



COLLECTIVE EMOTIONAL MAPPING

Builds a space for discussion, participation and creation as a starting point for common knowledge of the space that surrounds us. Draws upon individual perceptions that co-create a collective understanding of space dynamics. Requires supplies such as base-map, rice-paper and colored pencils.



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is an inter-disciplinary research collective

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ge.CO Living Lab is an EU funded Horizon 2020 project. It aims at creating a space where people who are involved in communities that deal with generative commons and public initiatives that foster such actions can come together and share their expertise. The programme will connect commons initiatives around Europe and it will provide toolkits that are going to be of use for their proliferation and blooming.



A guide to implement collective mapping activities

Our idea of qualitative mapping tools involves the participation of underrepresented groups in the making of space and 'commons' initiatives. Through this process, we tried to build a space for discussion, participation, and creation as a starting point that builds common knowledge of the space that surrounds us. Qualitative maps are a useful tool for responding to the complexities surrounding issues of spatial scale, boundaries, and functionality, and possible differences in definitions of the neighbourhood among individuals depending on their own characteristics (e.g. gender, class, and ethnicity), by offering a means of not only defining neighbourhood led by residents rather than researchers but also better understanding how neighbourhoods are perceived, used, and experienced¹. Lynch's seminal study influenced this method. He asked urban residents to draw maps of their city from memory². When compiled into a collective map, this information helped identify the most important elements of the urban built environment around which people structured their cognitive images of

1 Alexander, Cl. (2006) Introduction: Mapping the issues. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(3): 397-410

2 Lynch, K. (1960) *The image of the city*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press



the city and subsequently influenced new theories and policies. People who are interested in studying and understanding spatial issues through collective maps are usually engaged with the specific issues themselves. For instance, in her research of queer public spaces in Philadelphia, Cieri, a queer scholar, used qualitative mapping to 'offer some ways of representing geographic space differently'³. Other examples of collective mapping that offers situated knowledge include the recording of public spaces on private lands created by tax breaks over the last few decades, such as Zucotti Park, where Occupy Wall Street protestors camped, and the mapping of community land trusts, cooperatives, and other commons that document the virtual world of the commons. Collective mapping is, therefore, a means of promoting participatory practices and potential social movements that aim to tackle discrimination and exclusion.

Drawing a map is a method of compiling collective accounts of what is common to a group of people who share comparable traits and experiences. Collective maps are a valuable tool for dealing with the complexity of geographic scale, borders, and functionality, as well as any variations regarding definitions. They are a part of a wider process as they

- **constitute a 'means' for thought and collective participation;**
- **promote understanding of spatial mobility of under-represented and socially isolated groups;**
- **provide a way for socialization of situated knowledge and good practices;**
- **foster co-creation of safe spaces;**
- **are a tool for deep analysis of key issues of visibility and inclusion;**
- **document the world of the commons.**

³ Cieri, M. (2003) Between being and looking: Queer tourism promotion and lesbian social space in Greater Philadelphia. *ACME*, 2, 147–166.



Means of Collective Mapping

The careful selection of collective mapping means is crucial for the successful implementation of an activity and the validity of insights. The appropriate method of collective mapping depends on

- the primary topic (or research question);
- the selected territory for the mapping;
- the place where the activity will take place;
- the aim of the workshop (exclusively research purposes, part of a broader activity, engagement activities for a specific community, etc.); and
- the target groups.

After clarifying and identifying these five aspects, you will have the starting point of the process, and you will be able to design and develop an exciting and interactive workshop based on your research needs.

A pool of devices is available for almost any kind of concept. Each researcher or organisation that wishes to create a collective map activity can modify the main core of each device based on its primary goals. Here, we describe some of the most popular and deliberated methods:

Mapping Table – The most common method of collective mapping. The organisers explain the activity and the topics for discus-



sion and invite the participants to illustrate their thoughts collectively on a map. Regardless of the total number of the participants, it is recommended to divide them into groups of eight people maximum to ensure everyone will have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. The materials and supplies needed for this method are a big table placed at the centre of the room, chairs, coloured pencils, and rice paper on which the participants will draw their responses.

Multiplans – A tool of multiple representations of a territory on the same map with the use of multiple layers. The participants are free to capture both geographical elements and/or emotions on rice papers. This method is similar to the mapping table but allows us to add different layers to investigate and combine multiple aspects of the same territory.

Mapping post or mural – Usually an additional tool for a larger meeting or massive activity where mapping is not the main tool. It includes a sizable map placed on the wall, on which people are free to draw whatever is relevant to a certain topic while passing by.

Photographic collage – Includes an abstract map of the city on which participants are invited to pin photographs of places accompanied with a short description and/or thought. This method depicts the city's corners through the personal lens of its inhabitants.

Urban trips – Includes visits on foot in the mapped territory. It is recommended to divide the participants into small groups and invite them to interact with residents, make notes, and take photographs while wandering around the city. Each participant should have a specific role during the trip. For instance, someone could interview people they meet in the neighbourhood while the others could keep notes, take pictures, observe the surroundings and/or write down feelings, colours, smells, or any other element that might draw their attention. The duration of the trip must be short, and the trip must be well organised to avoid wasting time and collecting extraneous data.

Table of multiple devices. The main principles of mapping methods.

	mapping table The organisers explain the activity and the topics for discussion and invite the participants to collectively illustrate their thoughts on the map.	1
	multiplans Multiple representations of a territory on the same map with the use of multilayers. Capture both geographical elements and/or emotions on the main map.	2
	mapping post/mural Additional tool to a larger meeting or massive activity. It includes a sizable map placed on the wall, on which people are free to draw whatever relevant to a certain topic while passing by.	3
	photographic collage Includes an abstract map of the city on which the participants are invited to pin photographs of the places accompanied with a short description and/or thought.	4
	urban trips Urban trips include visits by foot in the mapped territory. The participants are invited to interact with the locals, take notes and photographs while wander in the city.	5

B

Getting Started



The initial planning of your workshop is decisive for successful implementation. Before setting up the workshop, you should engage with your target group and initiate a dialogue to understand their expectations, the topics to be treated, and the territories your workshop will cover. These first contacts will allow you to start working on an abstract concept and guidelines, which the participants will enrich and specify later. On the day of the workshop, you should be prepared to include all participants in the activities and make sure they have understood the concept and purpose of their presence. A short presentation mentioning the aims and duration is recommended, while emphasising the potentialities of emotional mapping and explaining clearly how they will intervene freely and creatively in the visual outcomes.

Collective mapping is a process based heavily on teamwork. The participants are invited to interact, express themselves freely, and contribute to the activity by designating their personal experiences and points of view. For a successful interaction, divide the participants into groups of a maximum of eight people. The number obviously depends on how many participants are there. Before starting to draw, participants briefly introduce themselves by mentioning their names and other information they feel comfortable sharing. The working area should be well equipped with all the

1

means of collective mapping

select the most relevant and efficient means of mapping based on the defined topics and territories



preparing the workshop

analyze deeply the topics and the territories the workshop will cover



2

introduce tasks

participants briefly introduce themselves and organizers introduce the aim and the duration of the activity



3

working together

split participants to small groups and provide a working area with all resources and tools needed



4

conclusive discussion

try to keep notes during the activity and initiate a conclusive discussion



Before the take off. The basic steps towards a well-planned workshop.

required tools and resources of the workshop (coloured pencils, markers, rice paper, etc.).

During the activity, visit all the working tables, answer questions, encourage people to participate and, most important, observe and keep notes. Your notebook will guide you to initiate a conclusive discussion and present some primary insights. Invite participants to contribute to the discussion by sharing their opinions through open discussion or questionnaires in the case of large public events. groups of a maximum of eight people. Before starting drawing, participants briefly introduce themselves by mentioning their names and employment. The working area should be well equipped with all the required tools and resources of the workshop (coloured pencils, markers, rice-papers, etc.).



Implementing Collective Mapping

dominated the discussion:

- **The meaning of 'safe space'**

An introductory section where participants were encouraged to share their interpretation of 'safe space'.

- **The neighbourhood experiences**

At this point, participants were invited to assess their sense of 'safety' in their neighbourhoods using a five-point rating scale, and to mark on the map areas and zones that used to have and/or are still having an impact on their emotional state:

_Where do you live?

_What is the level of acceptance of your identity as a member of the LGBTQI+ community in your neighbourhood? (0/5)

How do you experience the way people from the neighbourhood see you as a member of the community?

_Was there an incident in which you felt your 'right to the city' was being questioned?

- **The city experience**

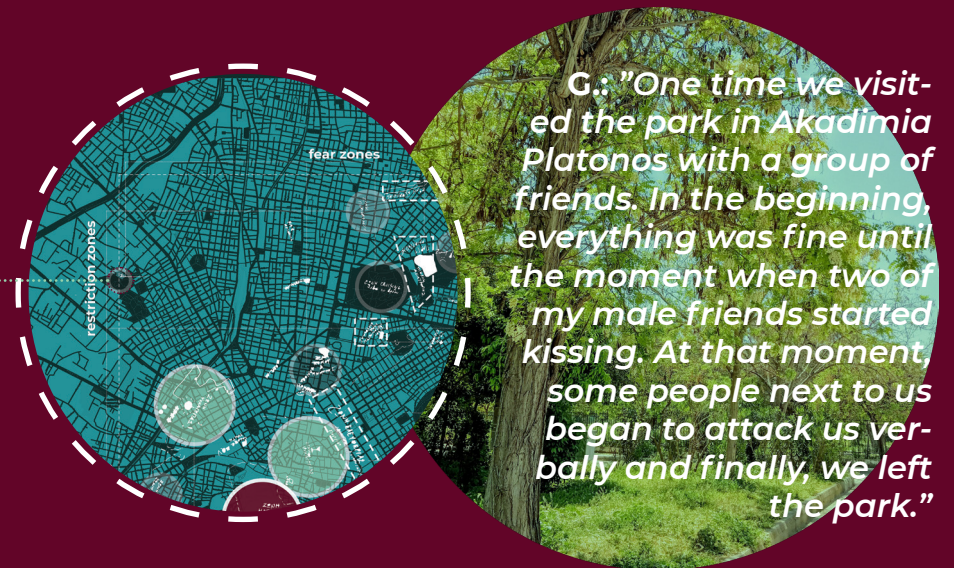
Here, we attempted to expand our understanding of spatial representation and of how the community experienced participation. We asked the participants to start thinking from the level of their neighbourhood to the level of the city:

_Which areas of the city do you visit the most often when alone?

_Which ones do you visit with your friends and for what reasons?

_Which are the areas of the city that you visit the least, the areas that 'bother' you? For what reasons?

_Could you share with us events or experiences of acceptance that you experienced? In which areas did they unfold? What were the reactions of the people who were there and to what extent did these experiences change your perception of the city?



Participants' comments about city spaces on questions related to fear and low acceptance

All the groups of questions asked above were designed to better understand the spatial dimension of acceptance of this specific social group. In the last section, we tried to open and discuss issues of participation and inequality. The discussion revolved around the following axes:

_Have you lived in other cities? What was the level of acceptance you experienced there and what was the activity of the respective communities, if any?

_How does locality (in relation to the space itself but also to culturally created space) change the way you participate and act in your daily life? How crucial is it for your well-being?


Finally, we asked participants to draw freely any additional information they considered important enough to share.



Participants' rating on the level of acceptance in the cities they lived



Final remarks and possible limitations



Collective mapping offers a visualised interpretation of space, as certain individuals that constitute a community with specific characteristics or needs perceive and sense it. It can give rise to conflicts and discontinuities of space even in seemingly homogeneous safe areas. Activities of collective mapping bring together communities and could initiate public dialogues around participation, commoning, and urban transformation based on localised needs and emotional representations of lived space. It is a tool, when used properly, for communities to carry out outreach of their activities to other groups of interest and for public institutions and organisations to develop policies of inclusion and visibility.

Usually, collective mapping is an additional tool larger research projects or public debates use that encompasses and employs qualitative data. The workshop's purpose, the structure of the organised activities, and the questions asked must exist under the theoretical framework that accompanies the research at hand. The results will not be relevant if the theory aspect of the procedure is undermined. The context is essential for the development and implementation of the tool. When working with groups that feel and are misrepresented or alienated, you should be aware of the challenges they face, their boundaries, and their inherent needs. If the organiser is based outside the community, involving members

of the community and getting feedback from the community is of the utmost importance for the respectful development of the process. Collective mapping could turn into an emotional experience for participants; hence, this manual was an effort to provide some guidelines for the efficient, fruitful, inclusive, and well-organised use of this tool. However, it is not exhaustive and applicable to all use cases. Thus, the organisation and implementation should be handled with as much care and empathy as possible.



COLLECTIVE EMOTIONAL MAPPING

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search team in 2021 under the H2020 EU Program **ge.CO**
Living Lab



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