Time to put down my software, stop designing maps, and assemble another newsletter, just in time for its date to match its mailing and, appropriately for the time of year, there is an egg theme too!

**Date for your diary**
The third Schematic Mapping Workshop will be held on 15th/16th April, 2021, at Universität Würzburg, Germany. The basic workshop website is complete and includes the full scope and submission timetable. The portal for submissions opens soon, and we are happy to take questions about these at submissions@schematicmapping.org. Reports on all aspects of schematic map research are most welcome.

**Web Page News**
I am delighted to announce a new sister website, [Info Design Central](#). This is a joint venture with Sietske de Groot of TradePeers Ltd. Two years ago we created the twelve, remarkably future-proof regional [Brexit maps](#) highlighting the issues faced by businesses (described in [Newsletter 55](#)). Our new enterprise will specialise in infographics that clarify complex issues, including, but not restricted to, tube-map-style representations.

**Map of the Month: Moscow is Egg-Shaped?**
I promised a trip to Berlin for April Map of the Month: the design is ready and waiting for its newsletter outing, but it got overtaken by events. I have mapped Moscow twice in the past, but not really focused much attention on this network. In past decades, the map has been famously multilinear with perfect straight trajectories, but the addition of new lines forced more traditional official approaches, which emphasised the radial network structure but depicted Line 5, the Koltsevaya line, as a perfect circle.

The longstanding challenge with mapping the Moscow Metro has been central transfer stations in which surface entrances to individual lines can be several hundred meters apart. Although all lines can be (eventually) accessed from any entrance, each line gets a station name that reflects its direct locale, which results in individual stations having up to four names to squeeze into place.

The new mapping challenge is two circular lines that have been added to the network, Line 14 has been converted from various orbital railways, but Line 11 is brand new, and set to open in stages over the next couple of years. It would have been nice to have extended the circle theme of the map out to the suburbs but, unfortunately, these new routes are neither particularly regularly shaped, nor concentric.

Having seen other recent attempts, I decided to have a go myself with the following design priorities in mind: (1) topographical distortion under control; (2) reasonably large lettering; (3) absolutely no station names interrupting lines, and (4) simple line trajectories, including some sort of regular shape for the new circles. Line 11 (blue-ish) was prevented from following a circular trajectory by a pocket of high station density to the west of the city, most notably relating to Line 4. Line 14 (strawberry) was distorted by long station names to the south-east of the city (Lines 7, purple and 10, light green) and a need to intersect appropriately with Line 11. This resulted in a pair of eggs.
The outcome is a good gimmick, but in all honesty I am not a great fan of mixing straight lines and curves on the same design in this way. Yes, it is indeed nice to have simple, readily identifiable shapes on a map to give the network clear structure. But, the risk is straight lines crossing curves at all sorts of strange angles. With a straightforward octolinear map, lines can only cross at 45º or 90º, and this discipline has been utterly lost for this and many other Moscow Metro map incarnations. I suspect that as the network grows even more over the next few years, the hybrid approach currently taken on official designs will have to be abandoned but, in the meantime, there are at least three other ideas that I want to try, watch this space to see what develops.

This is the first time I have resorted to egg shapes on a map, and with Easter taking place this month, the design had to jump the queue. As you can see from the graphic on the previous page, I could have pushed the egg theme even harder, but I decided that would be somewhat over the top, and with several more Moscow maps to come, a common-visual language would be better for the ones that will not have an egg-theme. Berlin will have to wait for the summer now because Map of the Month for May addresses important, but controversial issues that will affect us all. To find out what is in store, subscribe my newsletter at www.tubemapcentral.com.

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