

TUBE MAP CENTRAL

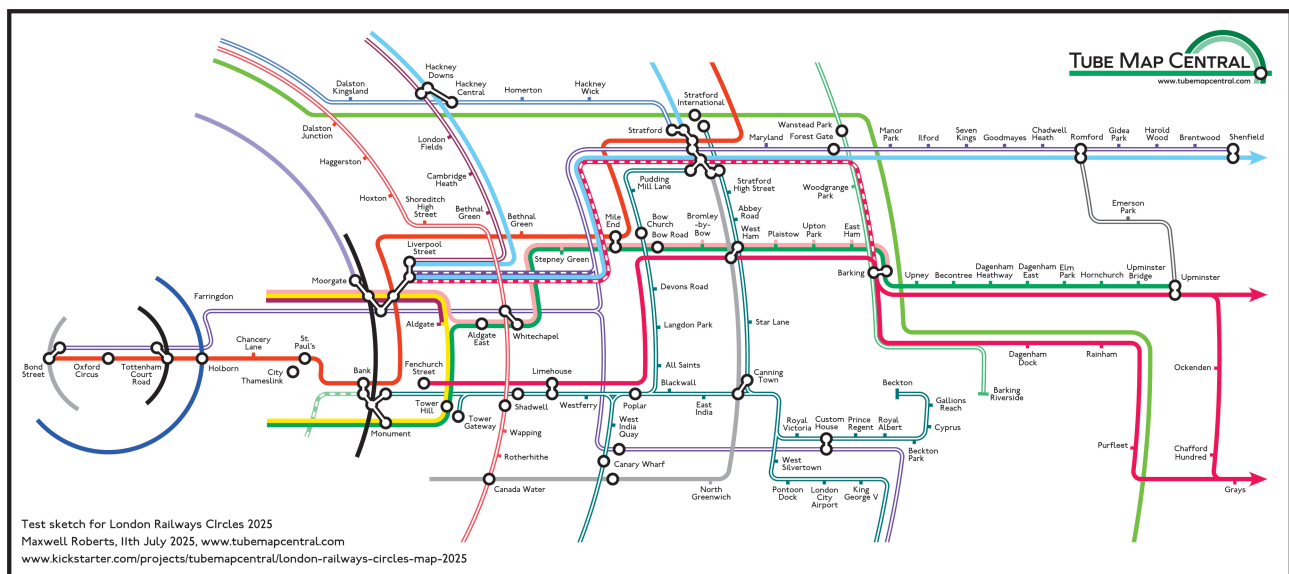
Newsletter

Number 102, September 2025

It has been a busy summer for all sorts of reasons and now there is more than enough material for another newsletter. There have also been important developments which mean that my work on map design will, inevitably change, both in the short and long-term. Read on to find out why.

Map Design I, Kickstarter campaign unsuccessful

It is a shame to start with bad news in a newsletter but, unfortunately, my [Kickstarter campaign](#) to fund the development of an all-London concentric circles map was unsuccessful, raising half its target. When I released [London Circles 2024](#) a year ago, many people requested a version that showed all of London's rail services and, for such a major project, this led me to Kickstarter. Thanks to [Londonist](#), the project had plenty of publicity that targeted exactly the right people, but I always knew that requesting advance payment for a sight-unseen poster was going to be a big ask, and so the outcome was not entirely surprising. I did create a proof-of-concept sketch for East London. I was very pleased with this but, unfortunately, current circumstances mean that developing the full version cannot be a priority.

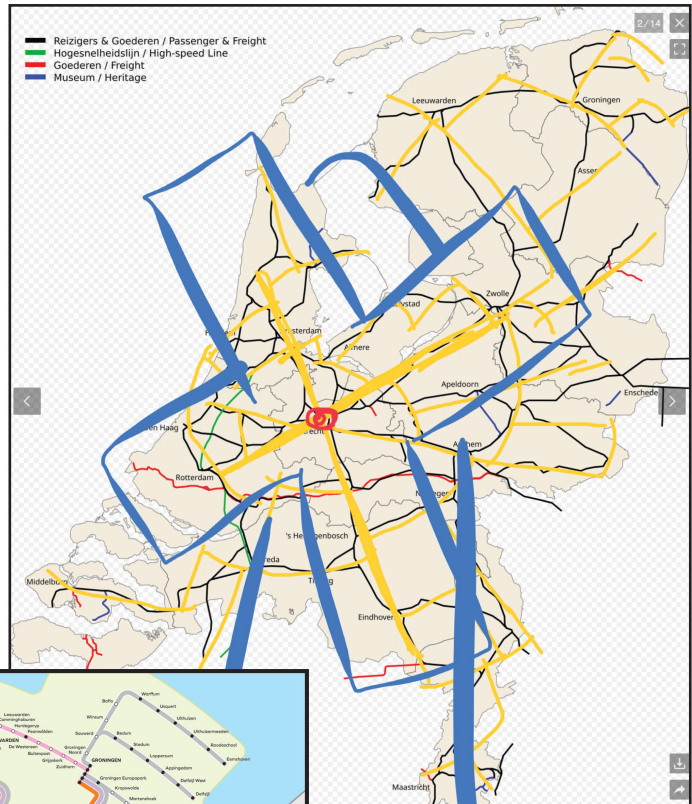


Map Design II, Netherlands in Circles

The Netherlands has a compact, intensively operated rail network. The official online map, [available for downloading](#), is challenging to interpret. It shows every individual service and this has the effect of fragmenting the overall structure. Station poster maps go to the opposite extreme, differentiating lines by operator and, as a result, show the bulk of the network as undifferentiated blue.

One day, studying a geographical map, I realised that the Netherlands network was centred on Utrecht with a clear east-west and north-south axis. From this, with some imaginative sketching, I managed to reconceptualise the entire system as concentric circles and spokes.

I worked with my usual constraint of keeping all text horizontal and with no station names interrupting lines. The biggest challenge, as with all circles maps, was keeping topographical distortion under control. I referred to a detailed geographical map of the network at all stages of the design process, and also track layouts where available. I attempted to bundle the services into conceptually coherent groups to show how the network was organised operationally. I added the Great Rivers and the IJssel to give some extra context to the design and also to provide some balance to the railways.



This was my first map of an entire country. The result is broadly spatially plausible: other than the convex coast, most cities are where people would expect to find them. The greatest distortions are usually owing to keeping the creation compact, rather than any inherent limitations of the design rules. The outcome is legible at A2 and works well printed A1-sized.

Should the Netherlands be mapped in this way? Opinions on LinkedIn were divided, both for the [English-language](#) and [Dutch-language](#) posts (thanks to [Arjan den Boer](#)). To date, the design has over 5000 positive reactions and most of the

comments are positive but, I suspect, many of these arose because people are starved of good quality official maps, rather than because concentric circles designs are inherently easier to use.

Map Design III, Brussels in Circles

One of the challenges with designing maps for numerous cities is keeping all of them up to date. Sometimes, external impetus results in me dusting off an old design, such as for my London and Paris maps, as described in [Newsletter 101](#). Conversely, my update of a design will be delayed if there is a major infrastructure project in progress, such as [Berlin S21](#).

My 2013 Brussels circles tram map [captured people's attention](#) but was last [updated in 2016](#). I was waiting for the North-South tram tunnel to be converted to full Metro before revisiting it but the recent news is that this project will be delayed or [might even be abandoned](#).

With my recent interest in the low countries, bringing the Brussels map up to date now rose to the top of my list, and, while reworking it, I was able to implement many changes to improve its geographical accuracy.

Web page news

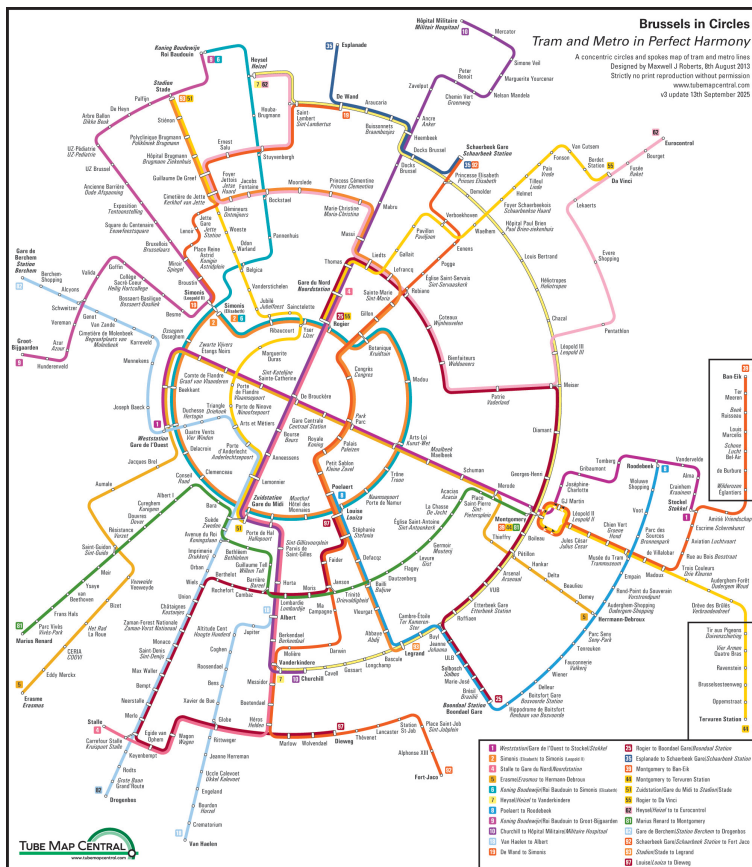
There is a small, visible change to my webpages but this flags a much greater upgrade under the bonnet: everything has been moved to a new hosting service. The website is now secure *and* the fee is considerably less than before. [Hosting Matters](#) did everything possible to ensure that there was a seamless transition without any loss of service, and I can recommend them unreservedly.

In the Media, on the web

- [The art of mapmaking: redrawing London Underground](#). This article was the result of an interview by Gela Pertusini for [Modus](#), the magazine of the RICS, published 7th July 2025.
- [CATCH-cast 6: Max Roberts \(Circles Maps\)](#). Author and broadcaster, [Mark Ovenden](#), now has a radio slot with a map-design interest and interviews are being uploaded to YouTube.

Afterword: The future of Tube Map Central

Some of you will know that my career as a university lecturer has ended and that, as part of an intended departure from academia, I will shortly be commencing an MBA degree, full time, at the University of Essex. The intention is that this will facilitate career change but the immediate consequence is that Tube Map Central will have a one-year hiatus. In the longer term, the future is impossible to predict, but I am mindful that new work commitments may take me away from a direct involvement with maps. That being said, there is at least one design in my in-tray waiting to be completed, and more news is pending, so you should anticipate a newsletter in a year's time. In the meantime, follow me on [LinkedIn](#) for map-related updates.



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