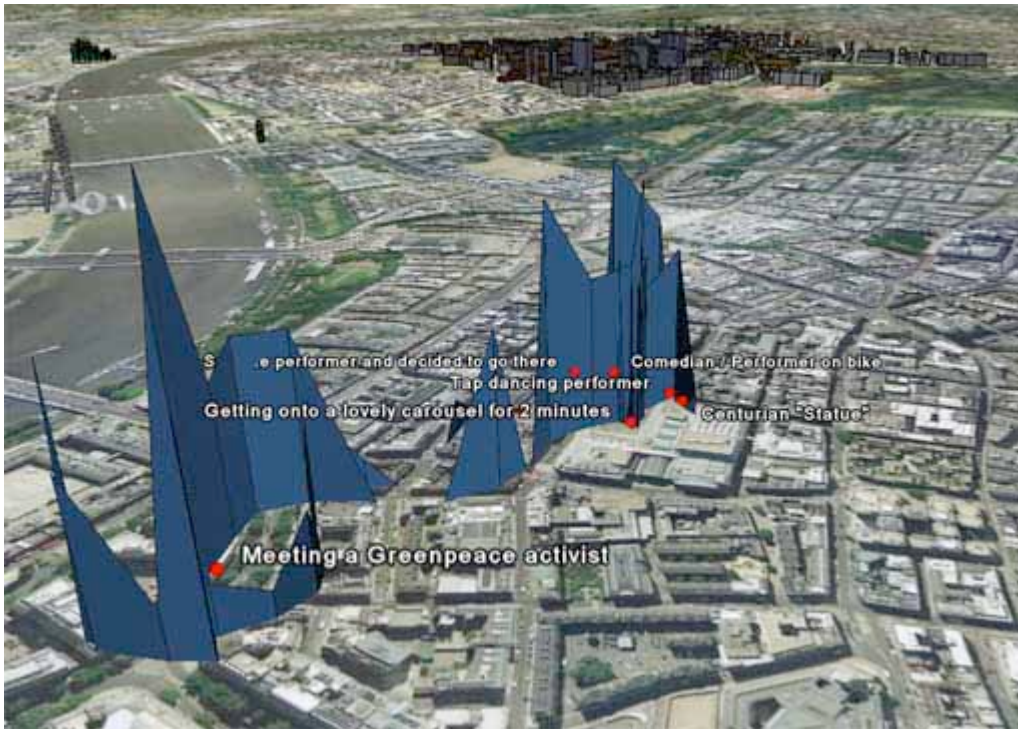




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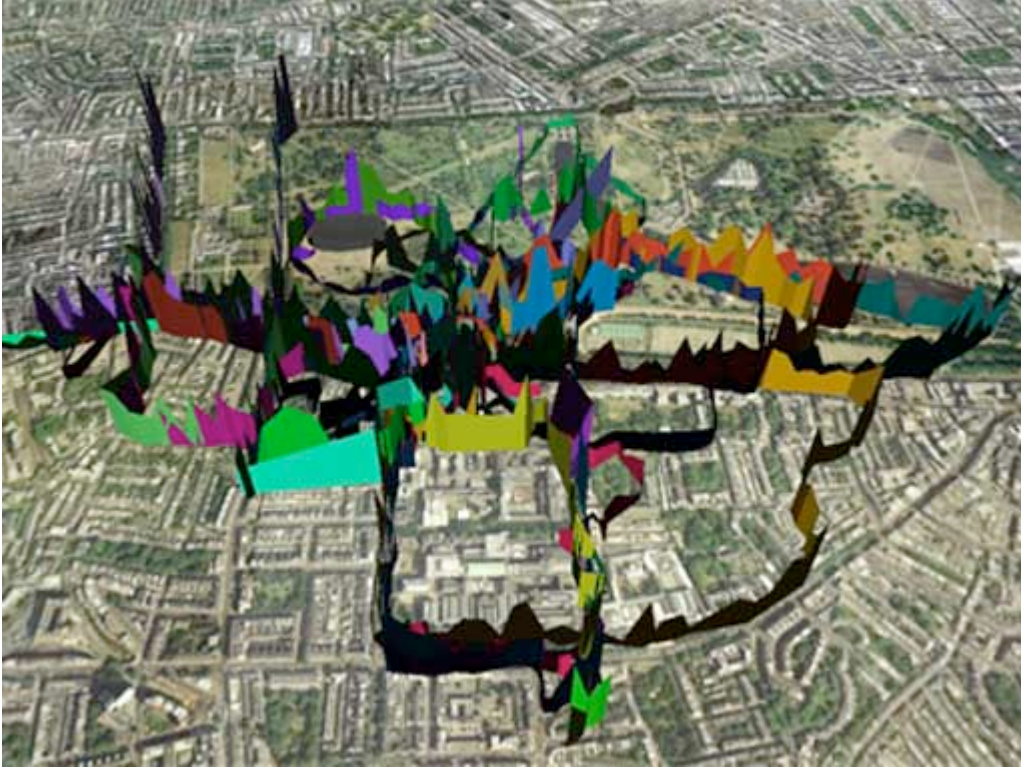
Biomapping London



Mapping, it seems, is the new rock and roll. Tools such as Google Earth are allowing everyday folk to create all manner of interesting mash-ups. The latest one to hit our radar (via [New Scientist's technology blog](#) – thanks guys) is biomapping.

Christian Nold of [BioMapping.net](#) is creating maps of London and other cities based on emotional responses. Places that elicit a strong emotional response appear as peaks (for example 'meeting a Greenpeace activist' in the Covent Garden map above, whereas calm, tranquil spots appear flat.

Subjects carry round a gizmo that measures changes in skin resistance. Basically, the more stimulated you are, the more sweaty your skin gets. The data are then coupled to GPS positions and plotted in Google Earth. Participants are asked to annotate the maps, so that peaks can be attributed to events.



There are a few problems with the concept. To get truly useful, meaningful results, you'd presumably have to send round tens of people on the same walk and average their data, thus removing subjectivity. There's also no real way of knowing what the spikes really represent – fear, horror, delight, anger, arousal? So in the Kensington map above, for example, the central peaks could be caused by frustration at the traffic levels, feelings of exultation on seeing the Albert Hall, or the shock of slipping in the Diana memorial fountain. The annotations go some way to addressing this, in a qualitative way.

This could be a very useful tool for planners and architects. And it'd be interesting to see where the top ten emotional hotspots are in the capital. We'll be keeping our eyes on this one.

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