

Mapping the Interzone to Resist Phantasmagoric Capitalism.

Independence for South Africa, Scotland, Ireland, Wales – and Ladbroke Grove.

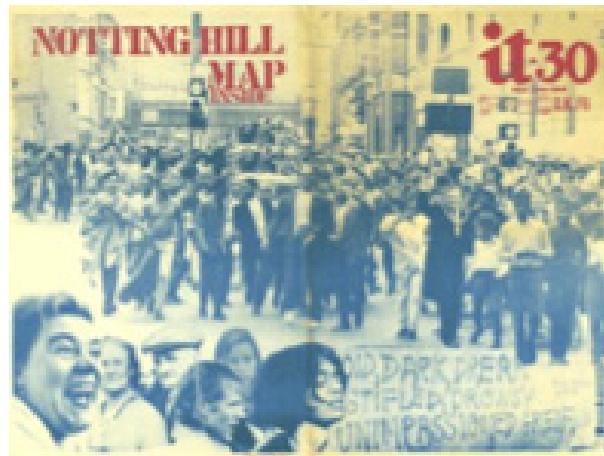
GRAFFITI IN NOTTING HILL CIRCA 1973.

In London the ideal of the counterculture, as manifested in the happenings and protests of the era, encouraged more open engagement that challenged the rules of place that were validated by the authority of the Establishment. From 1965, the street was mapped by the underground press. These points of sale operated as liminal points of contact for likeminded individuals, as well as operating as recruitment points for sellers. These papers of the free press, notably the *International Times*, challenged the Establishment with an anti-imperialist, non-conformist, and anti-authoritarian agenda, and propagated the necessity of a permanent revolution on evolving generational agendas. The instigator of the *International Times*, Jim Haynes, said that he had a vision for a London-based paper that would function as a vanguard to establish an international consensus, 'It would be a European paper which would try to create a kind of underground consciousness throughout Europe. We'd get writing from Warsaw, Stockholm, Paris, Berlin, what have you. To a certain extent that happened. People reporting on what they were doing and trying to bring people together' (quoted in Green, 1998 p.122). Alternative papers and included Irish issues such as the War in the North²⁰ and the consequences of Vatican 2 in an anti-imperialist fashion. This slant would have resonated with the newly arrived Irish.²¹

An important issue of *International Times* remains the 'Interzone' issue of May 3rd, 1968. Dedicated to mapping the alternative environment under construction outside the boundaries of the London rebuild, *International Times* (issue 30) that the mix of

Figure 5

International Times Issue 30.
Graffiti on the bottom left is
by the English Situationist
group, King Mob.



²⁰ After civil rights marchers were attacked in Derry on the 5th October, 1968, Irish exiles in Britain organised to support the civil rights movement. The Irish Civil Rights Solidarity Campaign (contd.) (ICRSC) consisted of the Irish Workers Group and the London Branch of the Peoples Democracy (PD), together with British far left organisations principally the International Socialists (later called the Socialist Workers Party) and the International Marxist Group (IMG) (Purdie, year).

²¹ In the sixties and seventies, sellers hawked Irish political newspapers or 'tracts' around the Irish enclaves. Even the tradition of the ballad monger was kept alive as men sold 'recitations' written to celebrate or eulogise men who featured in the Irish scheme. The Kennedy Assassination would have been a contemporary example of such a recitation.

community programmes practiced in the workshops and gatherings of Notting Hill defined it as an alternative international space constantly evolving from a mix of non-conformists and immigrant communities.²² The interzone issue acknowledged this mix conceptually. The instigator and producer of this issue, the activist John Hopkins, designed it as a psychographic statement that recognised the three villages of Notting Hill as an autonomous zone,²³ to be mapped by 'a combination of William Blake, William Burroughs, situationist psychogeography and local history' (Vauge, 2007 p.16). Hopkins stated that 'if you want to take the territory then you publish the map (and) the first place we want to seize is Notting Hill' (Vauge, 2007 p.16). 'The 'Interzone' followed the 31 bus route that runs down to World's End, Chelsea, and came up through Kensington and Notting Hill to Swiss Cottage and Chalk Farm. We called it the fertile crescent – which is a phrase from archaeology, from Mesopotamia' (Hopkins, 1968/1969). The disciple of biogeography defines an interzone as an area characterised by a particular set of organisms whose presence is determined by environmental conditions, but Hopkins would have been familiar with the countercultural use of the term from (the then infamous book) *The Naked Lunch* by William Burroughs. Here, The Interzone stood for a place where law and national identity was suspended, granting the inhabitants an invisibility in a 'Composite City where all human potentials are spread out in a vast silent market' (Burroughs, 1959 p.). Early issues of the *International Times* had published articles by Burroughs who was 'using the platform to work out ideas' (Baird, 2009). These were ideas concerned with how power was manifested and the overthrow of the State (Baird, 2009).

Dig the vibrations in and around Notting Hill, perhaps the only area in London where through the differing enclaves of experimental living, a free-form and ingenious communal life-style could really burst forth... Now there are signs that a real underground community is alive, and especially in the village around Portobello Road. (Tulloch, 1968).

The experimental layout of issue 30 mapped the alternative scene over a series of two-page spreads. Agitational slogans photographed on the walls of Notting Hill, reports of community activists reclaiming public space, and general cultural events were styled by Hopkins and his staff to reflect the appearance of a manifesto (Issue 33 mentioned that *International Times* functioned as a 'community memory bank' with a 'a machine for processing, collecting, and publishing information. (*International Times*, 1968)) The offset litho design work for this issue created a looser scrapbook style that referenced an awareness of the psychographic layout used by the French situationist publication *International Situationniste*, primarily the cut up of a map of the city of Paris published by Guy Debord as *The Naked City* in May 1957. If this type of map functioned as a political graphic it suggested that discussions on the concept of a new unity could only happen after separation (points reorganised on the map, areas reduced and enlarged to signify their alternative possibilities) had been visualised. The basis of *The Naked City* highlighted the cultural significance of small urban areas versus territories of power

22 'In the early 70s there seems to have been a demo in Notting Hill virtually every other day while All Saints Hall hosted at least one community action meeting a night. By then, the People's Association consisted of various sub-groups covering the main local issues: housing, play, education, unemployment and police' (Author, year)

23 The area is synonymous in British culture for the beginnings of radical Black culture due to resistance by the residents to institutional police harassment circa 1969. The early manifestations of British Black Pride were protests that were visualised as empowerment in the Notting Hill Carnival.

managed by the Establishment. The public act of using this type of map was to ignore established paths of power manifested in the modern city and make the public acts of reclamation predicated on the denial of authority in the act of drifting. The intention of the *Situationist International* was to subvert the conservative ideology of the Western World, undermine the powers of state, bureaucracy, capital, and imperialism, and let citizens decide what spaces and architecture they wanted to live in and how they wished to live in them; this was to be the revolution of everyday life.

In essence, Hopkins was encouraging the example of Notting Hill to be replicated elsewhere in branding the space as a physical manifestation of the counterculture. The process of mapping the interzone can be seen as a lateral extension of the Pre-Norman English custom of 'boundary beating'. This was community walk, led by a priest, who would walk the boundaries of an area to share its knowledge and bless the space. The community would include children in the walk to ensure the knowledge continued as long as possible.²⁴

Where a city such as London creates dense conditions of overcrowding and claustrophobia, the necessity of a social space becomes not just a geographical phenomenon, but also a psychological phenomenon, particularly when different classes, cultures, and ethnicities live close together. The writer Jim Fearnley describes any psychogeographic research on self-determining activities emanating from these areas as resisting what he calls 'phantasmagoric capitalism'. Irish youth coming to London as researchers and cartographers would be struck by the open invitation given by the free press to participate in new communities.²⁵

As an aside, a report on the street distribution of the *International Times* in the paper itself describes the impact of the free press on what appears to be a member of the 'old' Irish. Titled 'The Constant Flux' the report documents the reception from a previous issue whose cover featured the image of a generic longhaired 'hippie' that was mistaken for Christ:

It seems we have gained quite a few new readers who thought we were selling a new religious newspaper although one woman was put off as 'it doesn't look like him'.... Apart from the expected comments, one street seller had two nuns trying to get him arrested for blasphemy: Marie was attacked by a drunken Irishman waving a knife and screaming sacrilege: Keith was threatened with hellfire and most of our street sellers learnt more about religion than they ever did in their Sunday School days.' (International Times, year p.)

The meta-narrative of Irish Catholicism was firm in the established enclaves with priests delivering Sunday sermons on the moral dangers of London.²⁶ Mapping of the path that existed in conduit between Limerick and London takes account of the conceptual territory that contrasts the fixed Irish nationalist conceptions of 'home' with its attachment to land and a church-controlled matrix of fixed relations and the ideal of communal life held in the potential of Notting Hill.

24 A Notting Hill boundary house is mentioned in an article in *Wonderful London* magazine in 1926.

25 The free press called out to the 'aware people' that congregated around Notting hill and Ladbrooke Grove.

26 RTÉ archives hold an interview of a young priest in Slough outlining these dangers circa 1965.



Figure 6
International Times Issue 103, May 6-20 1971.