

# “What is your ideal city?” Participative Cartography

## Methodological Guidelines

Written by Méлина Germes, May 2020

<p><b>Aim of the method</b></p>	<p>“What is your ideal city?” is a method for participative cartography, aiming at giving (marginalized) drug users a political voice and supporting advocacy. Small focus groups using drugs and living in the same area, think together about what would their ideal city need, regarding to their own living conditions as people who use drugs. It involves reflecting about drug practices, but also housing conditions, access to healthcare, to mobility, right to security, and any other theme that is relevant for the particular group &amp; its context.</p>
<p><b>Method suited for</b></p>	<p>If you are a group, a collective, an association, and you want to work as/with a group of peers, from a marginalized position, on your ideal city – and act, as if you were the city planners seeking for social and spatial justice.</p>
<p><b>Bibliography</b></p>	<p>Inspired by counter-mapping and participatory methods. Authored by Méлина Germes, Francesca Guarascio, Luise Klaus and Christian Herrgesell: <a href="https://drusec.hypotheses.org/tag/participation">https://drusec.hypotheses.org/tag/participation</a></p>
<p><b>Themes</b></p>	<p>Users groups; Party; Open Scenes; Mapping; Self-governance; City planning; Mobility; Healthcare; Safety; Housing</p>
<p><b>What do you need</b></p>	<p><b>People:</b> 3 to 4 facilitators  <b>Time:</b> 2 to 5 sessions of 2 hours Workshop, 2 days for preparation, 2 days for finalization.  <b>Place:</b> A big room with tables, chairs, walls to hang the map on  <b>Budget:</b> Large prints of a base map of the neighborhood and the whole city; Black Eddings; Lots of post-its or same notes papers (max 10x10cm) in different colors. Maybe you want to want to defray participants for their time.</p>
<p><b>Requirements</b></p>	<p><b>Experience</b> in organizing groups, counter-cartography, and knowledge of the group you are working with. Sensibility and non-normativity. Most concerns are ethics of the discussion, collective decision process, and ethics of your “translation” of the results when you finalize the files.</p>



<b>Linked to</b>	Collection/Story in the archive: link. Link to Web Mapping, Mental Maps.	
<b>Contents</b>	A contribution to alternative urban planning “for drugs”	p. 2
	Getting ready	p. 3
	In Action	p. 5
	Prepare the donation and upload your files	p. 6

## A contribution to alternative urban planning “for drugs”

Drug users know: the cities are not made for them. The more marginalized, the highest the difficulties of everyday life. Whereas in most of European countries, drug policies rely on an “acceptance” of drug use and addiction, this acceptance is very limited. Discriminations and violence towards drug users are plenty. Too often, the condition to access help structures for drug users is abstinence.

An article written by Boland et al. (Boland P, Fox-Rogers L, McKay S, et al. (2020) Illegal geographies and spatial planning: developing a dialogue on drugs. *Territory, Politics, Governance* 8(2): 177–203. DOI: [10.1080/21622671.2018.1503092](https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2018.1503092)) is claiming for a practice of urban planning that involves drug practices.

There is a urgent necessity on including drug users, individually and organized, in the political processes of making a city. Within the social movement reclaiming a right to the city and/or within planning attempts. This concept for participative mapping is an answer to this necessity. It builds on methods from participative research and counter-mapping.

It contributes at the same time to activism and research, insofar as the often-unheard voices of drug users are present in the participative maps as political.

<b>Strengths of this research practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The workshop experience is a collective event fostering group belonging, giving persons seldom heard a possibility to voice and imagine a city where they would be acknowledged and welcomed. Previous experiences were empowering moments.</li> <li>□ The results can be publicly shown and discussed (online, at meeting, in form of an exhibition). It helps to address other social movements or even policy makers and politics about highly relevant issues.</li> <li>□ Emergence of some brand-new ideas and motivating to take action.</li> </ul>
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### Limits of this research practice

- How much our own normativity and political views get us in the way, as facilitator.
- Different positions within the group, moderation included and contradictory propositions.
- Occurrences of sexism, racism, ableism, classism or authoritarianism.
- Occurrences of interpersonal conflicts among participants
- When the facilitators team is not well synchronized and trained
- Sometimes difficult to locate some ideas “that apply everywhere”: try to locate them where responsible people are (for example “no police violence anywhere” can be located at a police station, minister of the interior or police school or...)
- The resulting maps are contingent – not the unbiased and acontextual expression of “the” drug users.

## Getting Ready

### Steps

- Get familiar with this document
- Gather 3 to 4 people to work on this project as facilitators and moderators
- Choose the city or neighborhood of your case study.
- Choose the social groups you want to focus on, in terms of demographics, discriminations
- In case of marginalized groups, make sure you involve skilled, experienced and resourceful facilitators
- Choose the practices that interest you: party, festival, everyday life...
- Choose the themes you want to speak about in a workshop session: for example, drug practices, housing conditions, access to healthcare, to mobility, right to security...
- Each theme needs a 2-hour workshop session and a specific color (color notes)
- Plan when and where you can have your workshop. You need a big quiet room with tables, chairs, walls to hang the map on.
- Inform and motivate participants in advance, let people register (max 5 to 8).
- Prepare the material:
  - A0-prints (black and white) of two base maps of the neighborhood and the whole city for each WS session
  - Black markers



- Lots of post-its or notes papers (max 10x10cm) in different colors for each theme (a theme = a session = a color)
- White paper notes and White tape for nametags
- Train the group of moderators to lead the workshop. Share roles (leading, moderating, taking notes, assisting participants). Train to moderate discussions and prepare to be challenged by a fair sharing of the speech time between participants.

**Ethics**

- Prepare for every problem situation:
- How will you handle disagreements or conflicts among participants?
  - How will you handle the monopolization of speech by some participants?
  - How will you handle it, when a proposition seems unethical or problematic to you?

**Data Protection**

- Think about what information or data you need to give about yourselves for the organization of the workshop – don't give too much.
- If you really need email addresses or telephone number from participants, register them separately (not on the same device).

## In Action

### Steps

- Share roles between facilitators (leading, moderating, taking notes, assisting participants). Keeping trace of the discussions is very important
- Let everyone sit around the table, facilitators among participants; write their name on a tag; make a presentation round first.
- Present yourself, the context of your study, give data protection & ethics information.
- Introduce the aim of the ideal-city-workshop: neither a utopia from a blank page, nor should it be limited to realistic measures. *“We are looking for the ideal city for you as part of [this group], with the ideal of a social justice in the city. The aim is to think about the most discriminated”*. As a reminder, you can write some notions on A4 paper sheets on the table such as: *“Own space; City for everyone; Decriminalisation; Self-determination; Access to; Equal rights; Education”*
- Introduce the topic of the day.
- **In the first hour of the workshop**, participants are invited to have an open discussion on the problems they experience and know about related to the topic of the day. Quickly, the facilitators ask “how would it be like in your ideal city?”; “what kind of measure, of proposition could be helpful?”. Participants are invited to write their propositions on white note papers, one proposition pro note.
- During a short pause, facilitators prepare the following steps: hanging maps up, etc.
- **The second hour** is dedicated to the drawing by the participants, with the marker, of symbols, of small drawings on colored papers of their propositions for the ideal city. With a bit of time, even the most abstract propositions can be illustrated by a symbol.
- Once all symbols are drawn and their description written with marker on colored notes, participants come to the map and glue them in the places that are relevant for them, and explain what they mean to the group. Don’t hesitate to make many notes for one symbol when it’s relevant in many places.
- Facilitators take notes of the meaning of each proposition and its localization on the map.

### Ethics

- At the beginning of the workshop, give information about the rights not to answer and to leave



- Give time to answer, time to remain silent. Don't interrupt.
- Moderate discussions among participants, so everybody can talk.
- Don't push your own political agenda or your own opinions (and it's tricky!)

**Data Protection**

- No personal information is recorded, pictured or noted.

## Prepare the donation of your files

**Finalize the file**

At the end of the process, you will have a lot of different maps, symbols, and notes from the workshop discussions. You can scan the whole maps. You can also scan each symbol. You can transcribe, comment or report on the workshop process.

Our advice is to upload two different items:

- the whole maps scanned files and a comment on the whole process.
- each symbol and their description. This will contribute to a kind of international "library of ideas" for all workshops made.

**Anonymise the file**

For the safety of everyone, it's vital that your file remains anonymous. Some tips:

- Don't include any personal information (names, pseudonyms, phone number, email, date of birth, etc.). Why not use a false name, just for this document?
- Instead of specifics (place of work, family members, medical conditions...), keep it vague and use general terms.
- Instead of addresses, talk about neighbourhoods and cities.
- Make sure no one is identifiable in the photos – which is boosting creativity!

## Upload your files

<https://narcotic-archive.org/s/archive/page/contribute>

