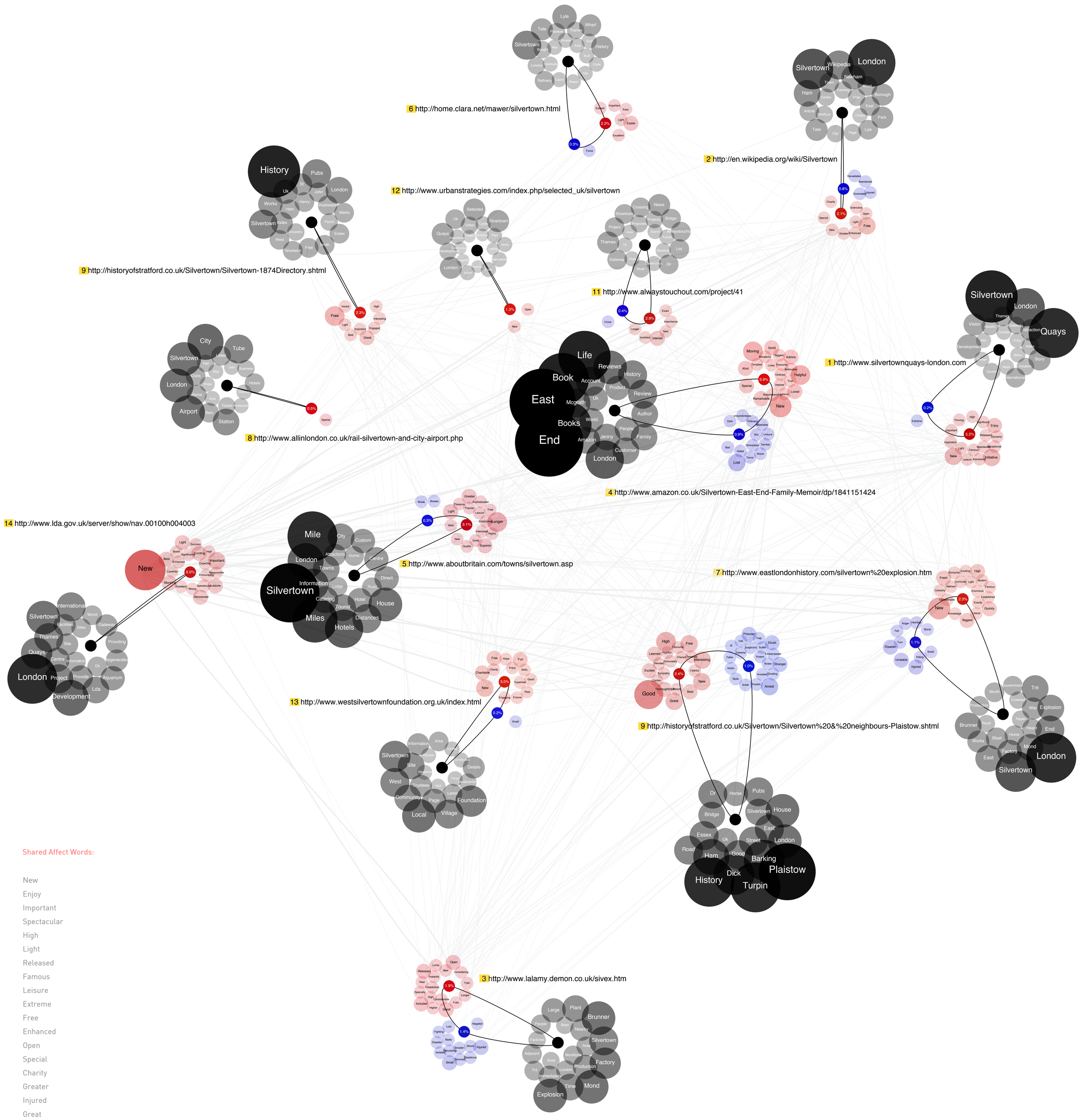
Silvertown Affect Map
October 2007

AFFECT BROWSER

Made using the Affect Browser software
http://softhook.com/affect.htm
Christian Nold 2007



Shared Affect Words:

New
Enjoy
Important
Spectacular
High
Light
Released
Famous
Leisure
Extreme
Free
Enhanced
Open
Special
Charity
Greater
Injured
Great
Longer
Considerable
Real
Established
Small
Disaster
Lost
Good
Biggest
Interest
Tempted
Favourite
Worst
Excellent
Exciting
Fell
Interesting
Best
Expertise

Websites examined:

1 http://www.silvertownquays-london.com
2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silvertown
3 http://www.lalamy.demon.co.uk/sivex.htm
4 http://www.amazon.co.uk/Silvertown-East-End-Family-Memoir/dp/1841151424
5 http://www.aboutbritain.com/towns/silvertown.asp
6 http://home.clara.net/mawer/silvertown.html
7 http://www.eastlondonhistory.com/silvertown%20explosion.htm
8 http://www.allinlondon.co.uk/rail-silvertown-and-city-airport.php
9 http://historyofstratford.co.uk/Silvertown/Silvertown-1874Directory.shtml
10 http://historyofstratford.co.uk/Silvertown/Silvertown%20&%20neighbours-Plaistow.shtml
11 http://www.alwaystouchout.com/project/41
12 http://www.urbanstrategies.com/index.php/selected_uk/silvertown
13 http://www.westsilvertownfoundation.org.uk/index.html
14 http://www.lda.gov.uk/server/show/nav.00100h004003

Silvertown Context

Silvertown is a small area of London in the Thames Estuary which is currently undergoing huge social and environmental changes due to a multitude of large scale regeneration projects taking place there. This is in addition to all the controversial changes that will take place there because the Olympics in 2012. Silvertown used to be crucially important as the site of the Royal Docks and large amounts of related industry. Now the area is mainly a residential area with a smattering of light industrial buildings with the City Airport at its centre.

This map aims to explore what is the nature of online communications and representation of Silvertown. This map was constructed with the Affect Browser software developed by Christian Nold, which carries out automated semiotic analyses of websites and visually represents the resulting data. The software extracts all the text from the web pages and categorises the words into three groups. positive (red clusters), negative (blue clusters) and most frequent content (black cluster). The software contains a number of dictionaries that allow the filtering of these terms into these categories

Mapping Process:

In order to create a discussion survey for Silvertown 14 representative web pages were selected. The website URLs were gathered through Google searches on the term Silvertown as well as local subterms ie. Royal Docks. This process yielded websites whose topics could be categorised were as follows in terms of frequency :

1 Property Developers
2 Governmental
3 Historical
4 Transport Information
5 Community

Previous studies using the Affect Browser software have indicated that a mix of positive and negative affect words is a good indicator of a websites "sociality". This concept is based on the notion that sociality requires free speech which is expressed as both positive and negative emotions. Those websites that allow people to express negative emotions are thus more social and conducive to democratic speech

Map Conclusions:

Local schools and community websites were hardly evident when searching on local terms indicating either that bad search terms were being used or more likely that school and community websites are either largely absent or not promoted.

The only Silvertown related websites that contain a healthy balance of both positive and negative affect words are historical websites that that focus in particular on a famous historical explosion of a gunpowder factory.

In conclusion the online representations and discussions about Silvertown are strongly skewed toward governmental and private property developers whose websites do not present any open discussions. The only public discourse about the area focuses on the area´s past rather than its imminent future. This worrying lack of democratic speech suggests a critical requirement for initiatives that support local community discourse in Silvertown on the future changes taking place there.