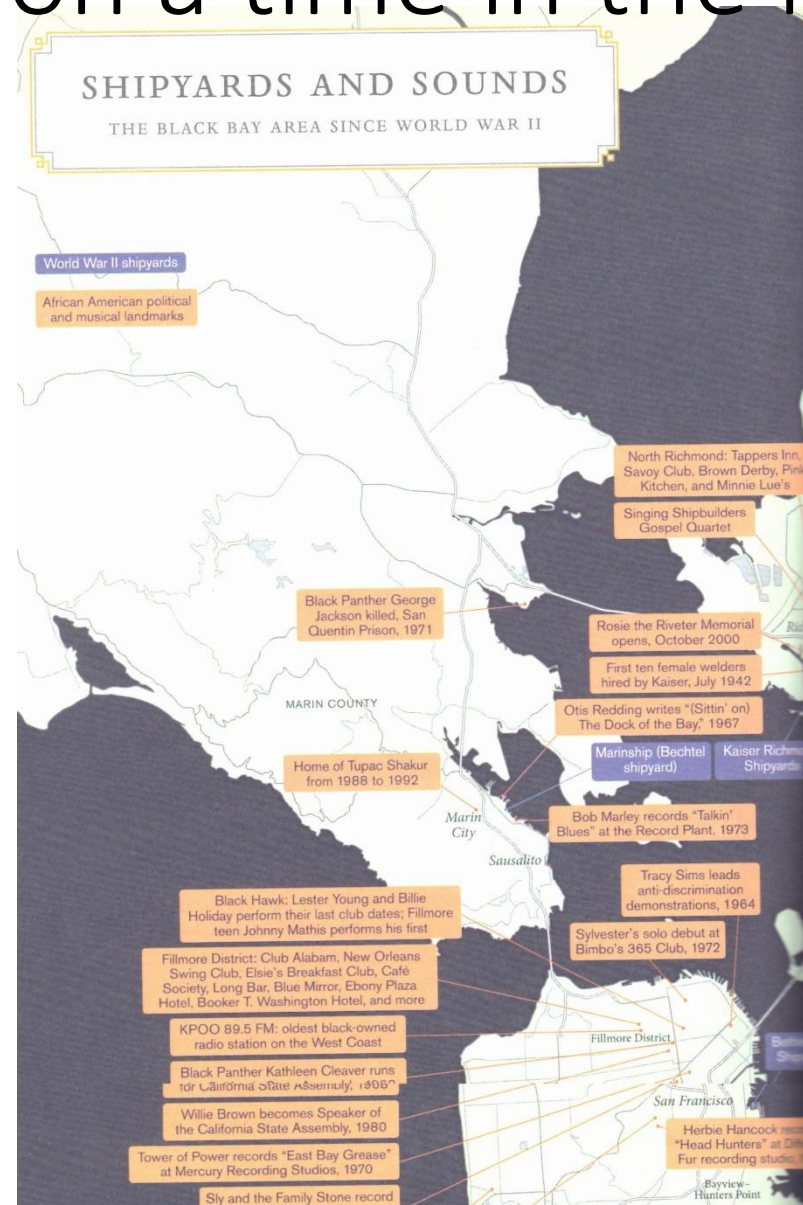


# THERE GOES THE LABOURHOOD?

- The Labourhood: a dense network of everyday cultural practices, and informal norms of solidarity traditionally linking workplace and neighbourhood in working class areas
- The last place you would look for community is in today's deregulated, privatised, and precarious workplaces – *trade union organiser*
- The chronic insecurities associated with contemporary work in post industrial society make it difficult if not impossible for many people to sustain the forms of attachment required for the formation of political community, or to sustain struggles of long duration  
- *sociologist*
- New forms of association and solidarity are being created by the digital economy, through its oppressive and exploitative conditions of work and leisure– *digital activist*.



# Once upon a time in the labourhood



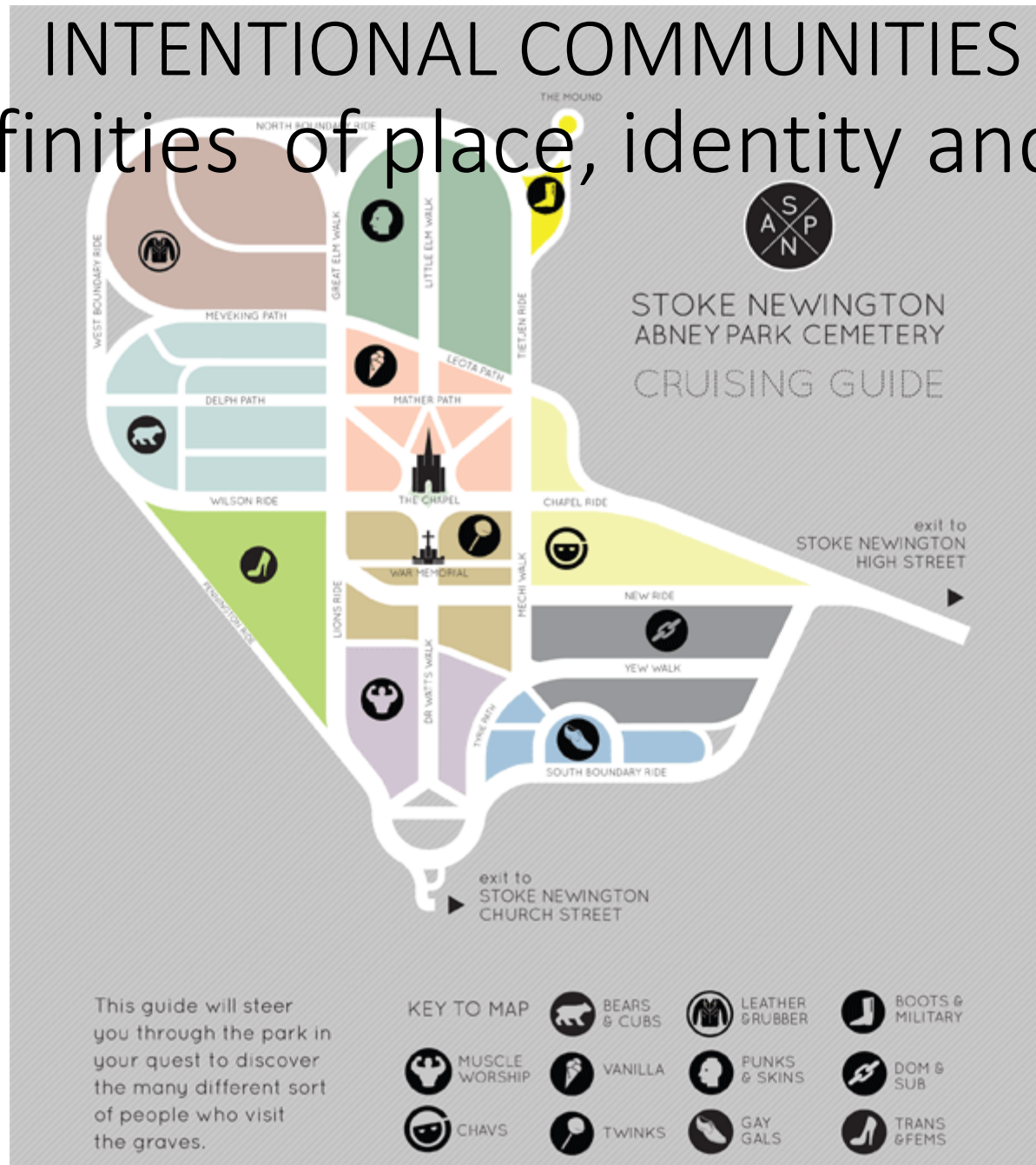
# INVOLUNTARY COMMUNITIES

People thrown together by force of circumstances over which they have no control



# INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

## Elective affinities of place, identity and belonging





# INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES 2.0.



# COMMUNITY ACTIVISM 1.0

- Community as the popular democratic expression of collective values and common interests
- Investing in material infrastructure and social capital to support community development and capacity building
- Moving from involuntary community- in- itself to intentional community- for –itself
- Staying with the trouble at the grass roots : the Alinski principle

# COMMUNITY ACTIVISM 2.0

- Community as transient moment not historical movement
- Present to itself as spontaneous assembly, not institutional emplacement
- A platform of mutual aid and direct democracy
- The coming together of diverse interests and perspectives in provisional collaboration
- Community to and from itself : negotiating centrifugal and centripetal trajectories
- Staying with the trouble at the grass routes
- From congregation to dispersal to regroupment - the Alinski principle revised for the digital age



# Communitarianism Revisited

- *Proposition One*: If you tell enough people enough times that they belong to a 'community' they will start to behave like one. Or maybe not?
- *Proposition Two*: The more the material infrastructure of social solidarity is eroded or hollowed out, the greater the rhetorical power of imagined community as source or site of its magical retrieval
- *Question One* : If 'community' is the answer to alienation, atomisation and anomie what is the question?
- *Question Two*: Is grass roots/routes campaigning about 'folk politics' ? Or rebuilding municipal Socialism from the bottom up? Or an updated/outdated version of Council Communism?

# Some further food for thought

- To be uprooted is to be denied real active and natural participation in the life of community – Simone Weil
- Community is provisional, always work in progress, underpinned by dialogue . Community is where it happens– *Martin Buber I and Thou*
- it is not a question of thinking community as substance, as its own and autonomous entity. No more is it a question of thinking it according to a natural given (a people or nation understood as a race or lineage), or according to a work to be realized, a monument to itself as suggested by all the national palaces, forbidden cities, capitals, Kremlins, and all the images of an essence of common being - *Jean-Luc Nancy The Inoperable Community*
- The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust. *Dona Haraway The Cyborg Manifesto*

# Further information

- [www.livingmaps.org](http://www.livingmaps.org)