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CREATIVE COMMUNITIES, CREATIVE ASSETS: EXPLORING METHODS OF MAPPING COMMUNITY ASSETS

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ABSTRACT

Asset mapping, a method for unearthing and visually representing an individual's or a community's assets, has been used in the context of planning and creative industries.

The goal of this workshop is to bring together stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and practices to discuss and generate outcomes that make use of different perspectives of asset mapping methodologies.

At the core of activities, facilitators will

demonstrate the ways in which asset mapping has been used with community groups within an area or neighbourhood in the Creative Citizens research project - a project which explores how different types of creativity and civic engagement intersect to add value to communities in the context of a radically changing media landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Asset mapping is a way of unearthing and visually representing the assets of an individual or community. As a methodology, asset mapping emerged out of the principle of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD): the premise that communities will be better equipped to develop if they can identify and mobilise

the assets they already have. By recognising their assets, a community can then focus on positive development, responding to, building and expanding upon existing capabilities (which often go unrecognized), rather than focusing on what it lacks or needs (Mathie and Cunningham 2002, McKnight and Kretzmann 1996). When discussing ‘community’, ABCD focuses mostly on geographical communities, including communities of interest that exist within a locality.

The Creative Citizens research project has developed asset mapping as a core methodology for use with community groups in the ‘Community-led Design’ strand of research (see <http://creativecitizens.co.uk/>). The project explores how different types of creative citizenship add value to communities, within the context of a radically changing media landscape that enables new forms civic engagement, participation and expression.

In the ‘Community-led Design’ strand, we refer specifically to projects where local people come together to redesign spaces and services in their neighbourhood, such as starting an allotment, providing services for young people, or opening up old buildings as a community hub.

By co-creating digital media interventions with the community groups, Creative Citizens will explore how this technology can be used to creatively engage more people in community-led design. As well as being of benefit to the community group, asset mapping will be used by the researchers to help articulate the value generated by these co-created media interventions, as a way of evaluating impact.

The process for developing the asset-mapping methodology has involved an extensive literature search in order to understand existing and emerging forms of asset mapping, and a series of expert interviews with community leaders, facilitators and public engagement practitioners, as well as pilot workshops with community groups.

The resulting methodology focuses on mapping assets at the level of both the community project and the participating individual using a suite of visual tools to unearth assets such as people’s relationships and skills, and the project’s connections with spaces, organisations and infrastructure. Due to the context of the changing media landscape, the methodology also captures the assets held by the community in terms of their online and offline media use.

The Creative Citizens asset mapping methodology also captures the relative current and potential value of each asset to the community project, the nature of this value (such as social, financial, environmental) and its relationship to other assets. A second level of analysis is achieved through individual asset mapping with each of the participant, to identify the true relationships between participants and the proposed assets, and how this compares with the group’s perspective of the ‘project’.

PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP

The purpose of this workshop is twofold: first, to share the asset mapping methodology being developed on the Creative Citizen project and gain advice and peer review about the instruments being used to record assets, the methods to analyse and present to communities and the opportunities and challenges for sustaining creative engagement and participatory curation of outputs, through physical, social and online media and tools. Second, to provide participants with opportunities to interact with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and practices—researchers, practitioners, designers, programmers, planners and design ethnographers—and together generate tangible outcomes that can utilise the diverse perspectives of asset mapping methodologies.

A draft programme for a half day workshop is presented below.

The programme will be adapted on the basis of participants’ numbers and profiles. Alternative asset mapping methodologies developed by participants are welcomed, and opportunities to share these will be including in the first or second activity, depending on numbers and the nature of the methodology proposed.

HALF DAY PROGRAMME

Introduction to asset mapping and its purposes in the context of the Creative Citizens ‘Community-led design’ project	20 mins
Participatory Activity 1: Participants will divide in groups and work together to create posters in order to 'make the case for the role of asset mapping in community-led design'	60 mins
Presentation of posters to the group	20 mins
Break	20 mins
Activity 2: Role Play: Participants will divide in groups and assume roles within different types of community groups to engage in mapping group assets and relationships using proposed asset mapping methodology	60 mins
Discussion: Reflecting on the process and feedback	30 mins

HOW ATTENDEES WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR WORKSHOP

Any attendees who wish to participate will be able to sign-up for this event subject to a maximum capacity of 20. Interested participants are invited to submit an one – two page profile that describes: their current / past work and interests related to the workshop's theme; how the workshop will benefit their work; and what they can contribute to the workshop. Participants who have personal experience of developing asset mapping

methodologies are invited to describe their own approach, so that room can be made in the timetable for comparative discussions.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PHYSICAL SETTING

The workshop will require tables and chairs that can accommodate groups of 4-6 people working together, and a projector.

MATERIALS

All materials (paper, pens, objects, stickers) will be provided by the workshop organisers.

CONTACT DETAILS

To sign up for this workshop, please email Gail Ramster at gail.ramster@network.rca.ac.uk

REFERENCES

Mathie, A. and Cunningham, G. (2002) 'From clients to citizens: Asset-based community development as a strategy for community-driven development' The Coady International Institute, St. Francis Xavier University, http://www.coady.stfx.ca/resources/publications/publications_occasional_citizens.html

McKnight, J. and Kretzmann, J. (1996) 'Mapping community capacity' Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University