

Protest Maps

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Glossary

- G0005 **Activism** Aggressive action taken for political or social purposes.
- G0010 **Dissent** Disagreement with prevailing ideas or forces; lack of conformity.
- G0015 **Hegemony** Domination of one group or person or idea over others.
- G0020 **Protest** Similar to activism; specific actions taken to counterprevailing political or social forces.
- G0025 **Satire** Sarcasm, irony, or ridicule used to undermine prevailing political or social forces.

P0005 Protest maps come in three registers, that of the office, that of the streets, and that of the press.

P0010 In the official register are maps made to establish, advance, or illustrate official protests. These protests are often of other maps. In Hillsborough County, Florida, for example, a protest map is attached to a protest, which is a form on which objections can be raised to flood-risk designations proposed by recently resurveyed flood maps. Residents of Austin, Texas, are being encouraged to file similar protest maps, as indeed is anyone who feels ill-served by the National Flood Insurance Program maps being updated as part of its Map Modernization Program by the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration (FIMA). FIMA has even prepared *A Guide for Community Officials: Appeals and Protests to National Flood Insurance Program Maps* that describes the form that protest maps must take. In Stillwater, Oklahoma, on the other hand, protest maps are prepared by city staff to help planning commissioners prepare for public hearings on proposed Street improvement districts. These protest maps are of properties whose owners are protesting inclusion in proposed improvement districts. Such usages of 'protest map' are widespread.

P0015 In the register of the streets are maps 'of' or 'to' protests. That is, these are maps that let you know how to get to protests. As a genre they seem to have come into their own during the Republican National Convention of 2004 when seemingly every newspaper, as well as every blog, carried maps not only of the convention sites, but of the protest sites as well. These rapidly became known as protest maps, so that invitations such as this have become

common: "If your group wants to be represented at the event (table, leaflets, protest maps, etc.), please get in touch with us." The etymology is apparent in: "I would like to invite you to attend our protest. Maps of campus are available and protesters are asked to arrive at the mall by 12:45 because, while Bush is inside, the event media will have nothing to cover except the protesters outside," as also in, "Hi everybody. There is a protest on the Balnagown estate of Mohamed Al Fayed on Sunday 27th April at 12 noon. All are invited for a peaceful protest. Maps provided. We will cause no damage and leave only footprints."

A protest in essence is a solemn declaration of opinion, usually of dissent, and this sense is nicely focused by the official protest maps with their need to be "certified by a registered professional engineer or a licensed land surveyor" (unless derived from 'authoritative sources' such as the Bureau of Land Reclamation or a State department of highways and transportation). The process is formal, carefully framed, and the maps that resolve the protests have the force of law. These maps are members of a whole class of documents in an enormous system of dispute resolution that runs from the complaint counter of your neighborhood big-box retailer up through the appellate courts. But protests may also be registered in such dramatic, typically collective forms as strikes, boycotts, rallies, and marches, may even involve violence, and these are the sorts of protests the maps on the table with the leaflets etc., are directing people to. What we are referring to as the register of the press includes maps that, like official protest maps, are actual protests (not merely of or to them), but that at the same time are distinctly unofficial (often antiofficial) and partake of the noisy, public, self-consciously rhetorical character of street protests, more oriented toward ferment than resolution.

Doubtless there are earlier protest maps in this register, but perhaps the most famous is "The Gerrymander: a new species of monster, which appeared in Essex South District in Jan. 1812" (Figure 1). With a few strokes of the pen the map transformed a recently configured Massachusetts electoral district into a kind of winged salamander, with a name that combined that of the lizard with that of Massachusetts Governor Elbridge

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Figure 1 Elkanah Tisdale's original Gerry-mander, as it appeared in the *Boston Gazette*, 26 March 1812. From Parton, J. (1877). *Caricature and Other Comic Art*, p 316. New York: Harper and Brothers.

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Gerry. Engraved by Elkanah Tisdale for the 26 March 1812 issue of the *Boston Gazette*, the map was widely reprinted by Federalist sympathizers (broadsides appeared immediately) protesting the redistricting scheme that gave Gerry's Republicans, if not Gerry himself, a decisive advantage in the upcoming state elections.

Tisdale's map is sometimes thought about as a metaphorical or satirical map, but then satire – trenchant wit, irony, or sarcasm used to expose and discredit vice or folly – is a frequent companion of protest. Heavier on the sarcasm but playing in a related key is McArthur's 'Universal corrective map of the world' (Figure 2). Stuart McArthur, an Australian, was a 12-year-old when a teacher told him it was wrong to orient a world map he had drawn south up. He was 15 when, an exchange student in Japan, he was ridiculed by his fellow American exchange students "for coming from the bottom of the world." He was 21 when he published the map that fulfilled the vow he had taken in Japan to set things straight, protesting, with his map, not only the usual north-up orientation, but people's prejudice against the south: "Never again," a text on the map declares, "to suffer the perpetual onslaught of 'downunder' jokes – implications from Northern nations that the height of a country's prestige is determined by its

equivalent spatial location on a conventional map of the world."

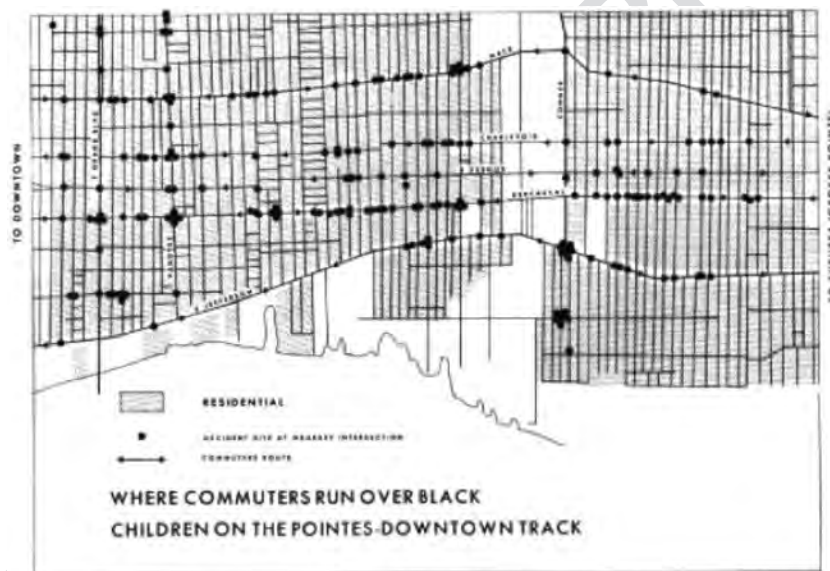
In a world dominated by maps oriented north up, it may happen that 'any' map with south on top comes to be taken as a kind of protest against the hegemonic point of view, but protest usually involves an awareness of not only what it is in favor of (south up), but of what it is opposed to (north up). In fact, protest is 'often' clearest about what it is against (when 'protest' is used affirmatively, as in a phrase like 'protested his innocence', it is always in the face of denial or doubt). What makes McArthur's 'Universal corrective map of the world' a protest map is the 'corrective' in the title which inescapably brings to mind the view being corrected, just as the 'Gerry-mander' brings to mind the shape of electoral districts less easily transformed into lizards. It is rarely in protest maps in this register that facts are being contested, as they always are in the official register. Instead it is the way the facts are framed. 'Gerry-mander' does not question the shape of the new electoral district. It insists that we look at it askance. The corrective map does not propose a new world. It asks that we look at the world anew.

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F0010 **Figure 2**

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F0015 **Figure 3**

P0040 Here is another example. In a discussion paper of 1971, the Detroit Geographical Expedition published a map it had compiled of the 'Citywide pattern of children's pedestrian deaths and injuries by automobiles'. The map displayed the deaths and injuries as dots on a background of Detroit streets. It also indicated the location of the city's black population with a meandering dashed line. It is not hard to see that most of the kids killed by cars lived in black neighborhoods, but this is a conclusion someone looking at the map has to draw. A couple of pages farther on the expedition zoomed in to

give us a map that drew the conclusion for us: "Where commuters run over black children on the Pointes-Downtown Track" (Figure 3). There is no mistaking the protest here. The map no longer displays a 'pattern' but locates crime scenes, and the deaths are no longer caused by automobiles. Indeed, the automobiles have vanished to be replaced by their drivers who are specifically characterized as commuters. Any Detroiters would have known that these commuters were white and on their way between work downtown and home in the exclusive Pointes communities to the east. That is, this is a map of where

white people, as they rush to and from work, run over black children. That is, it is a map of where white adults kill black kids. It is a map of racist infanticide, a racial child-murder map.

P0045 Again, 'Where commuters run over black children on the Pointes-Downtown track' proposed no data that had not been on the less inflammatory 'Citywide pattern of children's pedestrian deaths and injuries by automobiles'. It did, however, ask that we think about the data differently. Gwendolyn Warren wrote about this difference in an article that accompanied the maps: "The way the city is situated, there is the central place downtown and then there are rings which go outside of that and the big ring right outside downtown Detroit is the Black community. All the area about a mile going out from downtown Detroit is one-way traffic and runs right through the heart of the Black community. And on one specific corner in six months there were six children killed by commuter traffic. But, naturally, these deaths of the children or the injuries or whatever it happened to be were disguised as something else. They never said that a certain business man who was working for Burroughs downtown who was on his way to Southfield went through the Black community by way of this commuter traffic and killed my people – Black children. Even in the information which the police keep, we couldn't get that information. We had to use political people in order to use them as a means of getting information from the police department in order to find out exactly what time, where, and how, and who killed that child. The fact that it actually establishes a pattern proves it is not 'accidental'."

P0050 The protest, the anger, is on the surface here. It radiates from the map. A similar anger radiates from the maps in *The Nuclear War Atlas* published in 1982 by the Society for Human Exploration as a two-sided poster, text on one side, 28 maps on the other. It folded, William Bunge, its principal author recalls, "into a 5 in. × 8 in. size designed for peace demonstrations where it was abundantly sold." Black, white, and red, the very design and layout of the maps were inflammatory, but the reframing of data that had been culled from a variety of impeccably reserved sources (e.g., *Progress in Nuclear Energy, Health Physics, Child Psychology*) was largely carried out by the titling: 'The march of doom', 'Patriotic poisoning', 'The sea of cancer'. 'The sea of cancer' was a map of the US. largely covered with red stippling that indicated areas that would be exposed to 100 or more rem of radiation in a full nuclear war. "Not only will most of the United States be washed in immediate radiation," read the caption, "but even the white areas on the map are safe only in the sense that people in the open escape short term damage but not long term. The cancer is everywhere." A map of the world makes the point that the boundaries of a missile-armed United States and Soviet Union are global: "To state the new geographic reality using the

militaristic language of the 1980s, 'The Russians are not coming. They are already here.' At least they are straight up in the sky above us and thus are bounded by the earth's surface, not 'contained' by boundary lines. They can kill anything on the earth's surface and for a considerable depth below it; the Americans likewise. 'Containment' has been a mathematically proven bankruptcy for almost twenty years." By dramatically reframing simple truisms like these, *The Nuclear War Atlas* gave people whole new grounds for protesting nuclear weapons.

If the poster edition of *The Nuclear War Atlas* had been self-published and largely distributed by its author, Michael Kidron and Ronald Segal's *The State of the World Atlas* of 1981 was a Pluto Press project distributed in the United States by Simon and Schuster that has gone through eight subsequent editions and spawned an entire family of protest atlases (*The State of War and Peace Atlas*, 1983; *The New State of the World Atlas*, 1984; *The State of Women in the World Atlas*, 1986; *The State of the Earth Atlas*, 1990; *The State of Religion Atlas*, 1993, and so on, each with multiple editions). The initial object of Kidron and Segal's protest was the state: "It is our contention that that the destructive aspects of the state have come crucially to exceed the constructive ones," they wrote in the atlas' introduction. Their maps documented the way states have proliferated and expanded into the remaining nonstate areas of the planet. Their maps documented the military preoccupation of states and their squandering of resources on war. Their maps documented the unequal distribution of state resources, and the impact of the state on labor, society in general, and the environment.

The maps made no pretense about being neutral, and if the first edition's maps framed their subjects with titles like 'The state invades the sky', 'Arms for the sake of power', 'Bullets and blackboards' (mapping the ratio between soldiers and teachers), 'Slumland', 'Fouling the nest', and 'The dying earth', the second edition added incendiary subtitles for any who might have missed the point. For example, below the title, 'Scourges of the state' – a map of prisoners, capital punishment, state assassinations, and torture – the second edition now appended: "All states are armed against their citizens. Many states use exceptional methods to terrorize them." A quarter of the volume was taken up by notes about Kidron and Segal's data sources. One of these commenced, "The morally repulsive priorities of the state can be illustrated in many ways; but perhaps nowhere more eloquently than in the comparison between expenditure on preparations to promote injury or death and expenditures to heal and sustain life." It is always possible to disagree with Kidron and Segal, but it is not possible to mistake their point which, after all, was the point of their reframing.

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Maps in this register do not have to be literally run through a press, nor of course do they have to be protesting the state of things in the world. Maps of this type have become ubiquitous on the web where often they are protesting other maps. An already-notorious example involves the mapping of the results of the US presidential election of 2004. The night of the election, even before the Kerry/Edwards campaign had conceded, maps were published displaying the states in which a majority had voted for the Republicans in red, and those in which a majority had voted for the Democrats in blue. These maps showed a fringe of blue states in the far west, along the Great Lakes, and in the northeast, and the rest of the country, almost all of it from the Coastal Ranges in the west to the Atlantic in the east, in red. America, these maps proclaimed, was Republican. But as Michael Gastner, Cosma Shalizi, and Mark Newman soon pointed out, the maps were misleading. They failed to recognize that most of the red states had small populations and the blue ones large. Blue states might take up less space, but they were filled with many more people which is, after all, what matters in an election. So Gastner, Shalizi, and Newman made an election results cartogram, that is, a map that displays places sized according to some attribute other than their spatial extent. Their cartogram made it clearer that, though majorities in Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and 27 other states might have voted for Bush, almost as many people in the more heavily populated states of California, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and 15 others had voted for Kerry; and that instead of most of the country voting for Bush, nearly half had voted for Kerry.

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USA Today published a map of the election's results by counties instead of states. While its map was less strikingly divided, it again was overwhelmingly red. This too was then remade as a cartogram that magnified blue counties to reflect their greater populations, and it too made the election seem a far more equal contest. But even after allowing for the population differences, there was still more red than blue on the map which, since the national vote had been almost equally split, should not have been the case. The problem turned out to be that the amount of red was skewed by counties in which only a 'slim' majority had voted Republican. Robert Vanderbei suggested that one way to deal with this would be to use shades of purple to indicate the actual percentage of voters in each county. On Vanderbei's map, there were only a few red and blue counties. Most of the country was one shade or another of purple. The maps of Gastner, Shalizi, Newman, and Vanderbei protested not only the crude 'maps' of simple majorities, but also the 'impressions' people took away from them, that the country, split between a vast Republic heartland and a Democratic fringe, had handed Bush some sort of mandate. There was in fact no clear regional split at all, and instead of

handing Bush a mandate, Americans had reelected him by the slimmest of margins.

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Protest maps can concern themselves with lesser issues as well. In 1931, Harry Beck made a sketch in an exercise book of a map of the London Underground. Beck's ambition was to make the system intelligible by reducing its routes to vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines, by increasing the scale of its route-dense center, and by eliminating surface detail except for an equally stylized Thames. Beck's map, many times revised and issued in uncountable forms and numbers, in time became an icon, not only of the London Underground, but of modern design itself. In 1992 the conceptual artist, Simon Patterson, produced a lithograph called *The Great Bear*. Except for its title, which is a common name for the constellation Ursa Major, the print reproduced the contemporary version of Beck's map, except when you looked closely you realized Patterson had replaced the station names with those of philosophers, actors, politicians, and others that we sometimes think about as 'stars'. For example, Patterson renamed the stops on the Bakerloo (brown) line after engineers, those on one branch of the Northern (black) line after musicians, and those on the other branch after movie stars. The Fra Angelico station stands where the Saints line crosses the Italian painters line; and Geoff Hurst, on the Footballers line, is only a stop away from William Randolph Hearst on the Louis line. Patterson has worked in an equivalent fashion with paint chips, the periodic table, electric circuit diagrams, slide rules, air-traffic route maps, constellations, and *The Last Supper* (e.g., *The Last Supper Arranged According to the Flat Back Four Formation (Jesus Christ in Goal)*). "I like," Patterson says, "disrupting something people take as read."

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The Great Bear soon became an icon in its own right (a copy hangs in the Tate) and it attracted its own imitators: there was the *London Undergrub* (all the stations named after food), the *Undergroans* map (an impolite version), the *Untergrund* map (in German), an 'Anagrams' map (in which anagrams had been made of all the station names), *The Company Sponsored Map* (with the names changed to match, or nearly match, the name of well-known companies), an upside-down version, and one on which the underground lines had been flipped over the Thames so that south London now had most of the lines. In 2005 Thomas David Baker produced the *Moviemaker Tube Map*. "I liked *The Great Bear*," Baker writes, "but I didn't like the way when a station was both on the Artist and the Footballer line that the replacement person was just an Artist or a Footballer, but not both. Doing it for movies – using Director, Actor, Cinematographer, etc., for the lines – meant I could make sure that each individual representing an interchange had done the job represented by each line that goes through that station." In early 2006 the *Musical Map* appeared in *The Guardian* with each line

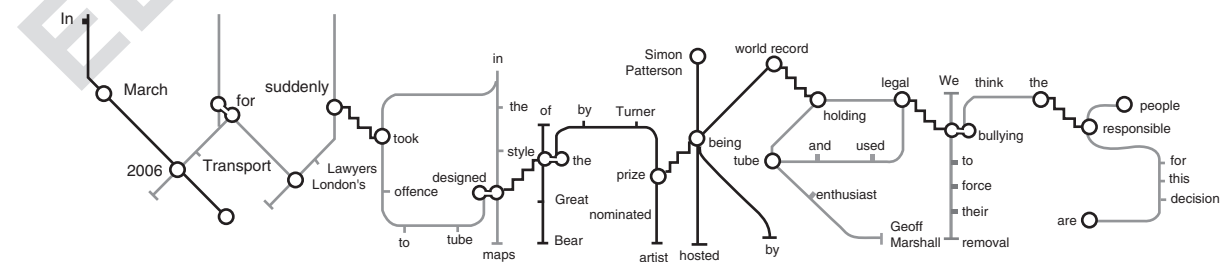
named for a type of music (soul, reggae, pop, etc.) and each station after an artist of that type (The Four Tops, Peter Tosh, U2, and so on). Artists at intersecting stations had to fall into the mixed genre of the intersecting lines (e.g., Prince is found where the Funk line intersects the Pop line). This map prompted the creation of still other versions.

P0085 Geoff Marshall, a tube fanatic (and holder of the world record for going round the entire system in the least amount of time), decided to gather these maps together into a folder, 'Silly tube maps', on his website. In addition to maps on which the names had been changed, Marshall posted a score of others (a map of stations with toilets, a map showing travel times between stations, a map on which dotted walk lines connected stations less than 500 m apart), and links to still others, including the London Tube Map Archive with its three dozen versions. Marshall made variations of his own, including *The Real Underground* that showed which portions of the Underground 'were' underground, and a map on which the station names had been omitted, which became the basis for further variations on the part of others (the 'London undergrub' had in fact been inspired by Marshall's site). In March 2006, a lawyer representing Transport for London, which owns the tube map, threatened to shut Marshall's site down unless Marshall removed "ALL images which infringe my client's intellectual property [by] midnight on Monday 13 March." Marshall immediately posted the threat which stirred a storm of controversy and finally ... a protest map.

P0090 Needless to say, it is in the style of Beck's tube map. However here the stations have been renamed, 'in', 'March', '2006', 'Transport', and so on, to create the sentence, "in March 2006 Transport for London's lawyers suddenly took offence to tube maps designed in the style of the Great Bear by Turner Prize nominated artist Simon Patterson being hosted by world record holding tube enthusiast Geoff Marshall and used to force their removal." We think the people responsible for this decision

The 'Wankers' map embodies everything we have come to expect of a protest map. Its creator, who wishes to remain anonymous, spelled out his motivations for us: "I read Geoff's blog on the subject, and I thought, 'what a colossal waste of public money' or words to that effect. Nothing he was doing was harming TfL, if anything, it was the reverse, and here they were, setting the packs of highly paid lawyers on to him, with my [expletive deleted] money. Particularly as it was just after the *Guardian* had published a map with musical artists, and made a big fuss of it. I think that's what inspired some people to create other maps – I saw some of the less functional maps as artistic endeavors. TfL knew he couldn't afford to defend himself; it seemed like corporate bullying, and it just stuck in my craw; even if you put the most benign view on their actions, they show a great misunderstanding of the internet and the difference between commercial websites, and personal sites; Geoff doesn't even carry any advertising, even though he gets a whole lot of traffic. At the time, I think it was Saturday 11 March, I had a fair amount of free time, and not much else to do, so I set about with a graphic package designing it. I thought it might cheer Geoff up a bit."

The map also makes it clear how hopeless the categorization of maps is. More than enough ink has been spilt already over whether Beck's original *Underground* map is a map or not, but only pedants refer to it as 'the Diagram'. What type of map it is, however, is another question. Helen Wallis and Arthur Robinson may have regarded it as a 'Route map', whereas Erwin Raisz would have been more likely to call it a 'Transportation map'. It is possible that none of these would have thought Patterson's *The Great Bear* was a map at all. Certainly, none of them had a category for art maps, much less art-map parodies (or parodies of a parody, for whatever else it is *The Great Bear* is certainly a parody). Thinking about the 'Wankers' map as a protest, however, gets at its motivation (as well as its content and form), and motivation in the end is what really matters about all the maps we have discussed here. Like the anonymous creator of 'Wankers', they have all been moved by the perception of injustice, to the voters of Massachusetts, to Australians, to the black children of Detroit, to the inhabitants of an earth



F0020 **Figure 4**

threatened by nuclear holocaust, to victims of the state system, to Geoff Marshall. Thinking about these maps from the perspective of motivation gets at aspects of them other ways of thinking about them cannot. But then perhaps all maps could be profitably approached from this angle. We would recommend it.

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Further Reading

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- Gordon, A., Paqlen, T., Rogers, H. et al. (2008). *An Atlas of Radical Cartography*. Los Angeles, CA: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press.
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