

Map of experiences

Description

This mapping exercise helps to foster a discussion of topics such as colonialism, racism, and anti-colonial resistance, based on personal experiences. With this tool, daily routines, places, and encounters of the participants can be traced, following along their diverse routes throughout the city or places the participants visit. As a point of departure, take a map of the city/place on paper or project it onto a wall and mark down places and experiences on it. Another option is to propose an abstraction of subjective interpretation of the place instead of a representative map.

The simultaneity of accounts makes visible different historic, systemic, and personal aspects of the topic exposed: colonialism, racism, and other forms of discrimination. This tool aims to show the way these problems are intertwined and how they are still manifested in daily lives, in architecture, street names, demands for assimilation, social norms, the justice and law enforcement system, etc.

Guiding questions

- Name three words or concepts you associate with the city of Zurich.
- Name the places you regularly visit in the city or describe your daily routine.
- What emotions do you relate to your experience of living in Zurich?
- Name the places you associate with negative emotions and experiences such as racism, discrimination, or sexism.
- Name your favorite places in the city and those where you feel safe. Why do you feel safe in those places?
- Which initiatives do you know and/or support that offer a safe space for you?

Materials

- A map or any geographical representation of the city is to be used as a reference.
- A big piece of paper to draw a new map on.
- Markers, brushes, colored pencils, inks, and any other preferred material to draw and/or paint. Magazine clippings and stickers to remark spots on the map are also an option.



- Post-its in different colors to mark categories or to identify every participant on the map.
- Tape or nails to fix the map on the wall. Another option is to work on the floor.

And if it is available, a video projector to project the map and any other images or text on the paper surface to intervene with (as we did in the workshop).

Instructions

The suggested number of participants is six.

1. Inform the participants they can share whatever and as much as they feel comfortable about their personal experiences, places and daily routines in the city. Everyone should feel comfortable and safe during the exercise.
2. Begin by letting everybody introduce themselves and share information about their identity, cultural, historical and geographical context they feel are important for the other participants to know. Define the roles of the participants:
 - Mediator:** the person in charge of guiding the intervention on paper.
 - Participants:** who answer the questions and share their experiences. They can also take action on the map whenever they want by drawing or adding colored post-its.
 - Researcher:** the person in charge of looking for context, geographical and historical references.
3. Together, choose a representation of the city/place and use it as the guide to move and locate spots in the map you are going to create together. We recommend hanging a piece of paper on the wall, and projecting a map onto it.
4. Write down on individual papers the questions to guide the discussion. Share them among the participants and read them aloud.
5. Decide who starts responding to one of the questions. While participants respond, the facilitator locates, describes the experiences, and draws onto the map. One question can be answered by all of the participants, or everyone can choose different questions to create a more dynamic session.
6. If possible, and if all of the participants agree, take photos of the different stages of the process and the final map.

References

Julia Risler y Pablo Ares: Manual de mapeo colectivo: recursos cartográficos críticos para procesos territoriales de creación colaborativa, 2013.

Kollektiv Orangotango: A New Social Cartography: Defending Traditional Territories by Mapping in the Amazon, 2022.

