London: The Information Capital. 100 maps and graphics that will change how you view the city. By JAMES CHESHIRE and OLIVER UBERTI. Pp. 240. London: Particular Books, 2014. £25.00. ISBN 978-1-846-14847-7. Hardback.

This is a book about London and Londoners, about data, geography, cartography and not least about the authors themselves. Though heavy on the graphics and relatively light on text, this beautifully produced work is significantly more than a coffee-table book of maps. It is at once a snapshot of 'interesting' things about the city, a manifesto for open data and a showcase for geovisualization and spatial analysis. Five themes provide the book's structure: '*where we are, who we are, where we go, how we're doing* and *what we like*' (32). Within these themes, issues well known to geographers and Londoners alike are covered: house prices, demographic change, flood risk zones, tourism, public transport, emergency services, blue plaques. But even the most familiar topics are visualized in inventive and refreshing ways. Social media provide data on the 3,600 worldwide destinations visited by 120,000 tweeting Londoners in 2012-13, for instance, and a colourful Voronoi tessellation shows how far the city's residents have to travel to visit their nearest supermarket. For anyone considering a challenging day out, one map shows the most efficient way to visit all 270 tube stations. (Start at Chesham, finish at Heathrow Terminal 5, and be prepared to make your own way from High Barnet to Cockfosters.)

The backbone of the book is provided by 'open data' – information made public and online. Sources employed by the authors include the Office for National Statistics, Ordnance Survey, and agencies such as Transport for London and the London Fire Brigade. Moreover, public mapping in the form of OpenStreetMap (OSM), which uses volunteered information, has evidently proved invaluable. Cheshire and Uberti place OSM in the context of a long history of London mapping – noting that the first data point in the now-worldwide OSM was recorded in Regent's Park. As such, they argue, OSM has a similar relation to London as Charles Booth's poverty maps which relied on the policemen and school board inspectors who walked the city's streets. Booth's map is reproduced and overlaid with a transparency showing 2010's index of multiple deprivation. OSM is also linked by the authors to Phyllis Pearsall's 23,000-street trek to compile the *A-Z* (an urban legend if ever there was one). There is also a reproduction of John Snow's 1854 map of cholera in Soho, practically obligatory in a survey of London's cartographic history.

Cheshire – a lecturer at University College London's Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis – and Uberti – a US-based designer and visual journalist, formerly of National Geographic – confidently put themselves into the stories narrated by their graphics. A section on the 13 'protected vistas' safeguarded by the London Plan contains a series of neatly observed watercolours of each view by Uberti, for example. A visit to ZSL London Zoo is similarly commemorated in a double-page spread of sketches of its lesser-known inhabitants, ranging from lobetoothed piranha to pygmy hippo. The final map in the volume gives suggestions for bookshops, museums, cafes, pubs and other tourist destinations ('Brick Lane. Curry houses. Enough said').

There are plenty of surprising facts and thought-provoking visualisations in this book. Yet many of the infographics and maps are designed only to elicit a 'fancy that!' and do not address the 'but why?' which is bound to follow. Readers might find that this entertaining and informative work generates more questions than it answers. Nonetheless, anyone with more than a passing interest in London's spaces, networks and flows will find this collection of maps, charts, facts and figures absorbing.

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