2016 is becoming a year of map books. A Spanish version of Mark Ovenden’s *Transit Maps of the World* is now available, published by Nórdica Libros, ISBN 8416830061. Also available now, *Maps of London’s Transport – Design variety in the first half of the Twentieth Century*, by John Dodd, published by Capital Transport, ISBN 1854144003, fulfills its promise of many tram, underground, bus and railway maps never before published, in a large-format book (two images shown below). Elsewhere, Jug Cerovic has been successful in his Kickstarter campaign for his self-published book of his designs, with deliveries commencing soon. Don’t forget, if you want my book or posters in time for Christmas, then order as soon as possible, ideally no later than the end of this week.

Date for your diary

- 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 2017, 11:00 at Winston Churchill Hall, Ruislip, HA4 7QL.

In the media, On the Web

- Mark’s book has attracted the attention of Spanish newspapers and bloggers, with an article from the newspapers *La Voz de Galicia/La Voz de Asturias* and also write-ups at *Farenheit-451* and *Culturamas*.

Web page news

- My web shop has been updated again, with more posters, and *Paris* and *Berlin* have their own pages.

Map of the Month: Modernism in its Spiritual Home?

Map of the month for my April 2014 newsletter was a digitisation of a doomed yet colourful design that was produced by the Communist-controlled Berlin S-Bahn but never put into production. Back then, I suggested that the map might have been inspired by the famous 1972 New York City Subway map created by Massimo Vignelli. Its parallel stripes, one colour per service, are certainly conceptually similar, and are now a common design feature of many German and USA maps.

The distinctive Modernist/minimalist Vignelli style suits the network structure and service patterns of the New York City Subway well, but I have always argued that rail networks around the world differ in their shape and structure, and therefore care should be taken to match the design approach with the properties of the network. My own attempt at reworking the London Underground map in this style has attracted positive comments, but I’m not entirely convinced. One strand-per-route works well in New York, but in London it shifts the emphasis towards lines that are complex but are not necessarily the most important.
I have commented at length about the official Berlin U-Bahn and S-Bahn map in my book. It is not a design that I find easy to use because of its thin lines, complicated line trajectories, lack of coherent shape, and a colour-coding system that is not quite one-colour-per-service, and not quite logically coloured by trunk line grouping. This dissatisfaction led to an extensive study of how the network structure interacted with design rules to influence the resulting map. Later, I added a concentric circles version, although this has now been shown to be difficult to use and unpopular. Even so, there will always be more possibilities to explore.

I am currently involved with research investigating the effect of different ways of colour-coding services on the usability of a map, in terms of line tracking and journey planning. Although the New York City Subway will be used as a test bed to investigate this, the preference in Germany for one-colour-per-service coding means that the findings will have a wider relevance. This got me thinking about the Berlin network, wondering whether the colour-coding might be made more meaningful if presented in a different way.

The Vignelli subway map style, showing only the essentials of lines, stations, and their connections, devoid of unnecessary embellishment, is a perfect implementation of the philosophy espoused by the Bauhaus School, and Berlin certainly feels more comfortable with this than London. The result is a very orderly design and, for the first time, the colour coding used in Berlin makes sense to me. In fact, the distinctive station markers – small black dots inside the lines – predate Vignelli’s work. A 1969 German tourist guide to London has a version of the Underground map redrawn with this feature.

Another year of newsletters is completed, and with several designs in progress, there will be more than enough material for another twelve Maps of the Month for 2017. To make sure you receive them, subscribe to this newsletter at www.tubemapcentral.com. Wishing all my readers around the world a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

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