DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

COMMUNITY MAPPING TOOL

Fostering open schooling through democratic education

Co-funded by the European Union

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Table of contents

1. Introduction 4

2. Preparation 6

3. Implementation 7

4. From map to action 12

5. Assessment 13

6. Sources..... 14

1 INTRODUCTION

The Community Mapping tool is a document that helps **connect schools with local communities,** by identifying the assets of the school's neighbourhood, and marking places for potential collaborations.

The mapping exercise is a valuable and effective method that allows the school to engage with the community, guiding teachers from the initial scouting of the community resources to analysing **opportunities and interaction plans**.
Every community has assets (e.g. facilities such as libraries and community centres, NGOs, valued businesses, parks and forests).

However, the major asset is composed by the people and their capacities: organised community groups or individuals who have skills and talents. In these terms, every place could become an alley of the school and every person could become an expert that brings its value to the students and support teachers.

Mapping the community resources allows teachers to create a "community picture" displaying its capacity and potential **opportunities of interaction with the school.**

The mapping has therefore a twofold meaning:

Connect the school with the local reality, benefitting the school's actors with the knowledge and facilities in the local communities.

Foster a sense of community responsibility, encouraging all school actors to become powerful advocates for the care and transformation of the spaces in which they live, becoming more civically minded in the process.

Depending on the school interest and involvement in the mapping exercise, findings may be different according to the needs and aspirations of the school itself.

Some schools might want to cooperate in a particular field, seeking support in a theme they already explored (i.e. need to get storytelling competences from the closest library, or get help in gardening skills through the neighbour's collective gardening); other schools might not be able to predict in advance where the process could lead them, and can rather explore the tool with their students, sparkling curiosity on new subjects, activities and talents.

1 INTRODUCTION

Every step in the community mapping is extremely informative and can pave the road to new unexplored directions.

THE STEPS

Here are the different steps you will follow in order to gradually open up your school to the local community

1. Preparation

2.Implementation

3. From the map to the action



02

PREPARATION

PREPARATION PHASE

1.DEFINE GOALS:

Co-operate with your students in defining the goals for the mapping tool. What experiences, skills, and activities could be offered by the local community? What are of interest for the school community?

2.STUDY THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Try to understand what shapes and defines the local community, how did it change throughout time?

3.STUDY ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY AS A METHOD:

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a strategy for sustainable community-led development that focuses on identifying and mobilising the existing strengths and assets within a community, rather than only addressing its needs and deficiencies. As a teacher, get familiar with this method or stuy it with your students before putting it in practice in the next steps.



3 IMPLEMENTATION

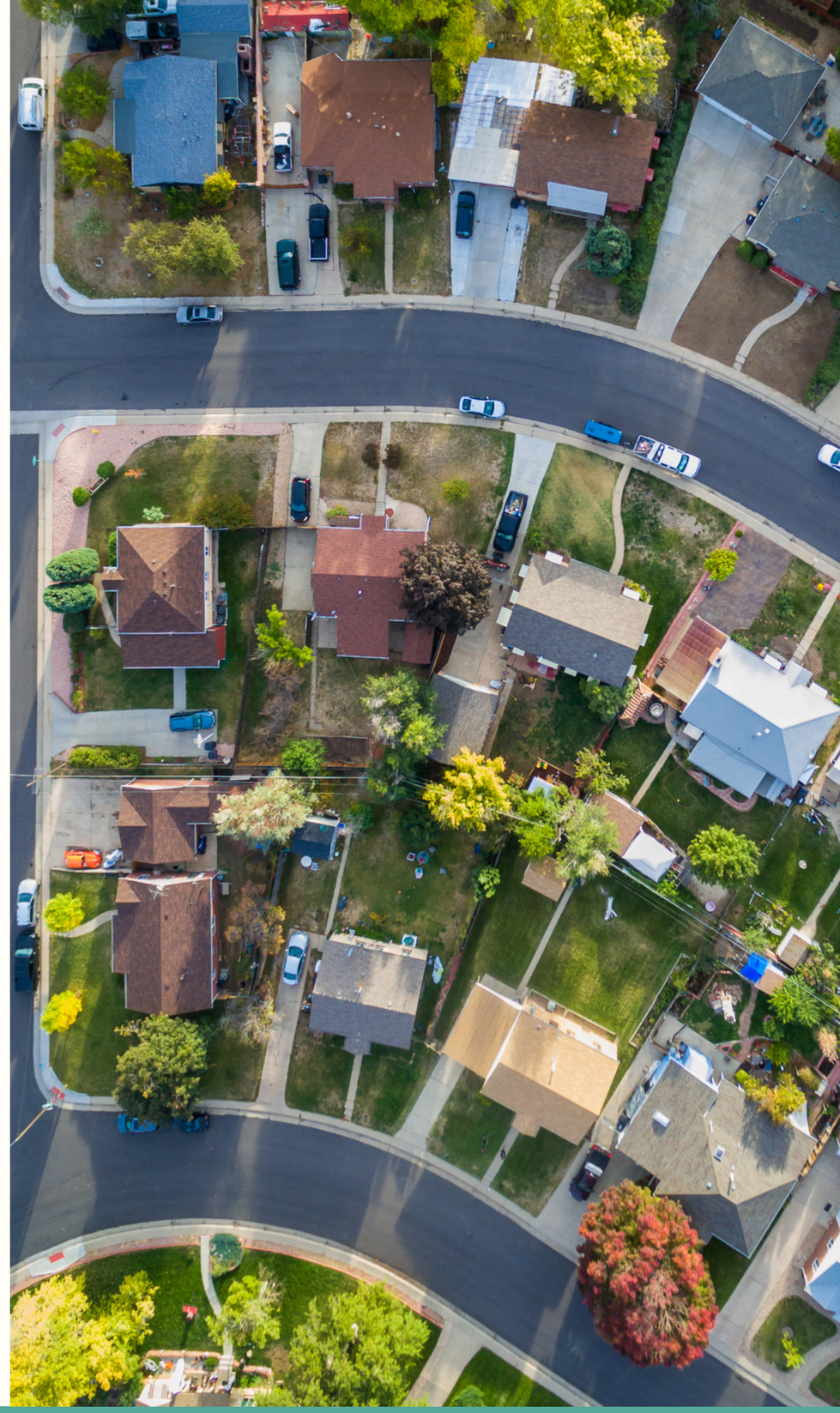
IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

4. RESEARCH WITH YOUR STUDENTS ABOUT WHAT INDIVIDUAL, ASSOCIATIONS AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS ARE INHABITING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Learning about your local community and what it can offer is important, and so is involving the students in the research process.

5. MAKE A FIRST EXPLORATORY TOUR OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Collectively define the borders and the parts of your neighbourhood you are going to explore, take pictures or videos, take note of interesting places and explore new venues and scout potential spaces of interest.



3 IMPLEMENTATION

6. USE THE ABCD METHOD (Asset-Based Community Development) with your students to identify and catalogue the assets of your neighbourhood

The ABCD method identifies 5 groups of key assets:

Individuals	Associations	Institutions	Physical assets	Connections
residents of the community, with skills and competences	groups of people freely working for a common interest	paid groups of people, generally professionals, who are structurally organised are called institutions	physical assets such as land, buildings, public space	sum of exchanges between people sharing their assets. These connections are created by people called connectors

3 IMPLEMENTATION

7. MAKE A SELECTION OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS, ASSOCIATIONS AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS THAT WOULD BE INTERESTING FOR YOUR SCHOOL TO COLLABORATE WITH.

Keeping in mind the goals you set, it is important to link the identified assets (individuals, associations and local institutions) to a context.
Why are they an asset? Who are they an asset to? Try to focus on shared priorities and commonalities instead of differences, keeping in mind the interests and aspirations of your students.

You can create a table also with your students, in which you can indicate also some key information of local communities “assets”, as well as key indicators you might want to consider (ie. are they promoting inclusion or green practices? Have they already collaborated with schools? Can they host classes?)

	Aspect	Aspect
Insituation		
Insititution		



3 IMPLEMENTATION

7.DESIGN A MAP OF YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, INCLUDING THE INTERESTING RESOURCES FOUND. YOU CAN MAP GIFTS, CAPACITIES AND ASSETS OF INDIVIDUALS, ASSOCIATIONS AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS.

You can do this by drawing on methods from participatory or community mapping, which aims to record and represent the spatial knowledge of local communities, bringing together a diversity of inputs.

Mapping can be conducted either as a tabletop or computer-based exercise, and ideally, it can be a combination of both!
Obtaining a large map of the area or allowing students to create their own map is beneficial, especially when dealing with multiple participants. A larger map accommodates more information and could allow the use of pins, making the exercise more practical.

Google mapping is a widely used, free, and versatile method for virtually mapping anything. While tabletop mapping serves well for the initial exercise, Google mapping proves valuable for presenting and demonstrating findings.



3 IMPLEMENTATION

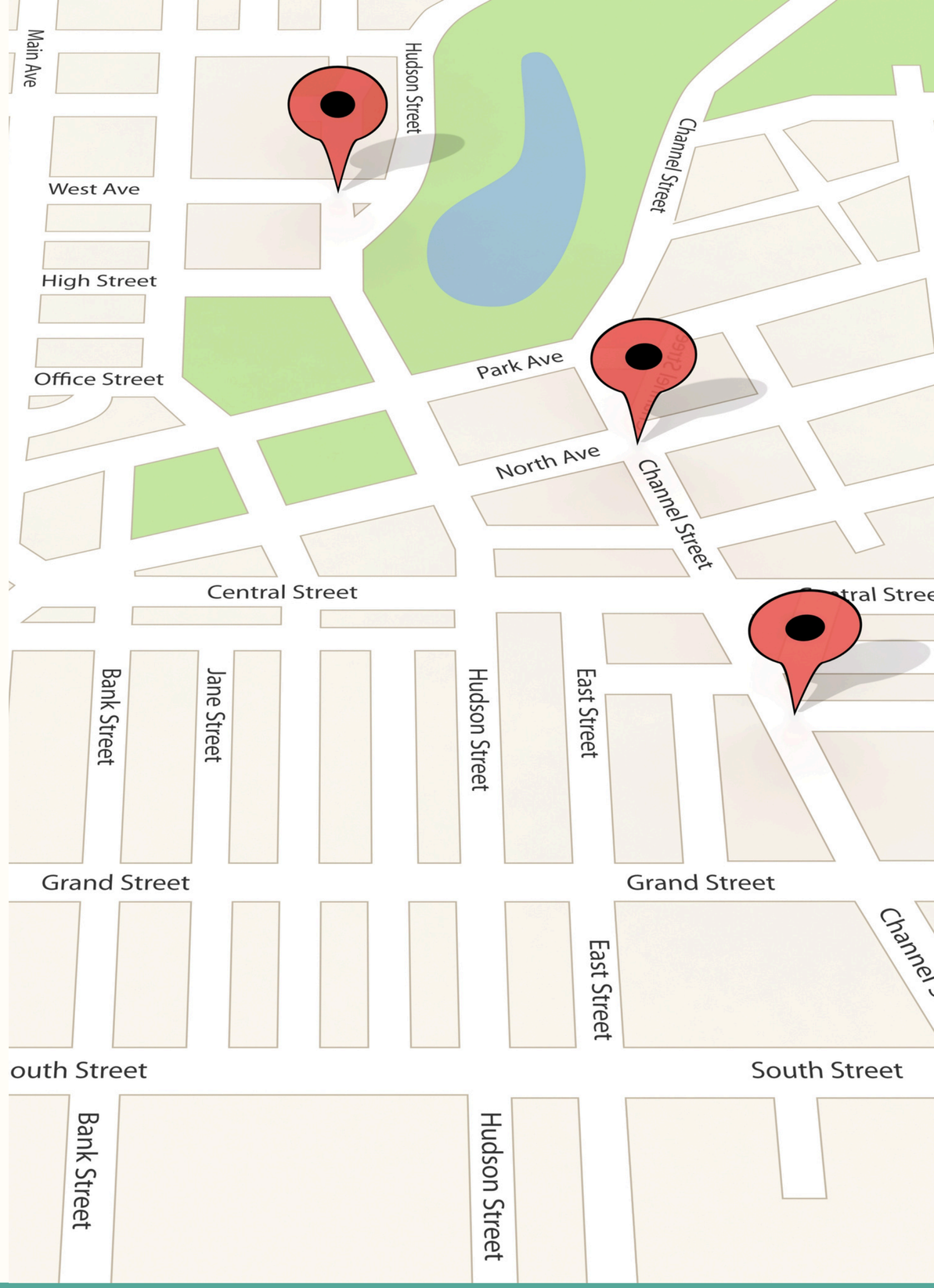
Through Google Maps you can:

- Place markers with a variety of icons. When clicking upon each marker, the user will be presented with a pop-up bubble containing text and any other content you should wish to add.

- Use lines and shapes to mark out specific areas, such as ward boundaries or sites marked for development.

- Insert links to relevant web content such as the websites of organisations you are mapping or news articles about specific markers (e.g a local newspaper writes a web article about your local park, you can insert a link to this article in your pop-up bubble).

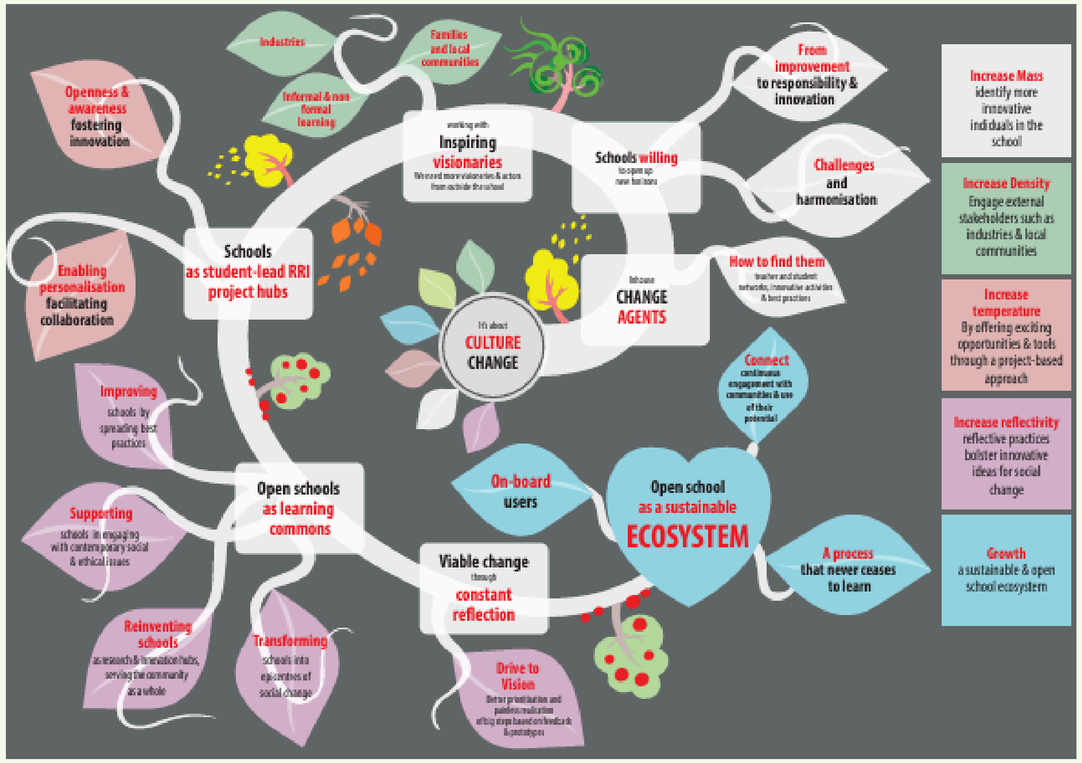
- You can also embed photos or videos into the pop-up bubbles so they can be viewed instantly without having to follow a link.



4 FROM MAP TO ACTION

FROM MAP TO ACTION: DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION

8. YOU CAN USE THIS ROADMAP TO SEE HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY:



9. INVITE INTERESTING INDIVIDUAL, ASSOCIATIONS AND LOCAL INSTITUTION FOR A MEETING AT THE SCHOOL, IN WHICH YOU CAN EXPLAIN THE WILLINGNESS OF THE SCHOOL TO BE "OPEN" TO EXTERNAL COLLABORATIONS.

10. INVITE INTERESTED "ASSETS" TO BE PROACTIVE IN OFFERING COLLABORATION IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES



5

ASSESSMENT

OPEN SCHOOLING IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

11.AFTER HAVING PROMOTED CONNECTION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, THE SCHOOL CAN USE THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA TO EVALUATE THEIR LEVEL OF "OPENNESS".

- The school has a clear vision and strategy (an Open School Development Plan) detailing how the school will support students and staff to become an Open School
- A strategic plan of professional development for teachers is implemented to foster a change in behaviour, enabling them to adapt to open schooling culture and philosophy.
- The school supports the development of an interdisciplinary environment where students/teachers are encouraged to try new ideas and approaches.
- Students identify and align stakeholder needs with matters of local social and economic concern.
- The school actively promotes the collaboration with non-formal and informal education providers, enterprises and civil society organisations
- The school engages in a number of projects which demonstrate external stakeholder involvement



5

ASSESSMENT

- There is evidence of parental engagement in school projects
- Schools show evidence of engaging in virtual and physical platforms to develop innovative projects, share ideas, identify and collaborate with other schools to develop new projects aimed at addressing the grand societal challenges
- Teachers and students show evidence of adapting activities and linking subjects/projects to issues of national or local interest in connection with the grand challenges
- The school has an ongoing system of teacher and student self-reflection, discussion and learning setup .
- Schools set up a system to reflect, track and monitor how open school practices have shaped the school organisational culture
- Schools encourage and engage in reflection, discussion and debates on scientific and societal issues
- There is evidence of an economic benefit associated to the engagement of all partners
- Schools engage with policymakers to inspire curriculum change.

Source: https://www.openschools.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/D6.1-Assessment-Methodology.pdf)



6

SOURCES

pLEASE FIND HERE THE LIST OF RESOURCES THAT WE USED TO COMPILE THE COMMUNITY MAPPING TOOL

https://ucanr.edu/sites/CA4-HA/files/206668.pdf

https://www.maptionnaire.com/blog/guide-to-community-mapping-for-planning

https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/resources/Documents/WhatisAssetBasedCommunityDevelopment.pdf

https://www.openschools.eu/open-school-model/

TO GO FURTHER

- Follow the DESC TRAINING on democratic education, where you will find a module on open schooling.
- Read QUEST position paper on Open Schooling
- Check the Outside Project Green Business Collection, where students have ideasted green projects with local community actors.



TO GET IN TOUCH:

QUEST
Quality Education in Europe for Sustainable Social Transformation

Rue François Gay 257, Woluwe St. Pierre 1150 Bruxelles, Belgique

www.quest-eu.org

www.facebook.com/Questasbl

info@quest-eu-org

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