

Mapping Our City: A co-created curriculum for Youth Led Participatory Mapping in Urban Refugee Contexts

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Introduction

Mapping Our City is a curriculum for youth-led participatory mapping projects in urban refugee settings. It aims to teach students the mapping and critical spatial literacy skills needed to carry out participatory mapping projects in their communities. Student projects will investigate spatial justice issues in students' own lives and culminate in open-source maps that can become resources for the community at large.

Curriculum Objectives

1. Equip youth with the critical thinking, research and mapping tools needed to investigate spatial justice issues in their lives
2. Create community knowledge resources that capture knowledge and assets that may not be represented in formal maps
3. Providing youth an opportunity to participate meaningfully in community and humanitarian activities in urban settings.

“Maps, like theories, have power in virtue of introducing modes of manipulation and control that are not possible without them. They become evidence of reality in themselves and can only be challenged through the production of other maps and theories” (David Turnbull)

Context & Participants

Youth as Co-Creators

This is a curriculum designed for and with youth in urban refugee settings. It will be adapted and piloted with Syrian and Kurdish refugee youth in Gaziantep, Turkey, but this framework is designed to be implemented in youth centers, informal education settings, or extracurricular programs for refugee youth in urban centers anywhere. This curriculum is premised on the idea that participatory mapping can be used to incorporate a wide variety of perspectives and experiences into community understandings of space. Thus classes should ensure that they are inclusive and representative of a wide variety of youth experiences. The curriculum framework provided here is a scaffold for building out the curriculum in collaboration with youth. Student projects should lead the direction of the course, and thus the curriculum may look very different in different contexts.



Mapping in Urban Refugee Contexts

Participatory maps allow refugees and host communities to identify their own needs and assets, and share this information with others, in an anonymized way. They allow for localized data collection and the de facto creation of firewalls that protect participants from retaliatory actions.

Participatory maps enable city authorities to better understand who lives where, what their needs may be, as well as what community assets already exist. This is particularly useful in marginalized urban areas where distrust of national authorities may otherwise impede data collection.

Participatory maps are also a way of identifying and supporting local organizations and institutions serving urban refugee populations. The value of reference maps lies not only in their ability to locate relevant institutions but also crowdsource information about procedures, processes and expectations.

Participatory maps are a way to better understand the informal and entrepreneurial livelihood strategies people use to survive in urban areas, and visualize how these activities map out across the city. Understanding how these initiatives connect to livelihoods, protection concerns, and capabilities is essential for supporting refugee communities in relevant and effective ways.

Literature Review

Add your information, graphs and images to this section .

Community mapping challenges that idea by using knowledge from citizens' lived experiences to create new representations of space (Corbett, Cochran & Keller, 2014). This literature review examines two kinds of community mapping initiatives that inform the design of this curriculum: digital humanitarian mapping (DHM) and youth participatory action research and mapping (YPAR+M). Digital humanitarian mapping projects aim to leverage the knowledge, skills and labor of external actors to create digital maps of crisis areas around the world. Groups like Humanitarian Open Street Map [HOSM], the Missing Maps Project, and Ushahidi, connect remote volunteer digital mappers with open source mapping projects of post-conflict or disaster affected areas. However Turk (2017) and Burns (2015) have both criticized digital humanitarian mapping programs where collectives of external mappers create "new" maps of disaster areas, claiming these initiatives ignore local knowledge. YPARM meanwhile is explicitly focused on the powers and capacities of youth themselves to be researchers and critical cartographers (Schlemper, Stewart, Shetty, Czajkowski, 2018). The aim of YPARM projects is to enable youth to question power dynamics in their neighborhoods, design research to analyze these issues, and create maps that represent their findings and share knowledge among their community. A number of YPAR projects were studied to inform the content and instructional strategies used in this curriculum, including from Cleveland (Schlemper, Stewart, Shetty, & Czajkowski, 2018), Boston (Teixeira & Gardner, 2017) and New York City (Rubel, Hall-Wieckert & Lim, 2017). YPAR and mapping programs from humanitarian settings were also studied, including Cooper's (2006) work in Dagahaley Camp, Bellino and the Kakuma Youth Research Groups (2018) work in Kakuma, The Women's Refugee Commission's work with Girl Roster mapping tool in Warrap state, South Sudan, and the RefuGIS program in Zaatari camp. Finally ideas and strategies from urban mapping projects like PLAN's six city "Free to Be" project and the IRC's Refugee.info initiative were analyzed and incorporated into different units in this curriculum.

Conceptual Frameworks

Spatial Justice Theory

"We all experience in one way or another the negative effects of unjust geographies. This makes struggles over space and the right to the city a potentially powerful source of shared identity, determination, and effectiveness in changing the world for the better. This may be the most important political lesson learned from the development of a spatial theory of justice" – Edward Soja (2010, p.109)

Meaningful Participation

This curriculum is informed by the Lundy model for meaningful youth participation which identifies the four factors that need to be present for meaningful youth participation to occur: *Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence* (Kennan, Brady & Forkan, 2017, p.1986). These factors are built into the curriculum in a number of ways. The structure of the curriculum allows youth to take ownership of class activities and shape class content according to the issues that interest them (space, voice). The technical, linguistic and academic skills are designed to recognize existing knowledge (in all its forms), connect new content with prior learning experiences, and develop both competencies and ideas (voice, audience). Mapping teams are an organic way for students to develop their own networks and connections, and also learn about each other's experiences and perspectives in a safe space (space, voice), while the creation of participatory maps allows for youth to create knowledge resources that are accessible and helpful to their communities (audience, influence). Finally the participatory mapping process is also a way for youth to engage with local services and actors, which allows them build networks and act as facilitators, connectors and role models in their wider communities (space, voice, audience, & influence).

Understanding by Design

Wiggins and McTighe's (2005) "Understanding by Design" (UbD) process of curriculum design, which has informed the technical construction of the course. UbD is focused on creating a logical succession of learning experiences that facilitates both practice of skills and exploration of big ideas through an inquiry-based lessons. UbD takes a "backwards" approach to curriculum design by beginning with an Essential Question and building out the curriculum from there. Each unit in this curriculum has an essential question to guides the lessons and project work. Finally, instead of content coverage, UbD focuses on complex understanding. Assessments for each unit focus on a different form of understanding and skill application so students have the opportunity to think critically about the content and question deeply what they are learning.

Curriculum Map

Unit 1: Introduction to mapping

Question: What makes something a map? What community assets (skills, knowledge, resources and needs) exist in this neighborhood that don't appear on maps?

Skills: Map reading skills

Project: Photomapping Our Neighborhood Project

Unit 2: Using Maps

Question: How are digital maps different from paper maps? How has technology changed how we use maps?

Skills: Survey and qualitative data collection skills

Project: Community survey: What do people use maps for?

Unit 3: Data & Place

Question: How does the organization of data on a map affect what relationships can be inferred about different data sets and place?

Skills: Analyzing data sets and visualizations across space

Project: Designing maps with Data Layers

Unit 4: Creating Maps

Question: What information can be included in a map? How can you show the relationship between places?

Skills: Plotting features

Project: Mapping Physical Spaces with ARC GIS

Unit 5: Perspectives on Space

Question: How is your experience in the city different/same from other people's experiences? Does your map reflect a range of perspectives and needs?

Skills: Collecting data

Project: Experiencing the City Data Project

Unit 6: Sharing Maps

Question: What does your map show and how can people use it?

Skills: Finalizing Inquiry Maps

Project: Presenting to the community

Mapping Our City Curriculum

A Co-created Curriculum for Youth Led Participatory Mapping in Urban Refugee Contexts

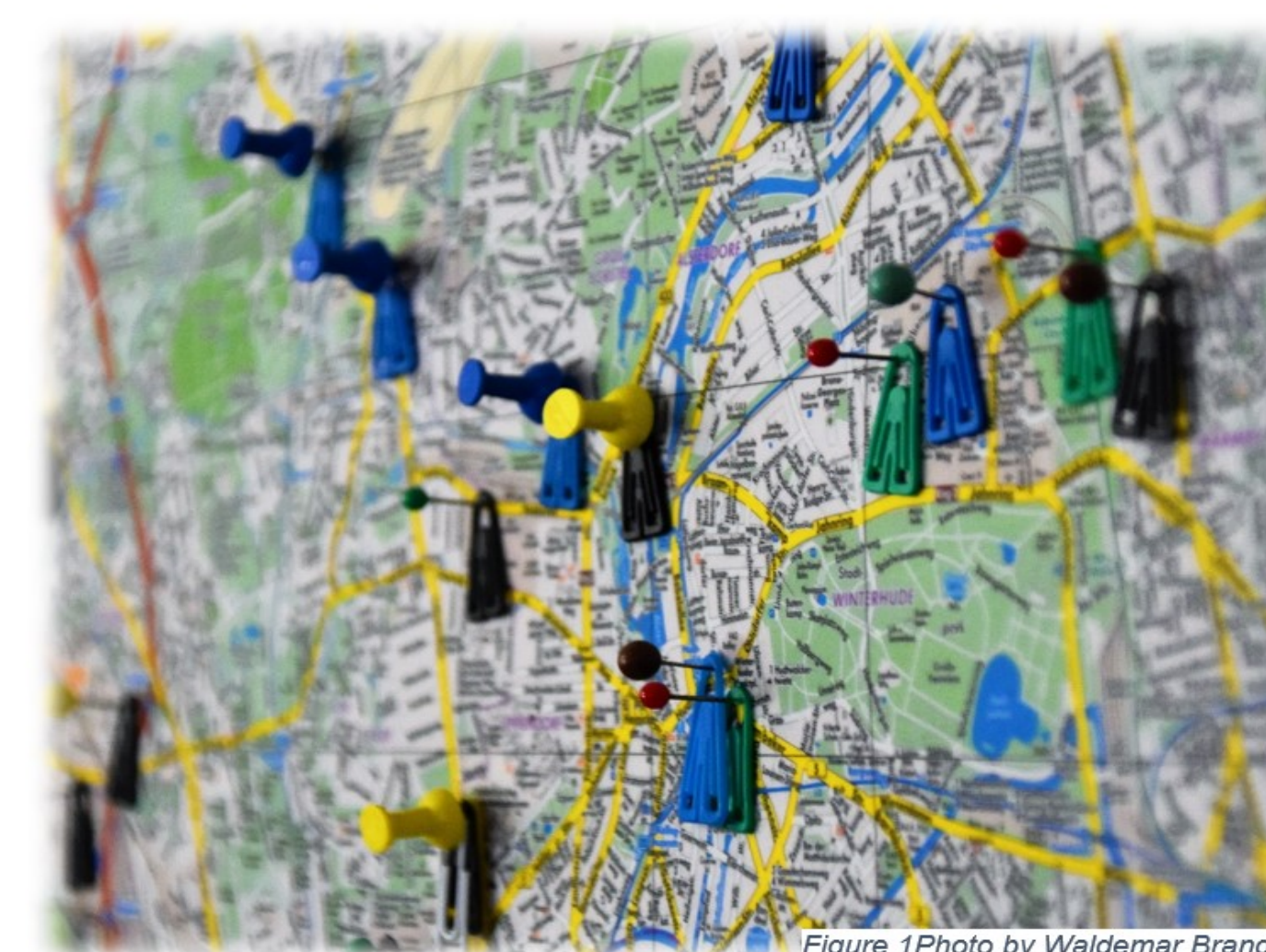


Figure 1 Photo by Waldemar Brandt

Curriculum Overview

The aim of this curriculum is to provide students with the skills and confidence to carry out their own investigations of space. It is designed to help students both explore technical mapping skills as well as fundamental components of critical spatial literacy. The theories, pedagogy and context explored above form the foundations of this curriculum. The sequence of this curriculum is designed to teach students the critical spatial literacy understandings as well as the technical GIS skills they need to create their own mapping projects by the end of the curriculum. Each unit builds on the previous by adding new skills and introducing students to new perspectives on space. Students then apply these new skills to their own mapping projects in each unit, allowing them to use and relate the new skills to investigate issues relevant to them. This also allows students to progressively build up each component of their final mapping project over the course of the curriculum, rather than putting it all at the end. This will allow for more direct application of skills, more time for peer and community feedback, and the chance for projects to evolve and iterate over the full span of the course.

The curriculum consists of six units that progressively build on each other. Each lesson is one hour long, although certain lessons that involve field trips or data collection are expected to last longer. Each unit will last three weeks, and it will take four and half months (roughly one semester) to complete the full curriculum.

Essential Questions

What is a map? Who is it for, and how can it be used?

How do you understand the space around you?

What information is it important for other people to know about this space?

Limitations & Adaptations

Language

This curriculum is written in English. However a great effort has been made to ensure that many of the resources, learning materials and software platforms used exist in other languages as well. When the curriculum is piloted, a review of the primary content will be conducted, and translation of key materials will be carried out ahead of time.

Technology Requirements

This curriculum is heavily reliant on technology. In addition to ARC GIS or QGIS mapping software, most units also include videos, online articles, and digital archive. Thus having reliable access to a strong internet connection is crucial. A lot of the data collection activities in the curriculum also make use of smart phone applications like KOBO, Live Tracker and Map.me. If students or school staff do not have phones that can be used for this purpose, alternative data collection methods are always possible. As this curriculum explores, maps come in many forms and the format for final projects can change based on the context and technology available.

Context & Positionality

Related to the challenge of language and translation, one of the most serious limitations in this curriculum is lack of awareness or familiarity with the specific context this curriculum will be used in. The activities and content in this curriculum are designed to be highly adaptable. Furthermore, the range of skills taught, from digital mapping to survey skills and research design, are intended to be transferrable skills. Not every activity will work for every setting or group of students, so rather than seeing the curriculum as a formal progression of lessons, it should be viewed as a toolkit of mapping activities which can be selected and adapted to meet the needs of the context and the interests of students. Significant cultural adaptation will have to occur wherever the curriculum is used. In the initial pilot, materials and lessons will be adapted to fit the Turkish context, and translation of key concepts and lesson materials will be carried out before the pilot begins. Consultations with local teachers, volunteers, and students, will be essential for ensuring that the content selected fits the needs of the Syrian and Kurdish refugee community in Gaziantep. My own positionality as an external curriculum developer limits the ability of this curriculum to be truly responsive to students and community needs. While I have experience working in informal youth centers and education projects, I do not have the experience of being displaced or living in an urban center without recourse to legal or social protections. Furthermore I do not understand the complex emotional responses students have to urban environments that they have been displaced to. I am aware that this severely limits the curriculum's ability to be sensitive to students' interests, complex identities and needs. For this reason the tools in this curriculum allow for students to shape the direction of the course. As the curriculum is refined over time the experiences of teachers and students will be incorporated into the content and lessons, and this should ensure a greater diversity of voices is reflected in the curriculum foundations.