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BIODIVERCITIES

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MAPS & MAPPING

Joint Research Centre

In one way or another, maps are an integral part of every planning process. Taking this central role, they necessarily hold a lot of power as artefacts that structure information, demand selection of what is represented and how, and involve appointed "mappers" in the process of their creation.

In most instances of the planning practice, mapping is reserved for experts and follows strict requirements and codes. In response to this exclusivity, mapping can also be "distributed, participatory and social" (Kitchin et al. 2011: 444). Participatory mapping - as other forms of mapping - comes in different shapes and sizes. It can be limited to the provision of local data with already pre-defined format and aims, but there are also many examples of the co-creation of maps, where citizens determine what gets represented and how.

As the BiodiverCities project aims at experimenting with ways of mainstreaming citizen engagement in urban planning and policy making, we naturally want to examine the role that mapping can play in this process. The purpose of this *Digest* is to **inform** and **inspire**. Inform about what we are looking for, as part of Deliverable 2 (part two), for the making of the Atlas. Inspire your work, showcasing examples of maps accompanied with short critical analyses addressing key questions, the same ones you will be addressing: What **role** have maps played in the participatory process, if any? What **kind** of maps were they? What **knowledge** have they represented and produced? Who made them? How have they been **used and "integrated" into the planning process**?

CHECK OUT

- During the 2021 European Week of Regions and Cities, we held a session on "**What does it take to mainstream citizen engagement and deliberative democracy in public institutions?**" **-** you can access the recording and report HERE.
- Sign up for the Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy's **newsletter** HERE.
- Add your project to the website of the Community of Practice of CC-DEMOS HERE.

Citizen engagement activities in all the cities make use, implicitly or explicitly, of maps and produce novel cartographies to re-make territories, inform policies or support communities. However, in some cities, participatory mapping features as a purposeful approach, method or tool of the process. In other cities, the citizen engagement process has been less about materially making new maps and more about making new narratives by means of different tools, including maps (see the example below by Hester, 2005).

The maps below are illustrative of these kinds of approaches where mapping with citizens deliberately serves the purpose of better capturing issues and dynamics at the local level. This occurs at a scale that is politically relevant in order to acknowledge and better understand community's concerns and local issues, including environmental ones, by bringing new evidences and producing new collective knowledge.

Imaging Homelessness in a City of Care

This map was developed with 30 homeless people in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (UK) with the aim of challenging public understanding of homelessness and imagining policies that are less punitive and more caring towards marginalities. It illustrates paths into homelessness as well as daily challenges and strategies associated with living on the street. By giving voice to the voiceless, it offers counter-readings of the uses of city spaces. The map attracted attention of policymakers, practitioners and researchers, ultimately reaching over 2 million citizens through a wide media coverage. This positive reaction can be traced to the ability of the map "to engage audiences instinctively and emotionally" (Irving and Moss, 2014, p. 254) by emphasizing the variety of meanings assigned to the city. Learn more about this project here.

A side note: an ethical assessment should always accompany research or social innovation projects, particularly when marginal groups are engaged. Moreover, in such cases, it is even more pressing to clarify their political impact: have such participatory projects affected institutional practices or policies - and how?

Credit: Lovely JoJo
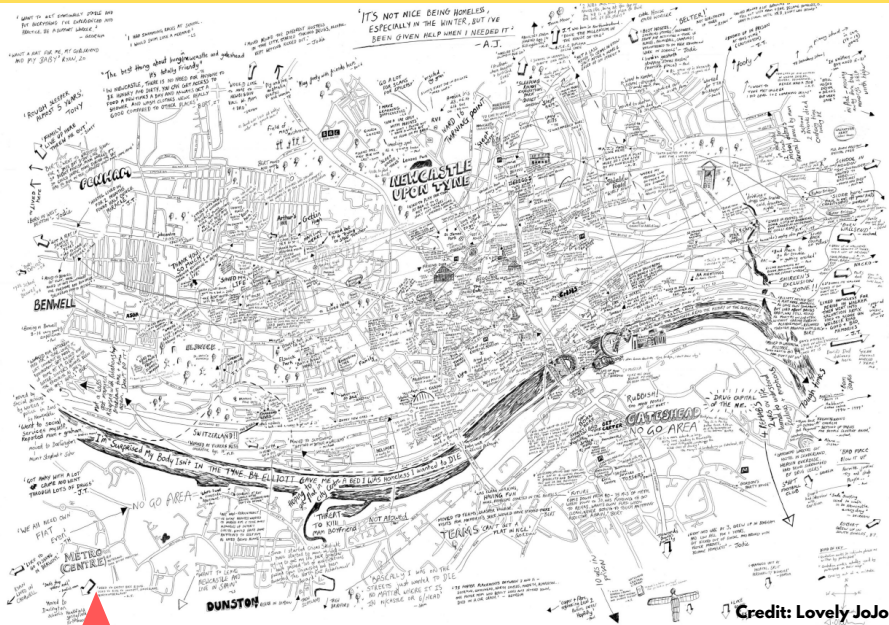
"The relationships between places and emotions are too complex to be properly captured solely by maps, but the mapping process is just too powerful not to play a central role in our attempt to better understand our emotional engagements with places." (Caquard and Griffin, 2018, p. 12)

"The map becomes the vehicle to study power/knowledge re/reproduction in action. Maps are a tool in furthering ideas. Therefore, we need to understand how maps are shaped by an ideology and how this ideology is being implemented through these maps." (Aalbers, 2014)

The indigenous cartography in Acre, Brazil

This kind of map can be seen as a relevant research and advocacy tool that incorporates indigenous knowledge about the land and related environmental conflicts, while empowering local inhabitants engaged in the making of the maps themselves. This latter aspect is particularly relevant given that "maps have been tools that were historically used against" indigenous populations (Comissão Pró-Índio do Acre and Renato Antonio Gavazzi, 2018, p. 111).

These maps and processes hold the power of providing **situated** representations about the realities of living in a given area and the perspectives of the people who inhabit it, while offering ways to address ongoing conflicts between minorities and governmental institutions, and produce novel knowledges.

As a consequence of this particular participatory mapping initiative, that is part of an original atlas called *This is Not an Atlas*, many indigenous schools now have maps and textbooks about their lands in their own languages.

More on indigenous planning? See here and here.

Source:
Comissão Pró-Índio do Acre and Renato Antonio Gavazzi, 2018

Bio mapping, or mapping emotions

This map is part of a more elaborate mapping process called 'Brentford Biopsy' (here) by Christian Nold *et al*. **Bio mapping** featured as the core mapping technique of the project: with the help of a finger-cuff sweat sensor detecting emotional arousals as well as a GPS, Bio Mapping **tracked emotions in relationship to places.** As Nold argues, tracking emotions is the starting point for more in-depth conversations that allow collective issues to emerge. For example, in Stockport, as elsewhere (Nold, 2018, p. 6), personal observations led to a group discussion about the past, present and future of the Brentford neighbourhood.

Therefore, if you are working with emotions, we suggest to engage with these questions: what use of such maps is foreseen? Has mapping of emotions led to dialogue about collective matters of concern?
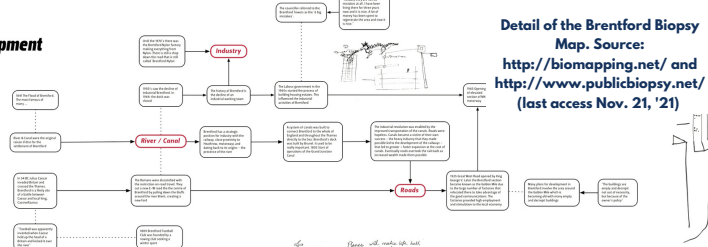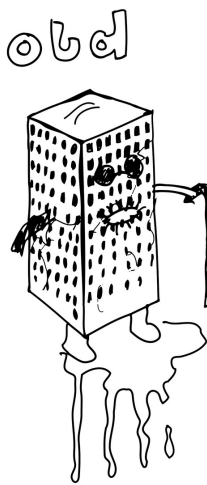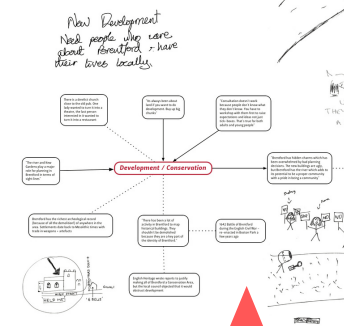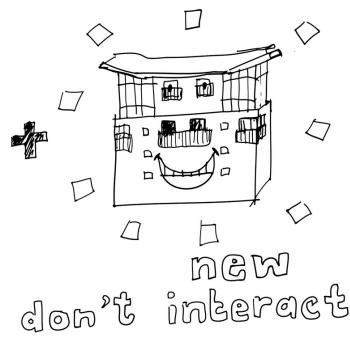
*"When we tried giving an emotion map to the council, this resulted in them exibiting it in their building, yet without taking any further action on the issues identified on the map. The problem was that the maps talked about urban life in an unfamiliar language of emotion and significant events. [...] For the maps to be an effective part of institutional decision making, they required **translations.**"* (Nold, 2018, p. 8)

Mapping San Siro: visualizing places from multiple view points

Mapping San Siro is a participatory action-research project that focuses on the San Siro neighbourhood, located in the north-west part of the city of Milan and whose public image is negatively characterized. San Siro is often viewed as a highly problematic part of the city, "with strong socio-economic inequalities and inter-cultural/inter-generational conflicts."

The now 7 year-old action-research project, by involving students, inhabitants, and local associations, aimed to co-produce an alternative, more inclusive, less stigmatizing narrative (see, for example, the figure below), by focusing on three main topics at the heart of the neighbourhood's concerns: housing, public/common spaces and potentials of vacant/underused spaces. A **multi-source observatory** has been set in place, collecting knowledge of different kinds - scientific and local - and combining quantitative and qualitative methods, visual and textual methodologies (e.g., storytelling, mapping).

The map below, designed in 2018 by Arjama Mukherjee e María José Jiménez, allows to represent the space in a more welcoming way, conveying a greater sense of hope and possibility (e.g., foodscape and historical routes).

Dana Park
existing layout

Key: Degree of territoriality
High
Low
None

Dana Park
definition of teen gang's territory

Dana Park
user conflicts

Gang with younger teens
Gang with elderly
Gang with younger teens
Gang with all other users

Activity Areas
Asphalt Play Area
swing
free play
boccie
Fountain
Basketball
Mounds
Open Play
Table & Bench
Sand Box

Dana Park
for the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts
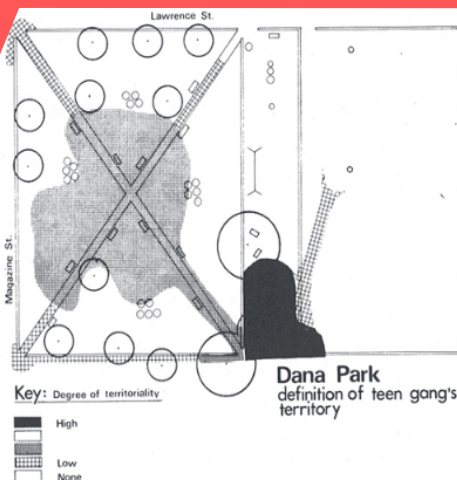designed by:
Community Development Section Design Team

Participatory design, or using maps to research places

Dana Park is a good example of the use of maps to represent and also to address, with the community affected, local matters of concern. Dating back to 1968, a turf war, led by local gangs, took place in this park, located in Cambridge, MA (USA), causing various issues to local inhabitants. Territorial mapping was employed as a mean to address the ongoing conflict.
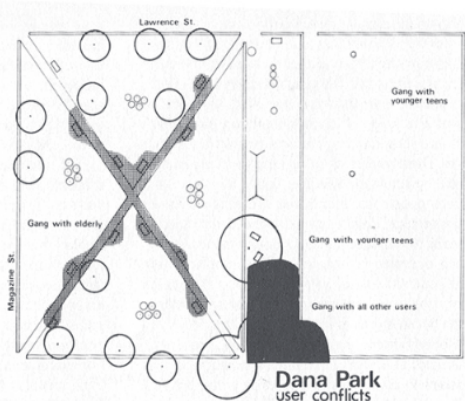
Similarly to participatory processes, whether of an invited or uninvited kind, "to effectively practice democratic design is **to embrace the many paradoxes we encounter and represent**" (de la Peña *et al.*, Design as Democracy, 2017, *Introduction*). Different stakes, at times conflicting, contested values, controversial issues are all at play in participatory processes, and mapping is an accessible and effective way to both represent such issues of concern and to bring about some desired transformation.

All these examples of maps explicitly aimed to produce novel cartographies. They engaged wider publics (e.g., marginalities), held diverse policy/political potentials, incorporated local knowledge (e.g., local knowledge), employed diverse techniques to map places (e.g., art or digital tools, or hybrid), with the aim of transforming the framings of places and understanding of issues. **How have they been able to engage with official maps, mapping and planning?** Given the policy scope of BiodiverCities, this is a key element to address.

Last but not least... Mapping is not just about the maps you produce, but also about the maps that have been framing your approach to the places or communities you have been engaging with. These maps, as any maps, "are infused with certain assumptions, values, and knowledges about socio-ecological relationships" (Movik et al., 2021). Therefore, thinking back to how you have approached a group, a place or an issue, what kind of map or spatial representation has framed your action initially? Has it changed?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
- Harmon, K., *You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination,* Princeton Architectural Press, Princeton, 2003.
- Monmonier M., *How to Lie with Maps*, Second Edition, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1996.