Apologies for another late newsletter, this time delayed, as we will see, owing to the Polish postal service. However, it is still December and still the holiday season and so it is timely to have some fun, as promised.

**Date for your diary**
The third [Schematic Mapping Workshop](#) will be held on 21st/22nd April, 2022, at Universität Würzburg, Germany. The workshop website includes the full scope and submission timetable. Reports on all aspects of schematic map research are most welcome. The portal for submissions opens in April 2021 and we are happy to take questions about these at submissions@schematicmapping.org.

**Book news**

November Map of the Month was an infographic showing new legal regimes covering trade between the UK and the rest of the world. I am delighted to announce the forthcoming book in which this and many others will feature. *Trade in Transition: Doing business in, to and from the United Kingdom and Ireland from 2021* is written by Sietske de Groot and documents the new legal environments faced by all UK businesses that operate internationally. This is not the sort of book that I am usually involved with, but creating attractive logically coherent infographics has been a fascinating challenge. More details of the book will be at [www.tradepeersconsulting.com](http://www.tradepeersconsulting.com).

**Map of the Month: Fantasy Transit Maps in Popular Culture**
It is always nice when the producer of a television show or a film goes to the extra trouble of adding authentic background details to set the scene. When rail travel is part of the plot, a fantasy map of the area served is most welcome. One attractive example is from the 1976 film *Silver Streak* where the curvilinear AMTrak map was rebranded to AMRoad, the fictitious operator in the film. More recently, an entire fantasy layout for Gotham City was created as a backdrop to the 2019 film *The Joker*.

Fantasy maps are not confined to the screen: on living room carpets worldwide the Lego Trains map has been assisting minifigures plan their journeys since 2006. The original is a conventional octolinear design with clean trajectories. It seems to show a commuter network converging on a central station and, although it is not strictly possible to evaluate the level of topographical distortion, the awkward double-dog-leg on the Red Line implies that the designer had a preference for accuracy over elegance. The major usability issue with this map is the first station on the Black Line. This appears to be shared with the Red Line but subsequent maps imply that this might not be the case.
The 2010 map looks very similar but is actually a completely new drawing. The obvious visual change is the recolouring of the Blue Line to yellow, presumably to mark the extension of this line southwest by one station. The colour choice is unfortunate as the line is now much less visible compared with the other two.

By 2014 the map seems to be running into trouble. A new branch has commenced operation on the Red Line, and also a new station has opened on this line near the centre. Presumably the designer redrew the shared Red Line–Black Line section to resolve the ambiguity described earlier concerning shared stations. Unfortunately, the elegant octolinearity of past years has been lost and the irregular diagonal angles have resulted in a distinctly ungainly appearance. The second version looks as though there was a partial attempt to fix this on the south-western branch of the Green Line – the Yellow colouring was short lived – but the whole map would have benefitted from reworking to make the combinations of angles more harmonious.

The 2018 design does not seem to fit with the rest of the sequence at all, unless there have been mass station closures in the interim. Again, the designer had no commitment towards regular angles, making this version probably the least aesthetically pleasing of all. New maps are issued every four years and so we can only hope that the 2022 version will herald a return to the more elegant design standards of earlier years.

Building with Lego has a lot in common with creating a schematised map. Although Lego produces a bewildering array of specialist parts, the basic bricks are still the staple of construction and so the creation of buildings becomes a challenge of architectural schematisation in three dimensions. If you know of any other fantasy rail maps created for films or television, do let me know. Back to maps of real networks next month: Map of the Month for January will probably feature Berlin. To find out what is in store, subscribe to my newsletter at www.tubemapcentral.com.

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The Lego railway maps exhibition has been delayed owing to late delivery of Polish floor tiles