

# TUBE MAP CENTRAL

Monthly Newsletter

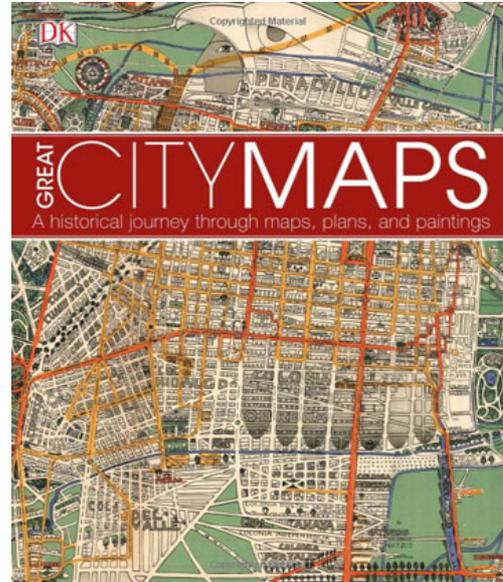
Number 36, October 2016

Another new book to report this month. *Great City Maps: A Historical Journey Through Maps, Plans, and Paintings* is an attractive compilation of designs published by Dorling Kindersley, ISBN 978-0241238986. Readers will recognise one of my own pieces of work sneaking in towards the end.

J35

## Dates for your diary

- The exhibition planned by [Wiener Linien](#) to celebrate the start of construction of an extension to Line U2, and the creation of Line U5, appears to be commencing on 25th October 2016, not the 17th as originally reported. Details are sketchy but the venue seems to be the new information centre at [Volkstheater](#) on U2/U3. A number of my designs should be on display, but check opening times before travel.
- I will be giving my talk [Transit Maps: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly](#) to the University of the Third Age, [Hillingdon branch](#), Monday 9th January, 11:00 at Winston Churchill Hall, Ruislip, HA4 7QL.



T19

## In the media, on the web

- [Wired magazine](#) got hold of a [track map of the London Underground](#), which seemed to [upset them](#) somewhat, but their analysis of factors that influence map usability is sound!
- [Boston Public Library](#) has [revisited](#) some of my city maps from [two years ago](#). I still have not completed all the designs in this sequence!
- My [updated Brussels circles map](#) is reproduced in the [ENLOCC newsletter](#) to assist members who want to attend their [tenth anniversary event](#).

L12

## Research news

[Map-induced journey-planning biases for a simple network: A Docklands Light Railway study](#) has now been accepted for publication by [Transportation Research A: Policy and Practice](#). This is the formal write-up of the usability studies comparing various DLR prototype maps conducted in conjunction with Transport for London and [FWT](#). The resulting maps that are displayed on trains and stations are a direct consequence of the research, and there are a number of intriguing findings relevant to schematic map design in general. A pre-print can be downloaded [here](#), and a digested version produced by FWT is available [here](#).

T13

## Web page news

- In conjunction with the price reduction for my book, [Underground Maps Unravelled](#), a PDF document comprising sample chapters is now [available online](#) for download and evaluation.
- With a further paper accepted for publication, my [publications page](#) has been updated again. All academic works to date are now available for downloading.

## Map of the Month: Minimalising Scandinavian minimalism

When I give a [presentation](#), I am often asked which are my favourite current city schematic maps. That is a difficult question to answer, not least because [I have never seen a map I haven't wanted to fix](#) (including my own). But some cities do seem to put more-than-usual thought into their designs, and the networks of [Lisbon](#), [St Petersburg](#), [Köln](#), [San Francisco](#) (BART) and [Copenhagen](#) (S-Tog) have consistently caught my eye in the past, for various reasons, subject to the caveat that often a good base map is ruined by clumsy subsequent modifications. Last year, the [Stockholm railways map](#) made it to my list. The designer worked hard to simplify the line trajectories, and the black background gives a nice counterpoint to the Scandinavian minimalism. Irrespective of the usability of the design, it is certainly dramatic.

Unfortunately, when care is taken to simplify as much of a design as possible, those regions where this is not achieved stand out somewhat. In particular, right at the middle of the original design, the trajectory of the blue lines is uncharacteristically zig-zagged, and the brown line (L22) bends back on itself unconvincingly.

L27

L28

L29

L21

S7

L25

L26

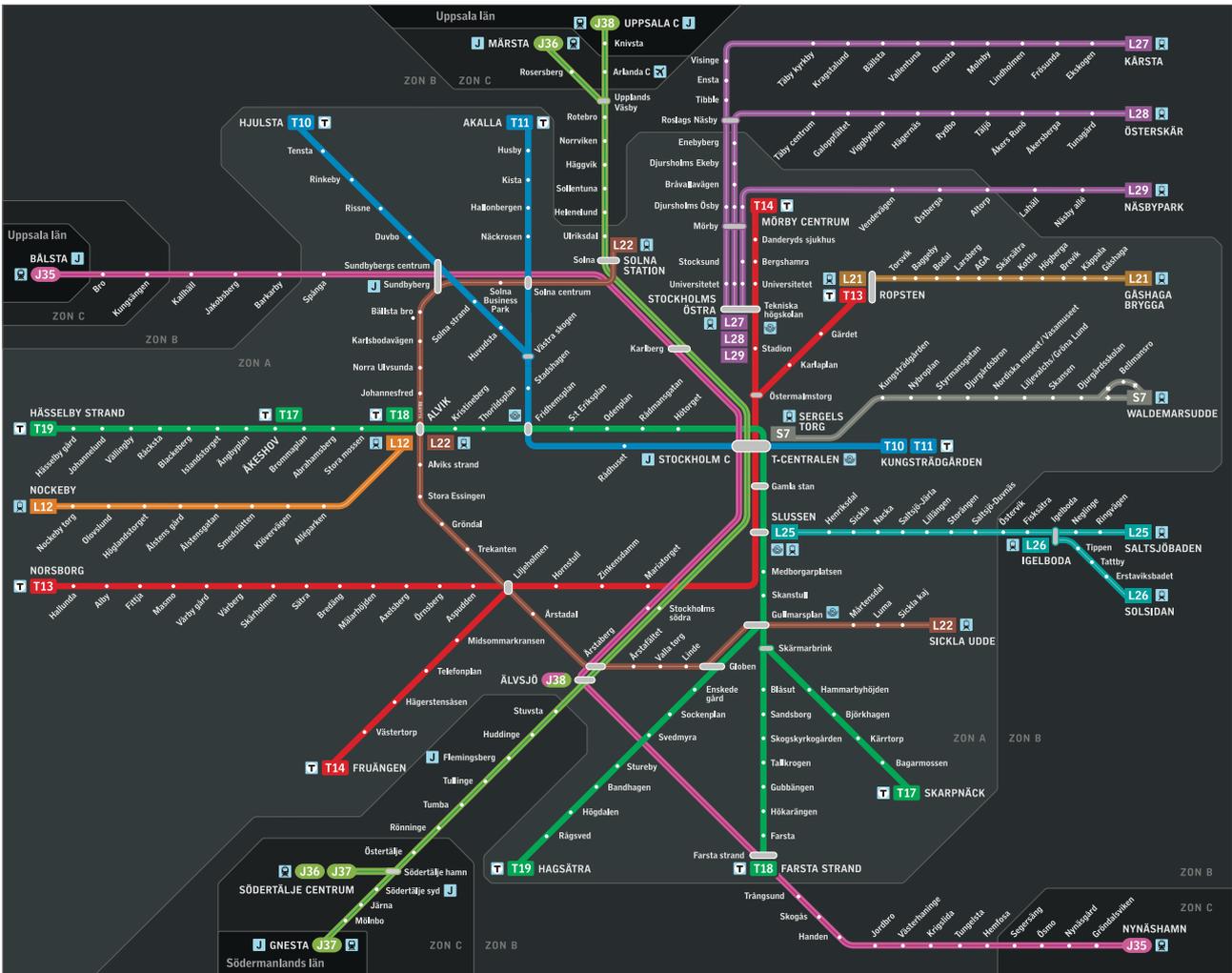
J35



Any readers familiar with Stockholm will see that the official map is very distorting of local topography, including the centre, where the relationships between blue and green *Tunnelbana* lines and longer distance suburban lines (light green and pink) bear very little resemblance to reality. This presents a puzzle from a design perspective. If geography really doesn't matter (and presumably it doesn't, otherwise these distortions would not be there) then why not go all the way and really work hard to simplify the outcome, rather than seeming to leave it unfinished? Schematic map design is always a compromise between line trajectory simplicity versus topographical accuracy, but once priorities become

focused towards one extreme of this continuum as opposed the other, then the need for a consistent approach to design does entail some commitment to the polarised decision.

The consequence of this inconsistency is that every time I saw this map, I had an overwhelming desire to rework the offending section. Eventually I succumbed, and at the same time, I tidied up some other parts of the design, aligned the eastern and western termini, and straightened some other lines. The basic map is still very much the original one though, enhanced rather than replaced. Even so, I can still see other parts of it that need some attention. My desire to fix this particular map has been attenuated rather than eliminated. Knowing when to stop fiddling is another important skill in map creation, otherwise nothing would ever get finished and there would be no newsletters!



Taking a published map and reworking it like this is technically in breach of copyright, and not strictly legal! Hopefully, the spirit intended by this reworking shines through; to take a distinctive piece of work and push the intentions of the original designer to their logical conclusion. With autumn well and truly here, and winter on its way, Map of the Month for November will take a seasonal theme. To see the results, subscribe to my newsletter at my web pages, [www.tubemapcentral.com](http://www.tubemapcentral.com).

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