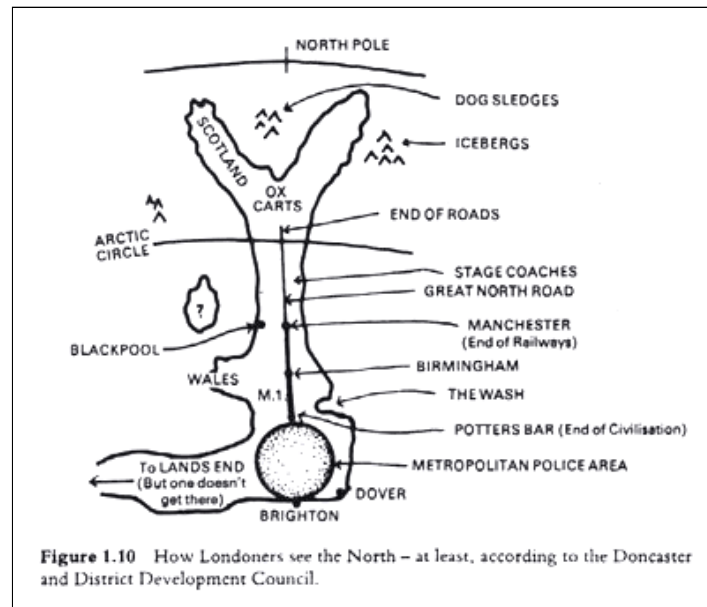


SPOTKANIE WTORKOWE, 9 STYCZNIA 2007

PROF. CLAUD-CHRISTIAN CARBON

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THE MENTAL WALLS INSIDE OUR BRAINS.
 MENTAL MAPS DISTORTED BY SOCIAL FACTORS.



A study about distance estimations between German cities investigated the organization of mental maps and their specific deviations from reality. Potential factors for the deviation of mental maps from reality are physical barriers, emotional involvement, and semantic unity. Distance estimations between cities situated in different former parts of Germany (East or West) were systematically overestimated compared to distances of cities located in the same parts of Germany. This trend was even strengthened when participants had a negative attitude to the reunification of Germany. It could be shown that mental barriers, here the former iron curtain which has been physically absent for 15 years, while still assuming a significant role in social interactions, are powerful predictors for psychological distance estimations. Moreover, by integrating demographical information about the participants, evidence can be found that social attitudes are often much stronger predictors for distance estimations than implicit or explicit geographical knowledge. For instance, it was revealed that the attitude towards German reunification plays a crucial role in estimating distances between cities crossing the former iron curtain: the more negative the attitude the more pronounced was the overestimation of distances. This trend was impenetrable by higher route knowledge measured implicitly by the extent of traveling experience and measured explicitly by ratings of geographical knowledge about Germany. Furthermore, participants tended to base their estimations of direct (air) distances between German cities on distances resulting from their experience with the German Autobahn system. The impact of these results are far reaching and will be integrated in a larger European perspective and outlook for future research.

Wtorek, 9 stycznia 2007
 godz. 15.15 - 16.00
 sala nr 1