

## THE LOCATION OF JUSTICE: INTRODUCTION

*Posted on June 5, 2018 by editorship*



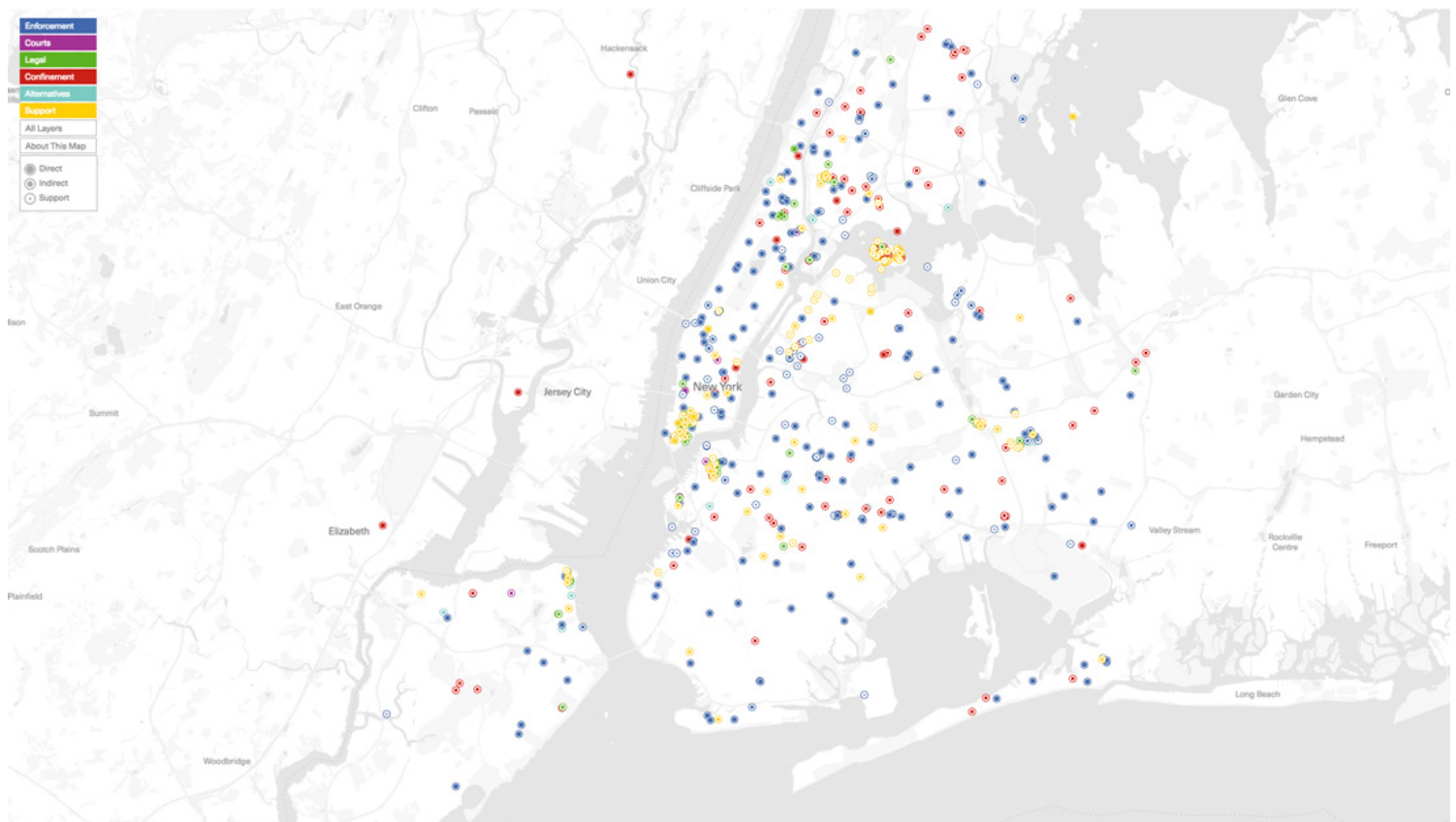
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How can we define the “criminal justice system”? Though increasingly aware of its injustices, we struggle to grasp its scope. What is it, where is it, and what are all of the things that it does? When police, jails, and prisons are thrown into relief, what else remains in the shadows? In order to envision a more just New York City, and to imagine how it might change, we must first make visible a more complete picture of the city's criminal justice system as it presently exists.



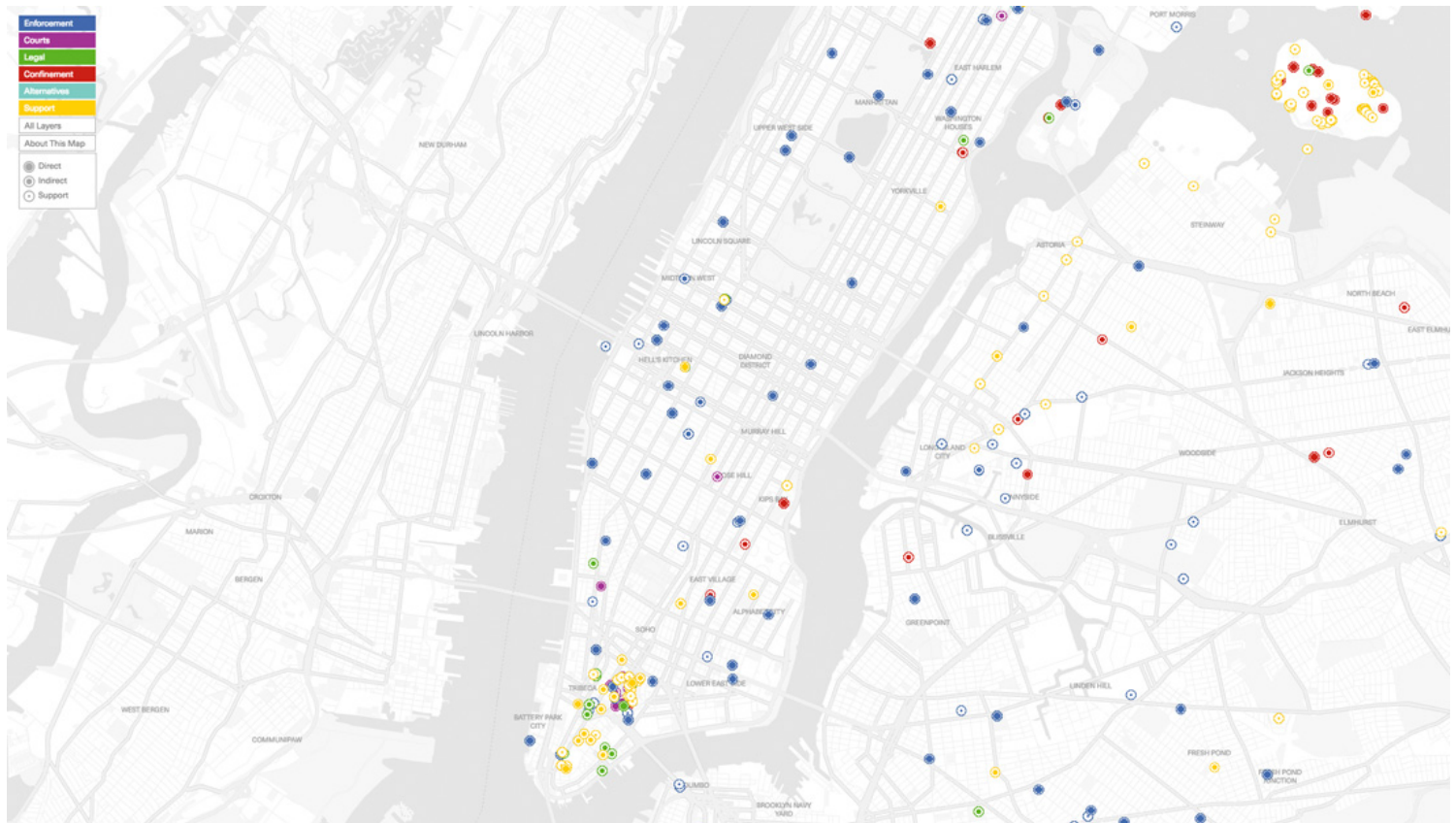
The system as assembled on this interactive map is a decentralized cluster of institutions with related, but largely uncoordinated, mandates. Together, these institutions police the public, enforce laws, adjudicate charges, and confine, punish, rehabilitate, and supervise people who are found guilty of committing crimes. This map shows the distribution of actors and agencies within the fabric of the city. For those seeking to decode society's relationship to crime and punishment, order and safety, the sites and spaces of the criminal justice system are a cipher. Read them as a receipt of public investment, a monument to collective notions of safety, or a footprint of government's power

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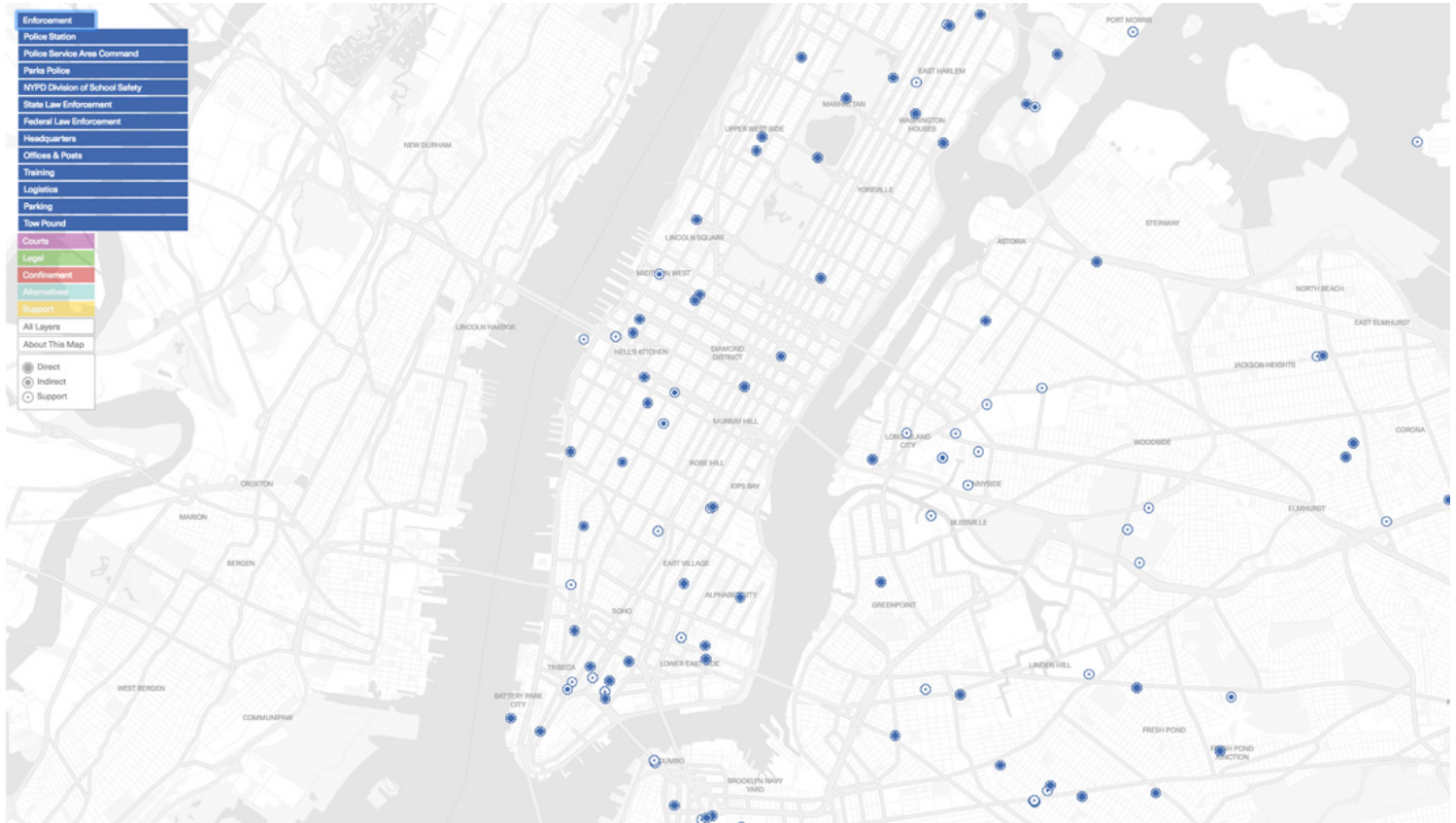
in people's lives. Some things, like police precincts, are scattershot throughout the city, omnipresent and everyday. Other things, like courts, are clustered in nodes where power is concentrated and authority proclaimed.



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These are the sites where the system makes itself visible, the places where it asserts its presence and the extent of its power. But at the same time, the system is engineered for invisibility; some of its most powerful operations are made possible by staging them out of sight. To shine a light means expanding the map's borders to include the prisons and detention centers upstate (and out of state) where thousands of city residents are held for years at a time. Furthermore, the system is more than policing and punishment for the New Yorkers in its purview; it wields power less directly as well, through probationary requirements, parole supervision, fines, and fees. It provides medical care, schooling, drug rehabilitation, mental health treatment, housing, surveillance, supervision, and visitation for those in its custody. It is also a workplace for tens of thousands of people. Public-facing sites are supported by a secondary network that includes everything from warehouses, parking lots, and cogeneration plants to call centers, evidence labs, and training grounds. To map "the system" is to demonstrate how its roots permeate the city — and to dispel the myth, once and for all, that its enterprises are marginal or its inadequacies remote.

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Like all maps, this tool presents a point of view, and cannot claim to be comprehensive or objective. But it does strive to be accurate. You can read more about the sources [here](#). If you believe there are errors or omissions in the information presented here, please [be in touch](#).

Laura Kurgan, Juan Saldarriaga, and Jochen Hartmann at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation's [Center for Spatial Research](#) conceived, designed, and built the map. Emily Schmidt originated the idea and compiled the core data set. Olivia Schwob, Aylunne Terieszkievicz, Maya Tellman, and Nishant Jacob conducted additional data-gathering and research.

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