UN MAPPED UN CIVILISED

Rachel Adeola Yemitan
Supervisor: Ben Campkin
Bartlett School of Architecture

representational techniques originating in Europe that are used to map place

How has Western Cartography affected the construction of the Lagosian *civic imaginary*?

natives inhabitants of Lagos city, Nigeria

"widespread cultural enthusiasm for viewing the city from above…[to stimulate] the imagination toward the city as it might be"

The name and cartographic identity of Nigeria that we are familiar with today is a direct product of British colonisation in 1914, before which a "Nigeria" did not exist. Lagos, the colonial base of the 'British Protectorate of Nigeria', was mapped out and eventually handed back to the "natives" at Independence on 1 October 1960. The Nigerian Government has not carried out an extensive survey of the area since the 1970s. Lagos is officially unmapped at present, and its indigenous inhabitants have unfairly never had the privilege of producing a widely recognised mapping that reflects their way of living. Dated colonial maps are subsequently given licence to construct the well-known image of the city and are the foundation for the *civic imaginary.*

In the research article 'Picturing the Profession: The View from Above and the Civic Imaginary in Burnham's Plans' Dr Rebecca Ross describes the "cultivation" of the civic imaginary as a process of "drawing upon existing widespread cultural enthusiasm for viewing the city from above…[to stimulate] the imagination toward the city as it might be", thus enabling inhabitants with a vision they can agree with and aspire towards. Ross' essay discusses the birth of the modern planning profession, but the colonial act of mapping was arguably imperious planning on a much larger scale, long before the profession emerged. The research carried out aims to look at how the construction of the civic imaginary is affected by the use of western cartographic representational techniques, with special focus on Lagos city, the former capital of Nigeria. In turn this intends to question how we could begin to give licence back to non-western countries to create an image distinct to them which embraces and celebrates their unique way of living.

I am identifying Lagos as a map that needs to be written in order to question "hegemonic representations" which wrongly encourage cultural hierarchy. Lagos needs to map itself with respect to the values that make it unique to create a foundation for constructing a healthy civic imaginary.

1 EXCLUSION FROM THE GRID

Land and Surveys Department. "Map of Lagos and Environs." Lagos, Nigeria, 1946.

Colonial mapping in Lagos introduced a spatial manifestation of power contrary to the way indigenous people understood it, corrupting the foundation of the civic imaginary. The western tradition of the controlling view from above is seen in The Map of Lagos and Environs 1946, created by the British Land and Survey Department, Lagos. The colonial cartographer uses this power to selectively exclude all non-British settlements from the map, using omission to enforce the correctness of the Western gridded city. The definition of territory was essential to colonialism, and mapping from above allowed a colonial body to have a tangible representation of their possessions. When Chinua Achebe describes division from a Nigerian perspective in his book *Home and Exile*, it is not used to depict possession, but to signifying uniqueness:

> ***"The first ancestor of Ogidi people was named Ezechuamagha. He was created by Chukwu on the present site of the town. Chukwu then moved...and planted another...man named Ezumaka, father of the neighbouring Nkwele people. For boundary, Chukwu created the Nkisi river to flow between them… [This] insistence on separate and individual creations of towns chimed with their belief that every human being was a unique creation."***

Lines on the colonial map representing township and acquisition boundaries subvert this idea; forgetting the concept of uniqueness, they segregate space to define the reach of authority. The lack of appreciation for the original native system coupled with representational neglect lays the foundation for a skewed construction of the imaginary. It tells inhabitants that their way of life is incorrect and therefore unmappable unless they strive for this foreign way of living.

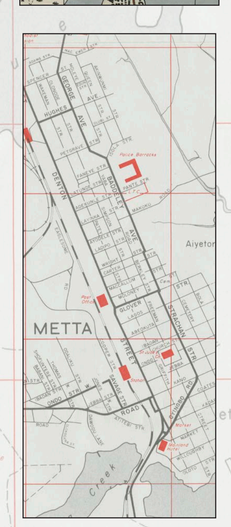
2 ABSENCE IN THE GRID

The techniques of omission in the 1946 map are complemented by the 'absence' present in the Shell-BP Map drawn as a celebration of Nigerian Independence. Despite the alleged motive, Lagosian settlements still fail to appear on the map. The concept of a foreign oil company creating this map is already questionable, and when remembering the exploitative nature of the cartographer, it becomes clear as to why there is so much that has been selectively forgotten. The map is like a ghost of Britain's legacy: it retains the grid of the 1946 map and depicts tarmac roads and railways with bold importance. In the context of Shell-BP being a company concerned with the exportation of oil, Lagos is a resource and their preoccupation with connectivity reveals their motives of financial profit over celebration of independence.

The map outlines former British settlement that are now vacant. If these spaces were vacant and Lagosian places were represented, the map would tell a different story, but by maintaining the omission of Lagosians= settlements and outlining their recent colonial past, it perpetuates the idea of the importance of European civilisation, or conversely reaffirms the view of African forms of civilisation as inferior to that of the European. They must aspire to a level of "British-ness", and the absent grid is a blueprint for them to do so.

above
Land and Surveys Department. "Map of Lagos and Environs." Lagos, Nigeria, 1946. Detail

below
Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria ltd. "Town Plan of Lagos, Capital CIty of the Feeration of Nigeria." Lagos, Nigeria: Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria ltd., 1960. Detail



1833 abolition of Slave Trade in Great Britain

26th December 1851 Britain bombards Lagos to unseat reigning king Kosoko for his lack of efforts in discontinuing the slave trade in Lagos

6th Augist 1861 Lagos is annexed as a British colony

British begin to work their way through Yorubaland. Promotion of anti-slavery and trading became part of British rhetoric for colonisation

1885 Berlin conference, formalisation of Scramble for Africa. Formation of Oil River Protectorate

1894 Oil River Protectorate are redesignated as the Niger Coast Protectorate

1900 Northern Nigeria Protectorate formed

1914 North and South merged into one Nigeria

1946 British map of Lagos

1960 Nigeria independence

1961 Shell BP map of Nigeria

1970s Economic boom

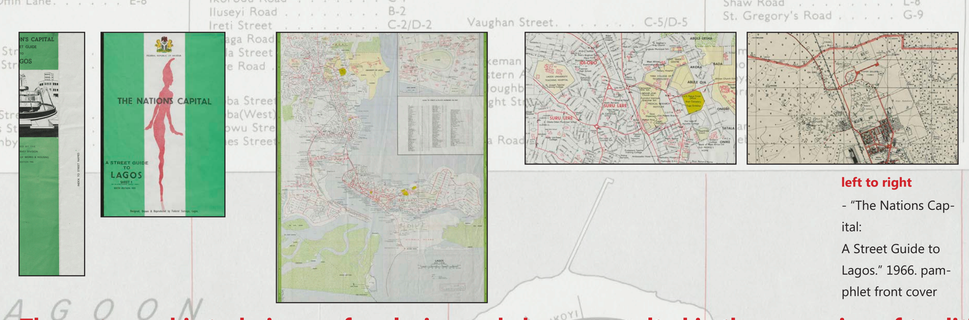
1980s Economic collapse

1983 expulsion of < 2 million illegal workers from surrounding nations

1991 population 5.195 million

2001 Rem Koolhaas Wide and Close documentary

3 BUILDING INTO THE GRID



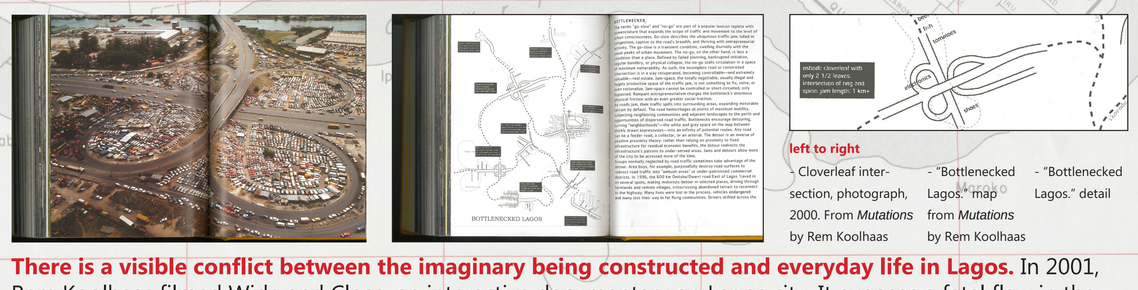
left to right
- "The Nations Capital: A Street Guide to Lagos." 1977. Pamphlet front cover
- "The Nations Capital: A Street Guide to Lagos." 1966. Full map
- "The Nations Capital: A Street Guide to Lagos." 1966. Detail
- "Map of Lagos and Environs." 1946. Detail
- "The Nations Capital: A Street Guide to Lagos." 1966. pamphlet front cover

The cartographic techniques of exclusion and absence resulted in the repression of traditional African values. This contributed to a shift in the civic imaginary, with Lagos aspiring towards European urbanism after 1960, "which came with some form of elitist consumerism and ways of appropriating Western values". Adopting the European style of mapping, the government began building into the grid. The official tourist city guide map began to cartographically write Lagosians into existence to show that they were keeping up with Western modern urbanity.

Places surrounding the original gridded city begin to appear in the 1966 edition. Attempting to follow Western traditions, Nigeria's cartographic naivety reveals itself on closer inspection. The cartographer understands that there is an importance placed on connection in western mapping, but this manifests itself in an underdrawn key, the entirety of which is '1.) "Bus stop"' and '2.) "Direction of flow of traffic on one-way roads"'. This key says nothing important about the city and is an anxious attempt at selective representation. In V.S Naipaul's talk on the universal civilisation he admits, "colonised or defeated people can begin to distrust themselves". The anxiety present in the 1966 city guide could be seen as the product of a demographic that distrusts their original means of celebration, looking to the west as the centre.

The 1977 edition depicts the swift appropriation of western modernity in Lagos' view from above. After an increased the economy, superhighways and cloverleaf intersections being to dominate and are prominently represented with a bold red stroke, creating boundaries as they sweep around minor roads. The Lagosian image from above begins to reflect the 'modern mentality', presenting Lagos in the way the inhabitants wished to be seen by the West.

4 DRAWING CONFLICT WITH THE GRID



left to right
- Cloverleaf intersection, photograph, 2000. From *Mutations* by Rem Koolhaas
- "Bottlenecked Lagos." map from *Mutations* by Rem Koolhaas
- "Bottlenecked Lagos." detail

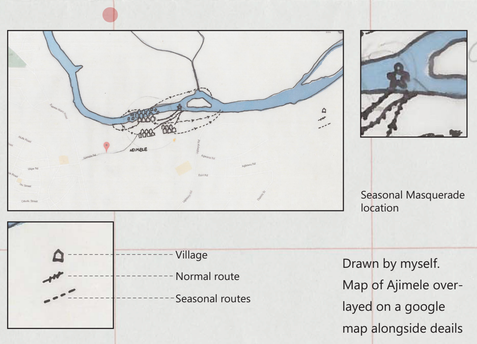
There is a visible conflict between the imaginary being constructed and everyday life in Lagos. In 2001, Rem Koolhaas filmed Wide and Close, an interactive documentary on Lagos city. It exposes a fatal flaw in the construction of the civic imaginary because of the western grid's incompatibility with Lagosian urbanism.

> ***"On a map they still look like they organise the city... but at each of the plan's intersections this omniscience collapses…Lagos has no streets; instead it has curbs and gates, barriers and hustlers that control separate landscapes… even the Lagos superhighway has bus stops on it, mosques under it, markets in it and buildingless factories throughout it."***

Koolhaas identifies a fragmented urban system that cannot be represented through the exactness of western mapping. On his map *Bottlenecked Lagos*, instead of place names, the activity being carried out in that place is noted down as well as the jam time (hours) and jam length (km). The limits of commercial activity are therefore defined by the (lack of) movement of people between places as opposed to architectures or infrastructures.

Koolhaas praises the Lagosian people's transgression of boundaries, even though it would be unacceptable in the European context of the civic imaginary. The black dashed lines that connect the fragments on his map can be read as the informal routes taken as a result of stagnant traffic jams. Koolhaas romanticises this action as "allowing more of the city to be accessed more of the time", but this could be likened to drivers taking shortcuts through back gardens during rush hour in London: it is incompatible with the western model.

5 BUILDING WITHOUT THE GRID



Seasonal Masquerade location

Drawn by myself. Map of Ajimele overlayed on a google map alongside deails

Constructing a renewed civic imaginary requires us to recall histories forgotten in the wake of colonialism. In *Home and Exile*, Chinua Achebe recalls folklores from his childhood upon which Ogidi urbanism was established, and although not all of these stories can be situated in reality, they have shaped the way the Ogidi live. Combining this knowledge with physical features would bring cultural relevance to a map and help people understand the complexities of an urbanism that may appear disorganised to the outsider. As an exercise, I collected stories from three former Nigerian residents on the histories of their towns. I made attempted to map fragments of those histories over a Google map, using the topography provided to situate historic activity, whether physical or not, in the present. The aim was to show layers of the town's past that had contributed to shaping their societies. To the left is a a map of Ajimele. It was the norm for inhabitants to bathe in Benin River, but folklore said that during a certain time of year, African masquerades would emerge from the water. Women were not allowed to see the masquerade, and so during this period they would select a different route to the river. The seasonal aspect of this story calls for the representation of indeterminate paths taken in-season to get to the river. Whether it is literal or not, the masquerade shapes the path taken by inhabitants.