

FRIDAY LATES

THE ART OF GETTING LOST

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY

"Lunatic researches are akin to unforeseen discoveries. The role of the nonexistent exists; the function of the imaginary is real [...] It seems then that the history of the mind can be resumed in these terms: it is absurd by what it seeks, great by what it finds"

– Paul Valéry.

**WHAT IS
'PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY'?!**



Three quick questions, TEN SECONDS to think of an answer to each:

- 1) A bat and a ball cost £1.10 in total. The bat costs £1.00 more than the ball. How much does the ball cost?
- 2) If it takes 5 machines 5 minutes to make 5 widgets, how long would it take 100 machines to make 100 widgets?
- 3) In a lake, there is a patch of lily pads. Every day, the patch doubles in size. If it takes 48 days for the patch to cover the entire lake, how long would it take for the patch to cover half the lake?

WHAT IS PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY?

Answers:

- 1) 5p
- 2) 5 minutes
- 3) 47 days



Schiphol Airport,
Amsterdam

This little fly reduced
'spillage' by 80%!

WHAT IS PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY?

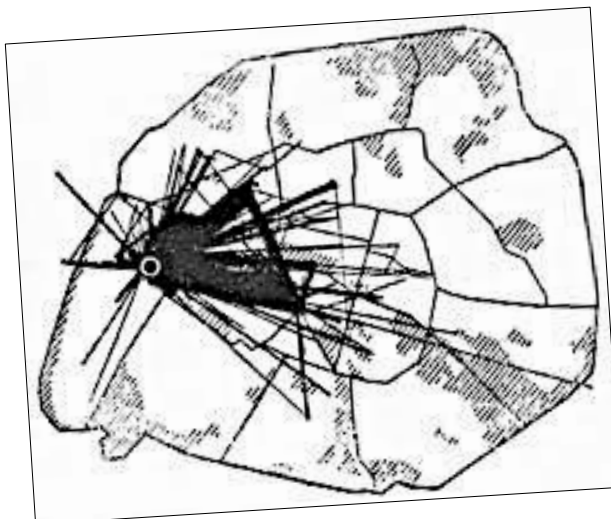
One influential definition:



“Psychogeography sets for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.”

– Guy Debord (editor of *International Situationist*)
Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography
(1955)

WHAT IS PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY?



Regular journeys of a student between School of Political Sciences and her piano class

Diagram illustrating *Theory of the Dérive*, an article on psychogeography, by Guy Debord (1956)

WHAT IS PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY?

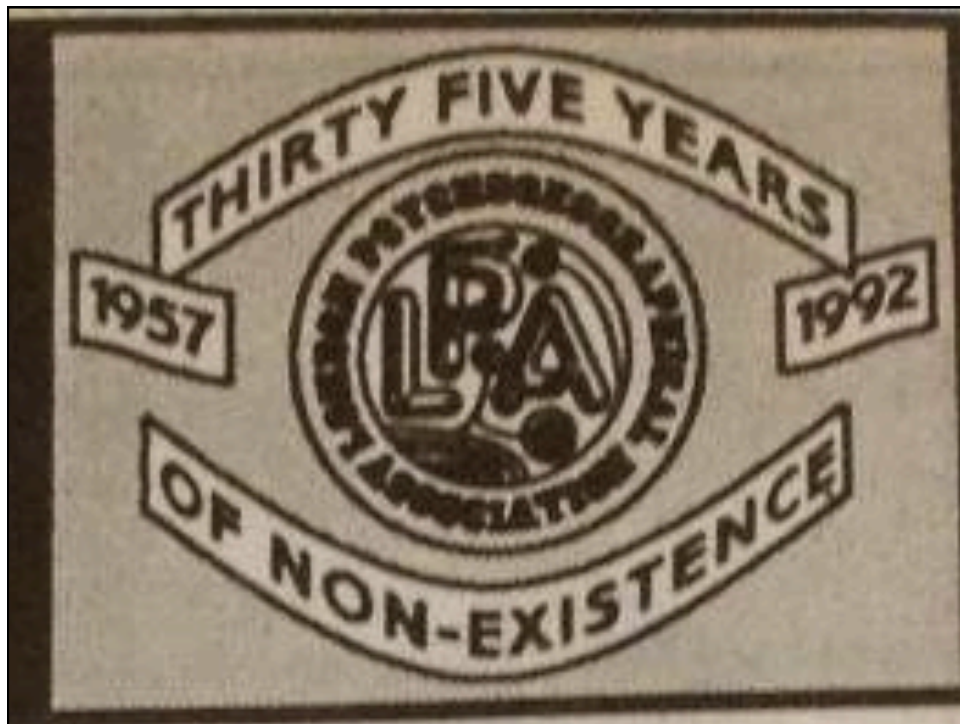
Other definitions:

- The effect of place on the brain/society
- A literary style - The 'poetry' of places
- Geomancy, folklore, topography
- Biography of people in place, 'deep mapping'
- An artistic technique
- Reconnaissance for the revolution
- A revolutionary dissolution of the division between everyday life and art
- Mindful ambient awareness
- Architectural research and practice
- 'Cognitive mapping'
- 'Local history'
- A pub crawl

Confused yet?

**It's about to
get more
confusing!
Let's go back
to the
beginning...**

but where to begin...?



THE FLÂNEUR

19th cent. Paris

- Dandy
- Bohemian outsider – man of leisure
- Aloof observer
- Aimless wandering
- Male
- A “passionate spectator...not precisely an artist, but rather a man of the world.” – Baudelaire.
- A man of the crowd, of the modern city
- Voyeur? Consumer?



THE FLÂNEUR

Charles Baudelaire *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863)... followed from *Artificial Paradises* (1860) ...and...

Edgar Allan Poe *The Man of the Crowd* (1840)

But they were not the first, where did *they* get it from?

Thomas de Quincey *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) – Romantic wandering of Coleridge and Wordsworth, applied to the urban environment

But he was not the first either, where did *he* get it from?



...THE MISSING FLÂNEUSE?

De Quincey learned his London wanderings from his erstwhile guide, Ann. The first 'Flâneuse'?

The first psychogeographer?

She disappears. Her absence itself becomes the protagonist, the catalyst for de Quincey's wanderings...

A fictional character? A ghost? 'Non-existent'? A working class woman?

Feminist scholars have addressed the missing Flâneuse in recent years: Janet Wolff, Dee Heddson, Cathy Turner, Morag Rose.

Forgotten tradition: Flora Tristan, Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf?



Ann?
(a slightly later portrait of a street girl of around the same age)

ENTERING THE 20TH CENTURY



“AMPHIONISM”

Guillaume Apollinaire – facilitated another of psychogeography’s ‘non-existent’ origins.

His ‘The False Amphion’ or the ‘Stories and Adventures of Baron D’Ormesan’ (1910), has a fake aristocrat invent new art form – ‘Amphionism’ – a tour of the city, responding to its architectural ambiances like music.

The art of the bluff:

‘I am an artist, my dear friend, and what is more, I invented my branch of art myself, and I am the only one to practice it.’



AMPHIONISM

Based on real activities of his secretary - conman and vagabond Honoré Joseph - Géry Pieret - cowboy, circus promoter and general adventurer

‘when he wasn’t galloping around Paris naked except for chaps, a cowboy hat and a set of sandwich boards, he stole artifacts from the Louvre for a lark.’ (R.A. Scotti).

Stole set of antique statuettes stolen from Louvre, two of which ended up with an aspiring painter...



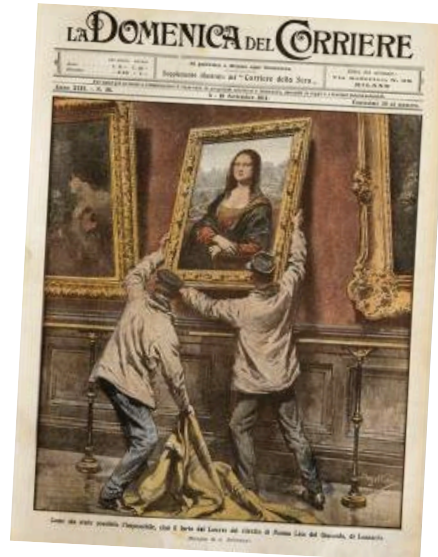
1911 Mona Lisa vanished from Louvre to great scandal. The Paris-Journal was offering a reward

Géry wrote in, posing as experienced art thief, obtaining 250 francs for a statuette, in corroboration

Disappearing on day of the theft, laid a trail of letters across France, before signing off, 'Adieu! I am about to leave France, to finish my novel!'

Signed 'Baron d'Ormesan' – the fictional persona Apollinaire based on him – thus implicating his friend!

Géry actually had nothing to do with it - painting showed up two years later in Italy, with a former Louvre worker!



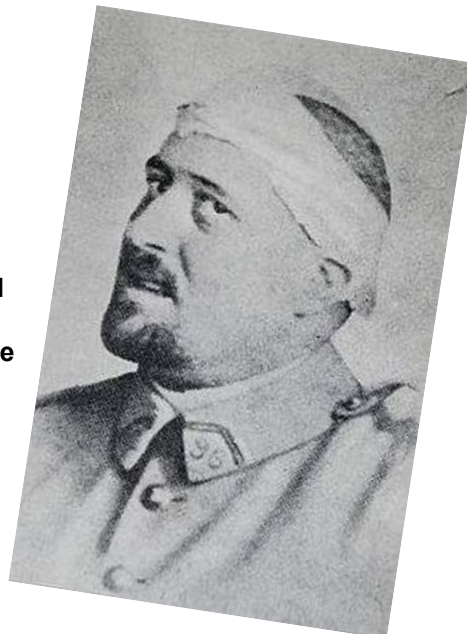
Another fictional character, an absence, a 'non-existent' origin?

But Apollinaire was not done, yet...

In 1917, he coined a new word that would have great significance for the emergence of psychogeography...

What was it?

"Surrealism"



SURREALISM

What is it? What words do you associate with it?

- Dreams
- Fantasy
- Subconscious
- Automatism
- Enigmatic
- Poetic
- Juxtapositions
- Illusion
- Revolution



Max Ernst

SURREALISM

Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)

Littérature journal (1919) – emerged from Paris Dada movement around Tristan Tzara (Dada poet)

André Breton, Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault

Influenced by the psychoanalytical work of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung - Used subconscious to create art.

Begun in Europe, centered in Paris. Spread all over the world.

Aimed to revolutionize human experience: personal, social, and political aspects.

For a period, strongly aligned with Communism, but fell out. Believed in revolution of art *and* life.



André Breton

Surrealist Manifesto (1924) defined surrealism as: "pure psychic automatism"

SURREALIST 'PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY'

- *Some Possibilities for Rationally Improving the City of Paris* (1933)
- Breton: *Nadja* 1928, *Communicating Vessels* (1932), *Mad Love* (1937)
- Soupault: *A La Dérive* (1922), *Last Nights of Paris* (1928)
- Aragon: *Paris Peasant* (1926)
- "Visit" to Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre (1921)
- Wandering around Blors (randomly chosen - 1923)
- Photography of Brassai, Henri Manuel, Lee Miller, (later Bill Brandt in England).



Brassai, Fille De Joie, Rue Quincampoix, 1931

But where did they get it from...?

'NADJA'

Tells story of Breton's 1926 affair with Léona Delcourt - 'a wandering soul'

b.1902, Lille, became pregnant by an English soldier, refused to marry. Sent to Paris (child kept in Lille)

Worked as mistress and drug dealer

Met and fell in love with Breton - wandered streets together, dowsing underground tunnels, sensing 'ghosts' and psychic atmospheres, visions, associative journeys (la Dauphin), synesthesia, attracts strange street characters



NADJA

Agreed to write their story together, but Breton dismissed her efforts

Breton broke off the affair after sleeping with her. She became depressed and anxious – landlady called police on her.

Sent to asylum – transfer to Lille 1928 (nine days before Breton published acclaimed account of meeting, 2 days after her 26th birthday)

Died there from malnutrition aged 38



NADJA

Book is full of photographs, but Nadja remains hidden, her presence felt as an absence...

A 'fictional character'

A 'ghost'

'Non-existent'

A working class woman?



LETTERISTS

After the war, the Surrealist's were increasingly seen as old-fashioned and out of touch by the younger generation

Youth culture rebellion with a taste for scandal (eg. *Easter*, *Notre Dame*, 1950)

Subculture

Letterist Group Paris around Isidore Isou – poet and film maker

Fled Romania, wrote manifesto aged 16, on his messianic role in saving art – an art of the 'letter'

Collected group of young rebels – film makers including Gabriel Pomerand, Maurice Lemaitre, Gil Wolman, Guy Debord



Isidore Isou

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZayMaC4RLo>

LETTERIST INTERNATIONAL

The 'Letterist Left', under leadership of Debord and Wolman split from Isou's group after they were reproached for attacking Charlie Chaplin.

Juvenile delinquents, living semi-rough in Paris, begging, drinking and wandering the streets.

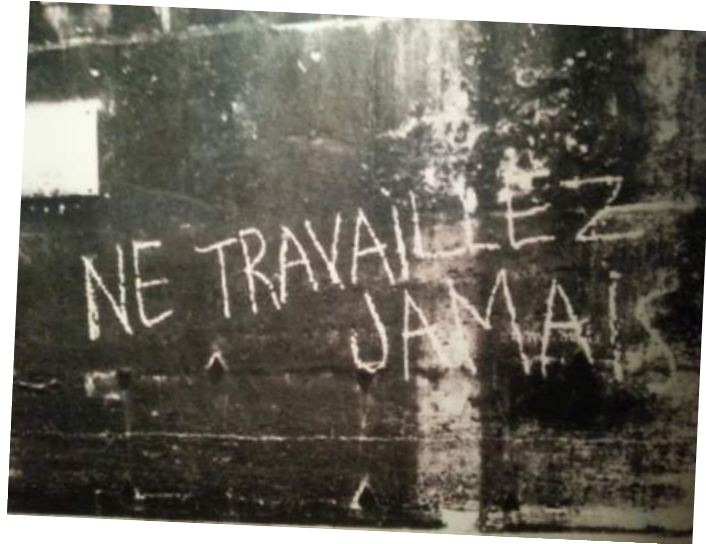
General transport strike of 1953 - psychogeography is born!

Debord defined it...But where did he get it from?



Chez Moineau, Left Bank, 1953

'PLAGIARISM IS NECESSARY'



Guy
Debord,
Graffiti

In 1953 Debord struck up friendship with Ivan Chtcheglov, 16 year old son of a Ukrainian taxi driver.

Chtcheglov, like Nadja, experienced some form of paranoid delusions – told Debord of his therapeutic explorations of the city.

Their friendship gave rise to a series of key texts that formulated their wanderings:

Chtcheglov:

Formulary for a New Urbanism (1953)

Debord:

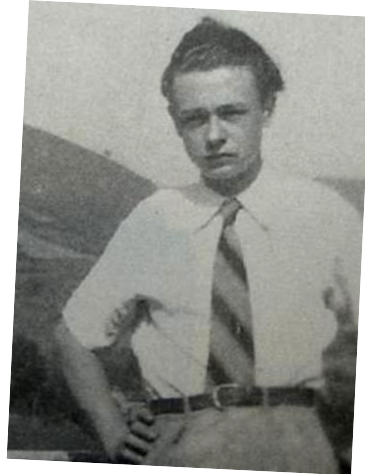
Exercise in Psychogeography (1954)

Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography (1955)

Theory of Dérive (1956)



IVAN CHTCHEGLOV



"Architecture is the simplest means of articulating time and space, of modulating reality, of engendering dreams" –

Chtcheglov.

IVAN CHTCHEGLOV: FORMULARY FOR A NEW URBANISM

- First truly “psychogeographical” text
- Draws heavily on Surrealist imagery
- Calls for ‘continuous *dérive*’
- Uses the collage and cut-up techniques from Dada and Surrealism, applied to terrain of everyday life: the city itself.
- Grew out of technique called “metagraphy” used by Letterists.

METAGRAPHIC MAP IVAN CHTCHEGLOV (1952)



Paris and
parts of
Asia
Pacific
region.

Effect?
Meanings?

c.p.
Surrealist
Maps, e.g.
Marcel
Mariën

PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY:

“Psychogeography sets for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.”

– Guy Debord (credited to ‘an illiterate Kabyle’).

Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography (1955)



ABDELHAFID KHATIB

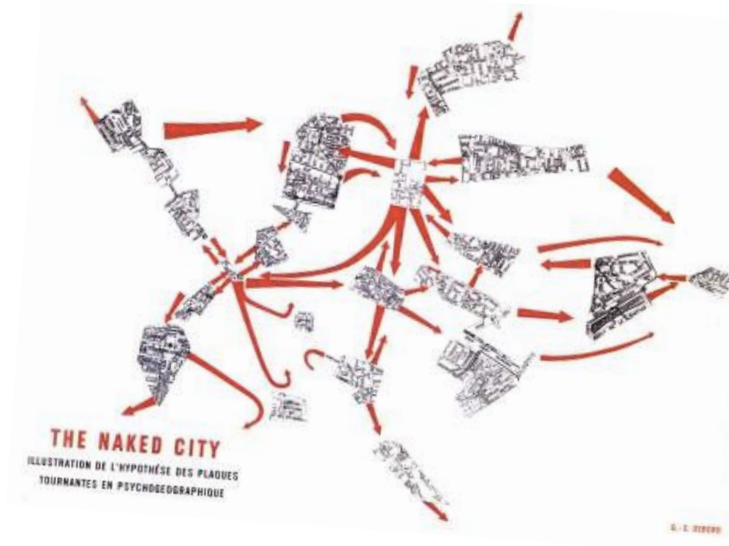
Algerian member Abdul Khatib conducted *Psychogeographical Survey of Les Halles*. Published in Journal #2 (Dec 1958)

Arrested several times, two nights in a cell – Paris under curfew (Police massacre 40-300 Algerians, 1961)

Letterists had also had an Algerian Section, led by Mohammed Dahou, sometime editor (along with Debord) for the Letterist Journal Potlatch.



Khatib's Research



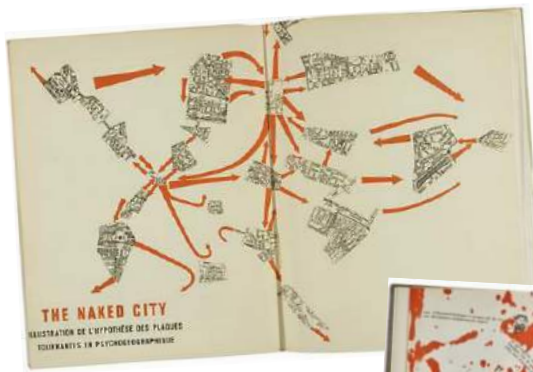
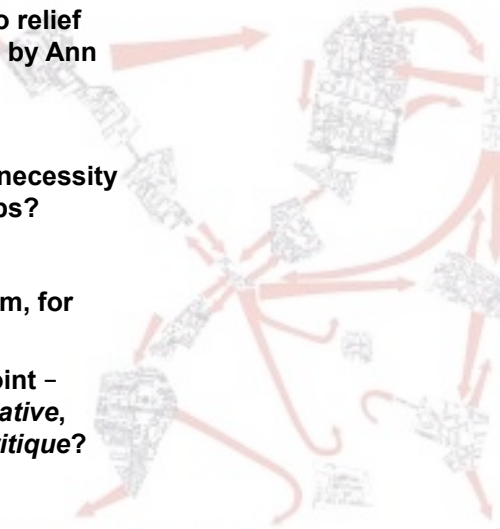
PSYCHOGEOGRAPHICAL MAPS

THE NAKED CITY
GUY DEBORD AND ASGER JORN
(1957, SCREENPRINT)

PSYCHOGEOGRAPHICAL MAPS FOR WHOM?

Khatib's experience draws into relief some similar questions raised by Ann and Nadja's experiences...

- Concerning the possibility/necessity of psychogeographical maps?
- The nature of mapping?
- Psychogeography – of whom, for whom?
- ...Or is that precisely the point – psychogeography as a *negative*, 'non-existent' practice: a *critique*?



The Naked City, Guy Debord and Asger Jorn (1957)

Memoires, Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, (1959)



**MÉMOIRES
GUY DEBORD AND ASGER
JORN (COLLABORATIVE
BOOK, 1959)**



Do these
remind
you of
anything?

**FIN DE COPANHAGUE
GUY DEBORD AND ASGER
JORN (COLLABORATIVE
BOOK, 1957)**



THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL



The Situationist International (1957-72)

WHO WERE THE SI?

Came together in *The First Exhibition of Psychogeography* 1957, international organisation of avant-garde artists and left-wing intellectuals.

'Situations' as supersession of art: uniting art and politics, overcoming capitalist alienation.

Later split, most artists leaving/being thrown out, forming '2nd Situationist International'. Original group became increasingly political.

Active across Europe. Later, branches in UK, US and elsewhere.

72 members over 15 years. Instrumental in May '68 events. Dissolved 1972 with only 2 members left.

Letterist International

+

International
Movement for an
Imaginist Bauhaus

+

London
Psychogeographical
Association

FIRST EXHIBITION OF PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY, 1957

IMIB +

LPA +

Letterists



Yves Klein,
Asger Jorn,
Ralph Rumney,
Collective Painting,
1957

IMIB

Emerged from CoBrA, Art Brut, Informel/Taschisme and Nouveau Réalisme movements in post-war art.

Roots in Surrealism.



Jean Dubuffet, View of Paris: The Life of Pleasure, 1944



Wols, Bird, 1949.

Yves Klein, Anthropometry performance, 1960.



COBRA

From Belgium Revolutionary Surrealist group, emerged...

CoBrA (1948-1951)

Founded by:

- Asger Jorn (Copenhagen)
- Joseph Noiret and Christian Dotremont (Brussels)
- Constant, Corneille and Karel Appel (Amsterdam)

Against artistic and political stagnation of French Surrealists.

Style?



Asger Jorn, The Enigma of Frozen Water, 1970. Oil on canvas, 63" x 51 1/8". Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

JORN & THE IMIB

Asger Jorn (1914-73), Danish painter, sculptor, ceramicist, writer.

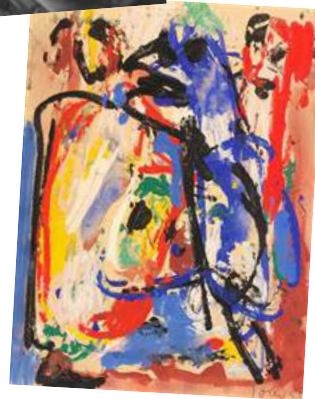
Founding member of avant-garde resistance journal *Helhesten*, COBRA, went on to found IMIB and SI.

'Greatest painter of the 1950s' (T.J. Clark)

Jorn reacted most against the Functionalist search for rationality and minimalism. Interested in myth and folklore.



Jorn



Jorn,
Untitled 1958

JORN & THE IMIB

Jorn created the IMIB to oppose Max Bill's new Bauhaus, which favoured Functionalism and rationality.

Jorn favoured free, expressive, organic form.



Asger Jorn,
Aarhus Mural,
3 x 27 m, 1959

CONSTANT – NEW BABYLON



New Babylon was project aiming to design a post-capitalist city based on drifting, worked on 1959-74 by Jorn's CoBrA colleague, artist and architect Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920-2005).

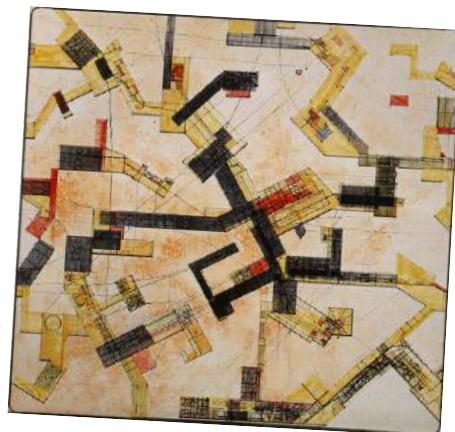
Member of SI 1958-1960.

CONSTANT – NEW BABYLON

"The project of New Babylon only intends to give the minimum conditions for a behaviour that must remain as free as possible. Any restriction of the freedom of movement, any limitation with regard to the creation of mood and atmosphere, has to be avoided. Everything has to remain possible, all is to happen, the environment has to be created by the activity of life, and not inversely." –

Constant

Never built, manifestations of New Babylon amounted to models, constructions, collages, drawings, graphics and texts.



THE LPA

The London
Psychogeographical
Association

Didn't really 'exist', sole
member Ralph Rumney, b.
1934 – personality at ICA.
Also interesting in creation of
'situations'/environments.

Produced
psychogeographical 'report'
on Venice: *Leaning Tower of
Venice*.

Submitted a day late, so he
was kicked out of the group!

Later the LPA was revived
'after 35 years of non-
existence' in the 1990s by
more recent
psychogeographers.



Rumney

Leaning
Tower of
Venice
(1957)



Idea perhaps to
replicate *This is
Tomorrow* (1956) at
Whitechapel Gallery,
featured 12 exhibits,
collaborations of
architects, painters,
sculptors, and others
on variety of
'environments'.

Featured ICA
Independent Group –
Watershed for Pop Art.

Show was opened by
Robby the Robot, star
of sci-fi movie
Forbidden Planet
(easier to book than
Marilyn Monroe).



<https://youtu.be/nJFuDhgCH1I>

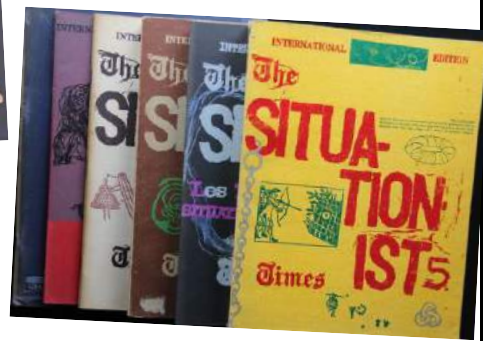
THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL

Mostly existed through their activities and writings, little visual artwork is understood as directly 'situationist', although individual situationists did make significant work.



Internationale Situationniste (1958-69)

The Situationist Times, (1962-64)



DÉTOURNEMENT

Détournement - "rerouting, hijacking" in French, is a technique developed by Letterists, later popularised by SI.

The SI's first journal (1958) defined it as:

"The integration of present or past artistic productions into a superior construction of a milieu. In this sense there can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of those means."

The reuse of elements of pop culture (ads, comic book strips, magazines, etc) to create new message, often in opposition to original.



Détourned image from SI Journal



Détourned pages from Situationist Times
Ed. Jacqueline de Jong of 2nd SI

DÉTOURNEMENT



'Pro-Situ' poster created by Strasbourg students in the run-up to May 1968

Found its way, via the English SI, the LSE occupation, the underground press and Tony Wilson into the early Factory release, [Return of the Durutti Column](#) (1980).

MAY '68

- Psychogeography?
- Détournement?
- Creation of Situations?

May 1968, Paris



THE ENGLISH SITUATIONISTS

SI was increasingly international towards the end of the 1960s.

English section: Charles Radcliffe, Chris Gray, T.J. Clark and Donald Nicholson Smith

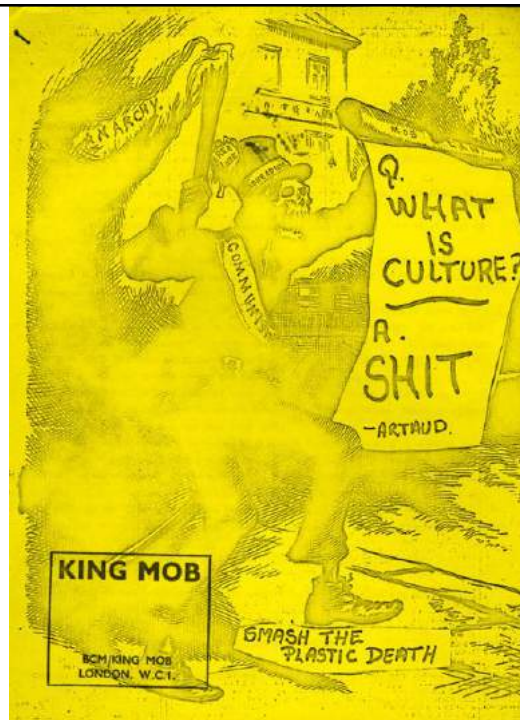
Kicked out for fraternising with 'mystical' Americans, Allan Hoffmann and Ben Morea.

Became King Mob

Influential in reception of SI in England

Part of 1960s London counter-culture, Situationist stunts, e.g. Powis Square, Selfridges 1968

King Mob, Détourned Flyer (1967, Tate Gallery)



PUNK AND THE SI

Malcolm McLaren was also introduced to SI ideas in 1968, part of student occupations with designer Jamie Reid.

Hung around with ex-English section of SI

Gave up making a 'psychogeographical' film about Oxford Street

Appropriated SI ideas into marketing - Chris Gray's 'unpleasant pop group' for his punk band, the Sex Pistols.

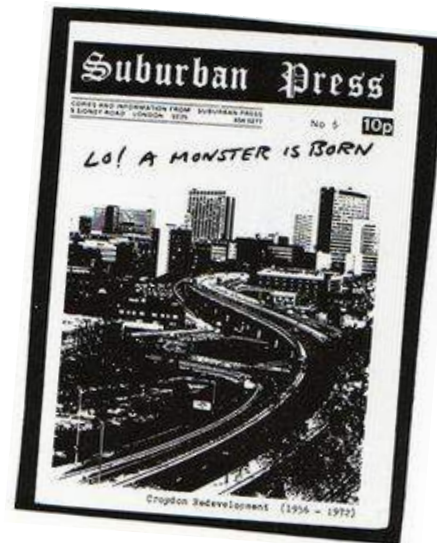


PUNK

Jamie Reid (Suburban Press and Sex Pistols graphic designer)
influence of Dada, English Situationists, King Mob.

“detournement” =
emerging punk aesthetic

Used to sell records via
youth rebellion!



Suburban Press, Jamie Reid's psychogeographical 'zine about Croydon was where he developed his style

THE END OF MUSIC, OR THE END OF PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY?

After punk took Situationist ideas mainstream,
psychogeography seemed to disappear for a while...

But it was to resurface in the 1990s, via a brief detour through literature...



King Mob graffiti, 1968

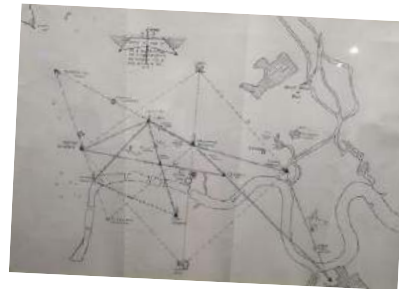
BACK TO THE BOOK...

In Britain a literary genre, dealing with a poetic, occult urbanism grew up during the 1970s and 1980s, following the works of writers such as Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd and comic book author Alan Moore.

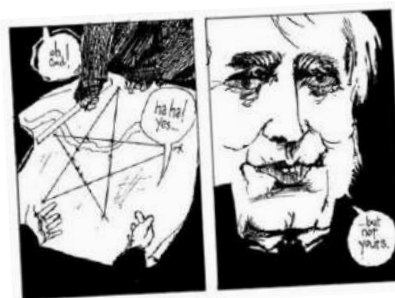
This later drew in figures such as filmmaker Patrick Keiller and columnist and author Will Self.

In the 1990s, this genre came to be retrospectively associated with psychogeography...

But how...?



Brian Catlin Map from Iain Sinclair's *Lud Heat* (1975)



Eddie Campbell, From Alan Moore's *From Hell* (1989-1998)

THE 1990S REVIVAL

Since the 1990s, psychogeography was revised by various underground groups.

First the London Psychogeographical Association, who combined this literary occultism with Situationist ideas – reviving the term 'Psychogeography'.

Followed by Workshop for Non-Linear Architecture, Luther Blisset, Neoist Alliance, Nottingham Psychogeographical Unit, Manchester Area Psychogeographic and others.

LPA (1992-1998) produced 21 newsletters in a 'Magico-Marxist' style and organising several trips to various sites.

WNLA 1992-1996 undertook practical research in Glasgow and London, documented in the group's journal *Viscosity*.

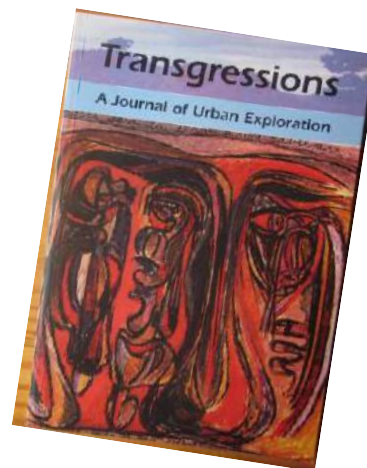




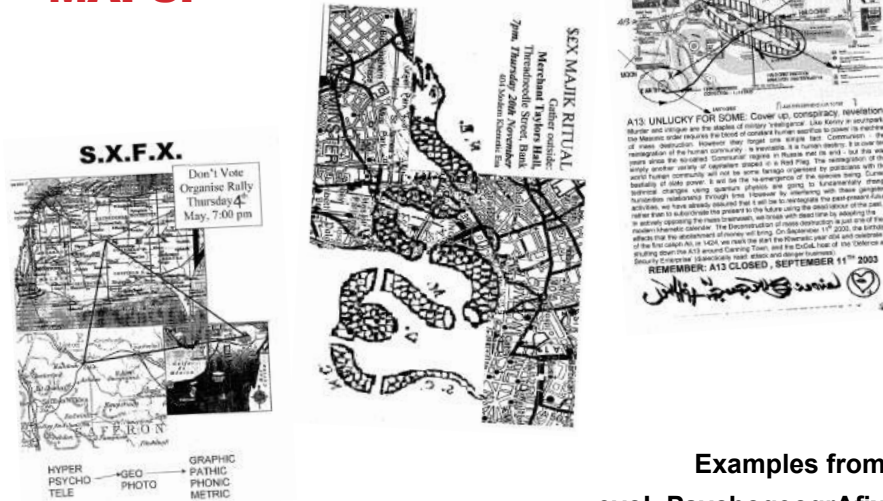
1990S REVIVAL

The journal *Transgressions: A Journal of Urban Exploration*, 5 issues, 1990s, collected together and published many avant-garde/revolutionary psychogeographical groups and themes.

2003-2013, the US festivals Provflux and Psy-Geo-conflux were an umbrella for psychogeographic experiments, locative media art, participatory urbanism etc.

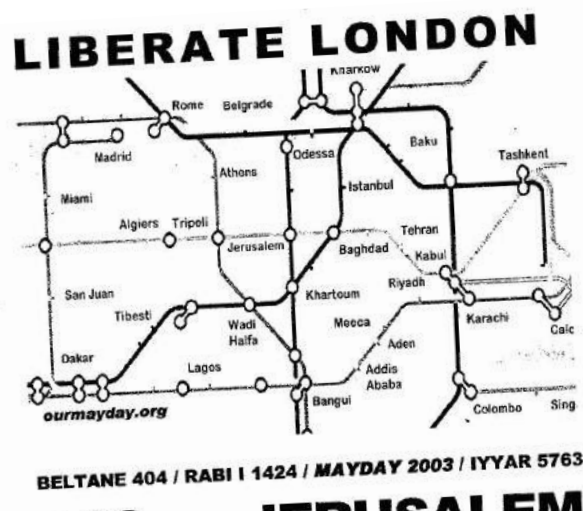


CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC MAPS:



Examples from
evoL PsychogeogrAfix
(2003-5)

CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC MAPS:



evoL PsychogeogrAfix

Flyer (detail) 2003

What's the context
here?

What
commonalities do
you see with older
psychogeographic
material?

LOCATIVE MEDIA

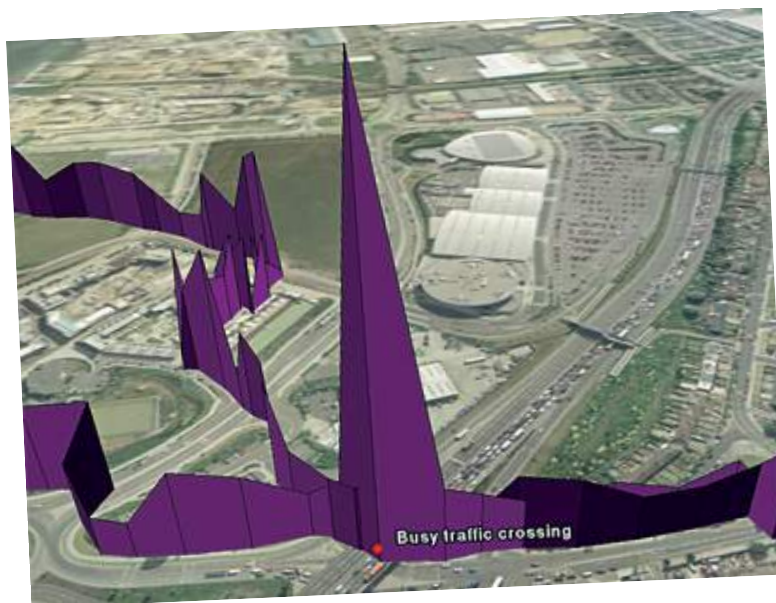
The turn of the 2000s and new technologies in mapping and mobile computing saw the psychogeographic revival continue.

Artists such as Christian Nold, with his *Biomapping* (2004), or *Blast Theory*, with this augmented reality games (2003).



Blast Theory, 2003

CHRISTIAN NOLD



ALGORITHMIC PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY

Invented by Wilfried Hou Je Bek in the Netherlands (2001).

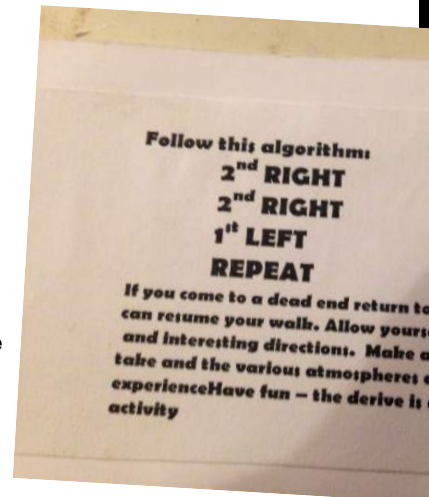
Sought an objective method. Inspired by John Cage's dictum: 'directions but no map'.

Thus devised a set of rules to generate random, unpredictable dérives:

2nd right
2nd right
1st left
Repeat

The success is dependent, he claims, on 3 variables:

- 1) The ability of the directions to enslave the participant
- 2) The real unexpected 'new-ness' of the stroll
- 3) The actual enhancement of the agents cognitive map with experiences of the city.



LAURA OLDFIELD FORD



WALKING ART

Finally, psychogeography also became accepted into the art world, with multiple exhibitions, publications and events organised under the banner of 'walking art'.

Whilst this might represent a retreat from psychogeography's underground, revolutionary ambitions, it has also seen far it become more accessible and more diverse participants involved in the practice.

Today many, if not most, walking artists are women.

For example:

- Walk Walk Walk
- Loiterers Resistance Movement
- Monique Besten
- Lucy Furlong
- And dozens upon dozens of others (see Phil Smith, *Walking's New Movement*, 2015)



Lucy Furlong, *Amniotic City*, 2013

FUTURE PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIES?

Will psychogeography continue to develop in an age of digital culture, 'wearables' and 'smart cities'?

What forms could this take?

This was a brief history of psychogeography, but *not* a practical class... if you want to learn that, and I suggest you do, you don't need special instructions, in the (semi-autobiographical) words of Michèle Bernstein...



'I see,' Carol observed with admiration.

'Serious work, with big books and a big table cluttered with papers.'

'No,' said Gilles.

'I walk. Mostly I walk.'

- All the King's Horses (1960)