

The community map



Brief description of the activity

The community map is a tool to tell a territory through the eyes of those who live there. It is a qualitative description of a community, in which the places of interest are not those recognized by everyone as such (monuments, bridges, famous buildings...), but are the places with which the authors of the map have an emotional link, or are somehow important for them.

The Community map

Topics, objectives and methodology:

The objective of this activity is to offer to people from different cultures the chance to express the relationship they have with the city, by using as coordinates the places that have a significant value for them. In this way, through the use of cartography and ICT, each participant collaborates in a collective storytelling of the city, in which each contribution is essential - because of its uniqueness - to the completion of the mosaic of the community.

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Steps:

Before

Building up the group:

Create a group of 10 people living in the neighborhood. It is important that the group is build up to be as heterogeneous as possible. Unlike “normal maps”, that are valid and universal for everyone, no matter who has drawn or uses it, a community map may vary a lot considering who has conceived and executed. For this reason, as the aim of this activity is to promote inter-culture, the group should represent as many cultures as possible that live in the chosen area. Here culture is not intended just as cultural background linked to one’s country of origin; people of different generations, from different socio-economic backgrounds, natives and newly arrived, all of them will enrich the community map by giving their personal perspective of what is important to them to show on a community, namely

which places, people, knowledge worth to be included in a community map, because they do belong to and represent the community.

During

Picking the area. 1.5 hours

Explain participants that you are going to build with them a “Community map”, a map of an area that is made by the people who live and care about it. Everybody will be asked to contribute to its creation because this map will not show the places that others have decided are important, but places of their daily life, that matter for them. They will see, in the end, how their daily and life route crosses other people’s routes, and how the places they just pass by can be important to someone else.

Ask participants the following questions to introduce the topic

- Where we are?

- What makes this place different from the others?
- What are the characteristics of this place?
- What is important on a personal and/or collective level and why?
- What are the natural qualities of the place?
- What do you know about this place?
- How can we share this knowledge?

Show the participants a map of the city. The best way to do it is to project Google maps, so that you can zoom in and out. Depending on the group, choose an area that is not too big, being sure that everybody lives in it. In small towns it can be the town itself, in bigger cities you can choose, with participants, how big the area should be. In order to identify the area, remember all participants that, to elicit which part of the city will be included in the map, all of them have to have a link with it. The possible links can be:

- Living there
- Working there
- Having friends or relatives living there
- Having important memories linked to the place
- Knowing someone important to them living there

Once the area has been identified, ask the participants to reproduce on the poster the borders of the chosen area. Remember them that it is not necessary to maintain the exact proportions as in Google Maps, but the drawing should still be precise enough to give an idea of the area that the group chose.

Then ask to identify famous places, buildings, streets (or neighbouring villages) external to the chosen area, that can represent the north, south, east and west and write them down on the poster, respectively on the up,

bottom, right and left side of the drawn area, in order to have a gross geo-localization of it.

Filling up the map 1.5 hours

Hand out to the participants post it, papers and pens.

Ask each participant to write down on their papers places - within the selected area - that have one or more of the following features:

- A place significant for my family
- A place significant for my community
- A place significant for the relationships between people of this area
- A place where someone significant due to his/her role in the community lives or works
- A place significant for my integration in the social tissue (a place but also a person)

- A place significant for my education
- A place significant for my religion
- A place that reminds me something special
- A mysterious place for me and what i imagine it could be
- A place where I can relax
- A place in the city that I'm proud of
- A place in the city I would like to change
- A detail in the city that I would like to share with others

Ask the participants to write their places on post it and then to locate them on the map. When sticking the post it on the map, ask them to describe the place and the reason it has been chosen.

ATTENTION!

To implement the next step, you will need a Gmail account. If you haven't any, you can easily create one at:

<https://support.google.com/mail/answer/56256?hl=en>

Once the drawn map is filled, reproduce it on the computer.

Go to <https://www.google.com/mymaps> log in with a Gmail account. Then press START and "**+ CREATE A NEW MAP**" (red button)

Zoom in the map until you find the area that the participants selected. Click on "DRAW A LINE" then "ADD A LINE OR SHAPE" to draw the borders of your area (fig.1).

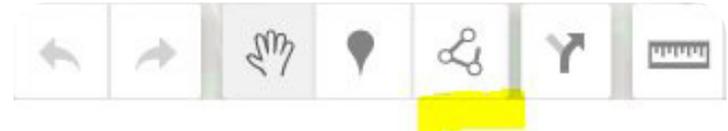


fig. 1

Add the places, as the participants indicated with the post it, by clicking on "ADD A MARKER" and placing it on the map (fig.2).

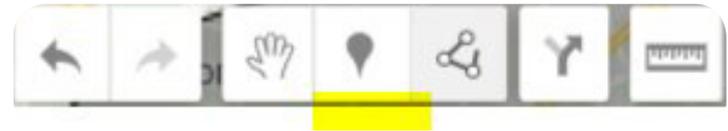


fig. 2

Once placed a marker on the map, a pop up window will appear. Participants can now name their places (first line) and add a description (second line) (fig.3).

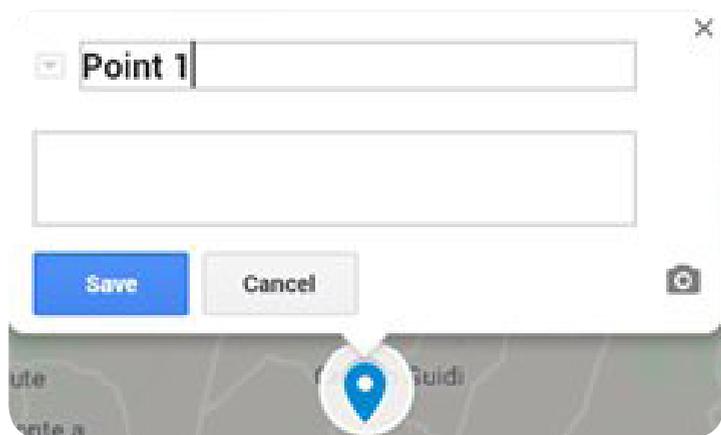


fig. 3

Ask participants to customize their description with pictures or videos. To do this, click on the camera on the bottom right (fig.4).

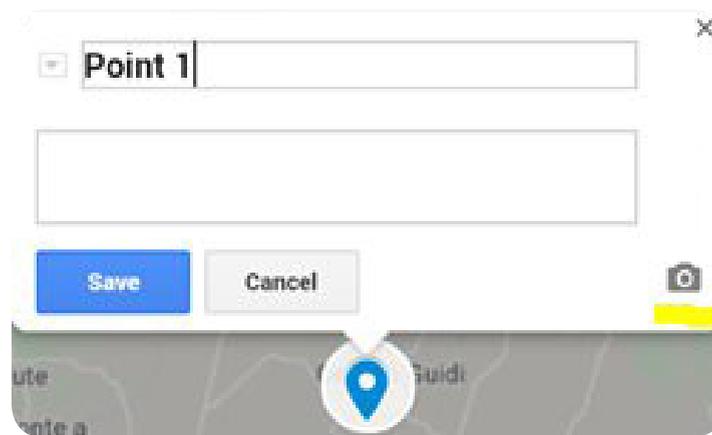


fig. 4

To add a video from youtube, click **“MORE”**, then **“YOUTUBE SEARCH”**.

To add pictures, you can both find images on the web, by clicking on **“GOOGLE IMAGE SEARCH”**, or add your own pictures to have a more “personal” and customized map. In this case, ask participants to take pictures of the places they chose, that can be added later on. To do this, you will have to upload the pictures on the computer, then click on the marker and then repeating the procedure above described.

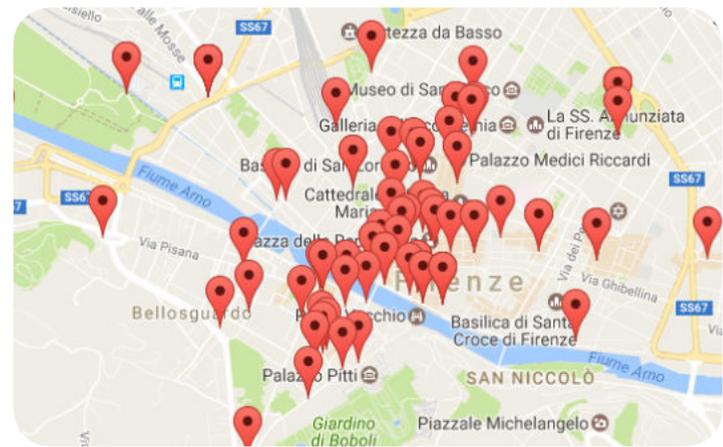
The map is automatically saved on your google Drive. You can access it at any time by going to <https://www.google.com/mymaps>.

Once you log in, the first page will show all the maps you created. Click on the upper right button to share it with participants via Facebook, Twitter or e-mail (fig.5).



fig. 5

Example



Innovative aspects for the promotion of interculture

A community map encourages and implements a vision of the city through different eyes. It helps to discover new places and people, or to see known ones from a new perspective, because they are of some interest to other people. It enhances in the participants the sense of belonging to the community, and the acceptance of others as bearers of new values and perspectives.

Making together a Community Map helps people of different cultures to chart the things that they value and to compare the way they perceive places, objects and people with other people living in the same area, sowing the seeds for a social cohesion through a common re-evaluation and defense of the places and the human values that enrich the territory.

