Using participatory mapping to explore participation in three communities

Pathways
through
participation

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"Maps are more than pieces of paper. They are stories, conversations, lives and songs lived out in a place and are inseparable from the political and cultural contexts in which they are used"
(Rambaldi, 2005)

Introduction

The Pathways through Participation project is researching how and why people get involved and stay involved in different forms of participation over the course of their lives, and what shapes those pathways over time. The project is a partnership between three organisations with different perspectives on participation: NCVO, the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) and Involve. The project has used participatory mapping as an initial research method, and the experience has provided both useful data and an opportunity for the project team to reflect on the strengths and limitations of the approach.

This report introduces readers to the history of participatory mapping as a versatile research tool, demonstrating its potential use in a variety of scenarios. It then illustrates our approach to mapping within the Pathways through Participation project, and discusses the emergent findings and our reflections on the method. The report is divided into the following sections:

- What is participatory mapping?
- Participatory mapping: a brief history
- Using mapping in the Pathways through Participation project
    - Participatory mapping in three case study areas
    - Emergent findings from the mapping workshops
    - Reflections on the methods used
- Conclusion
- References

What is participatory mapping?

Participatory mapping is an interactive approach that draws on local people's knowledge, enabling participants to create visual and non-visual data to explore social problems, opportunities and questions. Participants work together to create a visual representation of a place using the tools and materials at their disposal. At the same time, while creating their map, the group may deliberate over how to best represent the place in question, share their observations as they go along, and tell personal stories and anecdotes. This can lead to rich and sometimes surprising data for social research.

One of the strengths of participatory mapping as a research method is that it allows different features of a particular place, and the interplay between them, to be explored simultaneously. Physical and social geography, changes that have occurred over time, residents' personal and collective experiences, and their attitudes and perspectives on their environment are just a few of the subjects that can be explored through a mapping exercise. The approach explicitly recognises local people as capable research collaborators, and it fosters empowerment in that it helps participants define and represent places and relationships that are important to *them*. Participatory mapping, can therefore be more than a technical research exercise involving the extraction of data and information from the 'subjects' of research: it can become a rich social encounter between research participants and research facilitators.

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Participatory mapping: a brief history

The drawing of maps by local people in developing a sense of place and identity and to enhance cultural knowledge can be traced back centuries. However social and spatial mapping as a participatory exercise, often facilitated by 'outsiders' as a means for research and knowledge creation, has only really developed over the last 20 years (Chambers, 2006: 2-3). In the development literature, mapping is identified as having many different sources – from social anthropology to participatory action research and popular education (Chambers, 2008: 299).

Many commentators trace the increased use of, and interest in participatory mapping to developments in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) which emerged in the late 1980s in South Asia and combined insights from agro-ecosystem analysis with Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) (Cornwall and Pratt, 2003). By the early 1990s, three core components had emerged which can be said to constitute PRA: methods; behaviour and attitudes; and sharing (Mascarenhas et al, 1991: 35A). PRA *methods* are "visual and tangible and usually performed by small groups" and the maps created can be "social or census, showing people and their characteristics, resource maps showing land, trees, water and so on, and mobility maps showing where people travel for services" (Chambers, 2008: 298). *Behaviours and attitudes* relate to the facilitator (or 'professional') being humble, 'handing over the stick', stepping back and entrusting the appraisal and analysis to the local people involved in the process. *Sharing* relates to the principle of openness and borrowing from different methodologies (Chambers, 2008: 298-99).

The term Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is now more commonly used than PRA or RRA and incorporates a number of methodologies and approaches from both. The range of PLA approaches have in common a participatory approach to "investigating issues of concern to poor people, and to planning, implementing and evaluating development activities" (www.planotes.org/about).

Participatory mapping in context

Participatory mapping has been widely used across the world, not just in the global South as a tool in development. Chambers attributes its "pandemic spread", over other visual methods, to the "versatility and power of participatory mapping, the relative ease with which it can be facilitated, the fun, fulfilment and pride which people derive from it, and its multiple uses by so many stakeholders" (Chambers, 2006: 2). Below we outline five different examples of participatory mapping, to give a flavour of some different uses, types and interpretations of participatory mapping. From community mapping to social network mapping – all the examples draw fully or partially on the core components that constitute PRA: visual methods, behaviour and attitudes, and sharing.

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Community mapping

Community mapping, in line with PLA and community development principles, often has social change at its heart, with communities carrying out not only the mapping but also the projects or events that result from it (WaterAid, 2005: 2). One example of community mapping comes from Bassac - one of Phnom Penh's largest informal settlements and home to over 2,300 families. The land it sits on is valuable and many people have been evicted. A strong local group – Solidarity for the Urban Poor Federation (SUPF) – with support from the United Nations, has helped increase negotiations with municipal officials and a move towards exploring development possibilities that work for both Bassac's poor and the city as a whole. Community maps were drawn by residents of each of Bassac's 13 communities, assisted by architects from the Urban Resource Centre, which enabled community advocates to "explain to government clearly when we negotiate about land – how much area, how many families, what services, what areas flooded" (Noon Sun, Bassac leader, cited in WaterAid, 2005: 11).

WaterAid/Steve Bainbridge

Mapping as a research tool

Participatory mapping can be used for non-spatial purposes, as a research tool for exploring social relationships (for example through mind maps and mapping social networks) and eliciting data from research participants. When used in this way it is more accurately described as "an interactive approach using accessible and free-ranging visual methods in an individual or group interview setting to interrogate qualitative research questions" (Emmel, 2008: 1). This type of mapping may not explicitly be aimed at affecting change and/or challenging power relationships but can, unlike some other data collection methods (e.g. questionnaires), start to build more extensive dialogue and relationships (Amsten and VanWynsberghe, 2005: 361).

Participatory geographic information systems (PGIS)

Since the 1990s, technological advances in geographic software have allowed the development of Participatory Geographic Information Systems (PGIS): computer-based systems that capture, manage, analyse, store and present detailed geographic information. GPIS practitioners aim to "work with local communities to democratise the use of the technology and to enable them to communicate their spatial information to influence planning and policy-making" (IFAD, 2009: 46). GIS technologies are being used increasingly to address land-related issues, with examples throughout the global South (see *Participatory Learning and Action 54* special issue 'Mapping for Change: Practice, technologies and communication' for examples) (IFAD, 2009: 17). See also http://www.ppgis.net/

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Multimedia mapping

Recent developments in participatory mapping draw on Web 2.0 technology to create interactive, computer-based maps that link digital video, photos and written text with maps. Tagmap is an innovative consultation tool, developed over the last six years by Bold Creative.

Described by Bold Creative as "a mapping-video mash up application", Tagmap combines film making, social networking sites and Google Maps to enable young people to make and watch films and start conversations about the issues they face on a daily basis, become citizen journalists and have a voice (http://tagmap.wordpress.com/). To see a video of Tagmap in action, visit http://vimeo.com/9831266.

Planning for Real: creating 3D models to aid community consultation

In the UK, a technique called Planning for Real uses participatory mapping principles to invite communities to create a 3-D model of their local area and suggest how they would like to see their community develop. Groups then prioritise the suggestions and create an action plan for decision-makers to take away, and/or as a basis for community action. Picture X shows the map created by local school children in Sheffield and populated with over 3,000 flags with suggestions from residents. The exercise was part of an initiative to regenerate *High Hazels Park* in Sheffield as a catalyst to stimulate wider regeneration of the area. The project team successfully implemented many of the most highly prioritised facilities such as new play areas and seating. The team is continuing to follow the regeneration plan and apply for further facilities and training for the local community (see http://www.nif.co.uk/).

Image X – High Hazels Park, Sheffield: Planning for Real. www.nif.co.uk

As these examples illustrate, mapping crosses a number of disciplinary boundaries and is developing a growing body of theory, principles and practical experience. The general aims and specific objectives of participatory mapping initiatives vary significantly depending on the use to which maps will be put and who will view and make decisions based on the content of the maps (IAFD 2009: 4).

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Using mapping in the Pathways through Participation project

> ### *The Pathways through Participation project in a nutshell*
> The Pathways through Participation project is a 2.5 year project exploring how and why individuals get involved and stay involved in different forms of participation over the course of their lives. It aims to explore how participation begins and continues, as well as what connections and links exist between different forms of participation and what triggers movement between them.
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> 'Participation' means different things to different people. The Pathways through Participation project has defined participation to cover a very broad range of participatory activities, including voting, fundraising, campaigning, volunteering and ethical consumption[1]. The project is focused primarily on the individual experience of participation, and how individuals move through different types, experiences and spaces of participation through their lives. It is exploring individual's stories of participation in three contrasting communities in England to provide a range of different social contexts: an inner-city area of Leeds, a suburban area in Enfield, and a rural area in Suffolk.

Participatory mapping in three case study communities: the process

The project team chose to use participatory mapping to identify the range of places and spaces for participation in and beyond the three fieldwork communities in Enfield, Leeds, and Suffolk. The aim of using mapping was to gain a better understanding of the local context for participation in each area, and to begin to get a better understanding of participants' perceptions and understandings of participation. The mapping workshops were also intended to provide a collective, open and informal introduction to the project in the three communities. They were an 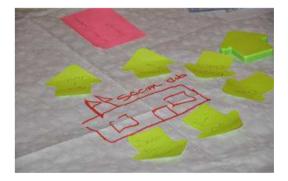opportunity to start to build relationships with local people to provide access to potential individual interviewees for the following phase of the project, where over a hundred in-depth interviews will be carried out across the fieldwork areas[1].

As a research method, participatory mapping was a useful way of exploring participants' knowledge, perceptions and experience of their environments. Maps produced by a group of participants reflect the knowledge of that group; omissions and variations from one map to the next are inevitable, so they cannot be used to make definitive claims about the landscape of participation in the three areas. However, the workshops were not designed to produce an exhaustive inventory of participation in the fieldwork areas, but simply to begin to outline some of the features of the local 'participation landscapes': where participation happens, who participates, how the workshop participants themselves are involved in their communities and beyond, and their reflections on the opportunities and barriers to participation in their areas. Moreover, the workshops were one stage in an iterative research process. They followed a stage of desk research and interviews with local stakeholders and preceded a stage of in-depth interviews

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[1] For a more detailed outline of the research process and the different phases of the project, please visit the '*Research Approach and Methods*' page of the website, found here.

with local residents, with each stage feeding into and informing the next. As such, findings from the mapping workshops can be analysed alongside findings from the other stages of the research, allowing for a fuller and more nuanced understanding of participation in the fieldwork areas. For example, reflecting on differences in what the groups include in their maps and comparing the sites on the maps to sites identified in interviews can provide some insights into different groups' awareness and engagement with opportunities for participation.

Two 'mapping workshops' were carried out in each of the fieldwork areas, each lasting about two hours and timed to enable people who were available at different times of day to attend (some day, some early evening). The workshops were open to anyone who lived or participated in the fieldwork areas, although pre-booking was encouraged. The research team's approach to recruitment was pragmatic rather than guided by pre-determined criteria or quotas. To encourage representation from as wide a range of organisations and activities as possible, workshop participants were recruited in a variety of ways: via communication with the project's Local Stakeholder Groups[2] and people who had been interviewed in an earlier stage of the project, who in turn forwarded information to their contacts; through direct contact with organisations, groups, and individuals identified in the area profiling stage; and through distribution of posters and flyers in public locations and community notice boards. Unsurprisingly, the most effective approach was a direct invitation to individuals. Most participants said they had heard about the workshops through one of the researchers or a local intermediary. Attendance was capped at 12 but the actual attendance at workshops ranged from eight to eleven. Workshops were attended predominantly by residents from the area, but also attracted a small number of people who live outside but participate in activities within the fieldwork area.

Each workshop began with a short group discussion around what participation means to the participants. This teased out individuals' perceptions and understandings of participation, and went some way to enabling a common understanding of participation across the group.

Following the initial discussion, the researchers facilitated a short 'active mapping' exercise. This involved asking participants to call out and write down important local landmarks in their area, and then place these paper landmarks on the floor. The facilitator then asked the group a series of questions, such as "Where did you last participate?" and "Where do you most enjoy participating?", and participants moved around the room to stand on the 'landmark' and show some of the places they participate in. In turn, each participant shared some of their own experiences of volunteering, campaigning, and other examples of participation. This exercise helped to make the transition from the conceptual to the practical, and to start thinking about participation in terms of the places and spaces in which it happens. The physical movement that the exercise requires also injected energy into the room, which made the following paper mapping exercise easier to facilitate.

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[2] A Local Stakeholder Group has been set up in each area to inform the research process locally.

In groups of between four and six, participants were then asked to draw a map of the local area on a large blank piece of paper, using a variety of materials, and to populate it with the sites and places where participation occurs. The facilitators emphasised that there was no 'correct' way to draw the map, and geographical scale and accuracy were not important. Following the map creation process, the groups within each workshop reflected on one another's map and discussed similarities, differences, noticeable inclusions and omissions.

Findings from the mapping workshops

This section presents some of the findings and reflections coming out of the Pathways through Participation mapping workshops. It begins by describing some of the physical features included on the paper maps, and moves to an overview of some of the themes that emerged in the workshop discussions. We then move to a reflection of mapping as a method (in the Pathways through Participation project), including what we have found to be some of its strengths and limitations.

The maps as representations of physical and social geography

A tangible outcome of the workshops was the development and production of large paper maps which indicated specific physical locations, or sites, where people participate – for example, schools, churches, businesses, and community centres - as well as examples of the activities and users of these sites.

The maps were all quite different in appearance, although those depicting the same places included a number of the same landmarks and sites. Some groups chose to create quite physical maps which marked sites geographically, while others created more conceptual maps that grouped sites thematically, such as by type of activity or type of organisation. In all cases, the finished maps included a number of details of where participation happens and who provides or coordinates these opportunities, providing a snapshot of some of the components of community life.

The number, range and concentration of sites of participation varied across the fieldwork areas. In **Enfield**, for example, a large number of sites of what we are calling 'social participation'[3] emerged (e.g. social clubs for over-50s, health walks in parks, bowling and cricket clubs). Social participation featured more prominently in the four Enfield maps than either political, public or more individual types of participation.

In **Suffolk**, a more limited number and variety of sites emerged – which, given the more dispersed population and concentration of certain core participatory sites in the nearest town, was not altogether surprising. The importance of a community centre in one of the **Leeds** workshops was apparent from both the activity/physical mapping exercise (most participants gathered on the community centre for most of the questions), and from the paper mapping exercise which highlighted the diversity of activities that take place there.

Another feature of the paper maps was the existence of intangible (not site-specific) and decentralised sites such as campaigns, online participation, and

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[3] For more on defining participation, please refer to our briefing paper *'What is Participation? Towards a round-earth view of participation'* which can be found here.

events. All the maps included important annual events as well as places, highlighting the role that episodic events can play in supporting participation. For example, in **Suffolk** the annual fireworks display, charity duck race, and various family fun days were included on the maps, and in **Leeds** there was much discussion about, and inclusion on the maps, of an annual day-long event that celebrates the local area and its diversity. In **Enfield**, the identification of online campaigns and organising illustrated the connections that can be made between physical and virtual spaces. For example, a campaign to save a local hospital included both demonstrations and online campaigns.

The maps further highlighted the institutions, organisations or groups that operate, manage or control the sites and spaces of participation. These included: local authorities (identified in all three fieldwork areas) and other statutory bodies (schools, the police, local authority maintained parks/green spaces, hospitals); private companies and commercial shopping complexes; faith-based organisations (mosques, churches, temples and synagogues); voluntary and community organisations; other community hubs and centres, and informal networks ('gossip' being noted in one workshop). Often these can be physical

sites themselves, for example a school or a hospital, as well as a body, group or institution that facilitates participation (Parent and Teacher Associations, and hospital fundraising for example).

At the end of the workshops, participants were invited to compare their maps, and reflect on the map-making process overall. In all the sessions, participants expressed their surprise at how many participatory sites and organisations they were able to identify in their areas. As someone in Enfield said, "the mapping exercise emphasises the richness of the area…The more you think about it the more you see and find." However, there was also a recognition that there were limits to what workshop participants were aware of and could include on their maps: "the fact we reached a point where we dried up shows we don't know everything that's going on."

Mapping people's perceptions and experiences
A paper map is limited in its ability to represent a place – and participation happening within that place - as dynamic. People's conversation as they create the maps adds an important layer to the interpretation of the maps, and to their value as a research tool. The discussions amongst participants in the workshops in Enfield, Leeds, and Suffolk (captured through note-taking and recording) allowed the research team to work together after the workshops to identify some common themes relating to participation across the three areas. We outline these below.

Perceptions of place and of community
The workshops raised questions about how perceptions of a place may have

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implications for the way participation is organised and the degree to which opportunities are taken up by local people. In some workshops, the maps (and accompanying discussions) revealed that residents in some of the fieldwork areas have a strong sense of their collective identity as residents of that place, and a common idea of where its boundaries begin and end. This has pointed the research team towards a question (that we hope to explore in the in-depth interviews) about whether this sense of identity with a place affects residents' participation either within or beyond their immediate environment. And, what is it that gives people their mental maps and sense of boundaries of particular communities?

In **Suffolk**, there was a conversation about the contradiction between the negative reputation of one of the communities in the fieldwork area and residents' experience of the area as a safe and friendly place to live. 'Outsider' perceptions of a community or place may in this case prevent people going there to participate. Also, 'insider' and 'outsider' perceptions of a place do not always align – something that must be factored in when attempting to design and implement initiatives to foster participation.

In **Enfield**, some workshop participants found it challenging to conceptualise the fieldwork area in the way it is demarcated by the project, and were keen to see sites in which they participated represented on the map, even if it meant extending the boundaries. This suggested that there were smaller and, indeed, larger communities – of place and of interest – operating in the demarcated fieldwork area, and that the people participating in the workshops in Enfield did not confine their participation to the fieldwork area. However, all four groups started with the public transport hubs on the map and extended outwards from there, suggesting that there was a shared view of these hubs as local landmarks.

The workshops also raised questions about whether everyone in the fieldwork areas has equal opportunities to participate, and in some groups, local tensions around who has the greater 'right' to participate – long-time, established residents or relative newcomers - revealed the importance of perceptions of entitlement to participation. In **Leeds**, there were conflicting views about whether university students or permanent residents are given more support and opportunities to participate. Some of the students in attendance felt that community events could be more welcoming to students by being held in term time, while some residents expressed the view that students' interests are given greater weight by decision-makers.

Accessibility and inclusion of sites of participation

Workshop participants raised several issues relating to the accessibility and inclusivity of local sites. Barriers to participation can range from the practical - like the lack of frequent, reliable, and affordable public transport or the absence of certain types of sites, like MPs' surgeries, in some areas - to the highly personal, such as the feeling of discomfort a newcomer to an area can get when joining a group that does not present itself as welcoming. At the end of one of the workshops in **Suffolk**, one participant commented that, "the charm with [this village] as a place to live is there are lots of things here, it's very accessible, and it's also very accessible to go elsewhere as well." However, the group also discussed the problem of limited transport services to and from the village making it harder for people without vehicles to meet their needs outside the village.

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Physical space – its availability, whether it is accessible to people with disabilities, and whether it feels safe and inviting – is also an important factor in the accessibility of participatory activities. In **Leeds**, the shortage of communal spaces in some of the tower blocks located within the fieldwork area was identified as a barrier to participation amongst residents: "there's just not much there...nowhere people can get together...and they can be scary places at night!"

Communications and outreach were also identified as a factor in the accessibility of sites. One of the participants in **Suffolk** commented that there were active clusters of activity around the village - particularly around the church, the school, and sport clubs – but that groups involved in these clusters were not very effective at communicating beyond their own networks. This could suggest that opportunities for involving more people are being missed and that effort is being duplicated (i.e. by not sharing). Another reading of this comment could be that the communication networks are well tailored to people's specific and individual interests and needs – perhaps implying that they find out about what is relevant to them (and no more!) A more general point holds that people will only attend an event if they know about it, know where to find it and how to get there. Examples where access

to community notice boards and other spaces to promote their events, as well as simple booking processes were lacking – including in the organising of the mapping workshops themselves – were shared in several of the sessions.

Multi-purpose and single use sites
All of the workshop groups identified 'hubs' of participation which support a wide range of activities, events, and organisations, and through which diverse groups of people access opportunities to participate. Common hubs included community centres, places of worship, schools, pubs, and parks and green spaces. In **Leeds**, one of the local community centres was described by a workshop participant as "something special", and one of the few places that "brings all races and ages together." These were contrasted with sites and activities that serve the needs and interests of specific groups and/or were used for a single purpose.

Threats to participatory sites
The mapping workshops highlighted that in some cases, a threat to a site valued highly by the community site act as a conduit for mobilising support and making people appreciate its function even more. In **Enfield**, for example, residents mounted a campaign to keep a local hall threatened with closure open. The

campaign was successful, and the number of people using this hall has since increased. In **Leeds**, participants raised concerns about the threat that new construction and land use developments can pose to existing participatory sites, revealing that regeneration efforts have the potential to both bring the community together and to divide it.

Reflections on the methods used
The team had investigated the use of participatory mapping methods, and devised an approach that was considered most appropriate to the project's needs and constraints. The main elements of the methods that had seemed valuable to the project were that it was visual rather than text or number based; that it was interactive and collaborative; it facilitated local people to articulate local knowledge; and that it fed into the research methods

planned for later in the project. Each of these anticipated and actual advantages are described in more detail below.

Visual method
The visual, creative prompts in mapping were expected to encourage participant dialogue at this early stage of the project and to start to develop the research team's relationship with local people. The project team found it an engaging way to elicit the information needed at this stage of the research. Not only did it aid discussion, but it resulted in a tangible representation of local participation which the research team were able to take away, reflect on, analyse and use for the following project phase.

The basic, 'self-created' mapping technique provided a means for participants to express their ideas and thoughts in an easily understandable and enjoyable visual format. A 'blank slate' approach was used, rather than using pre-printed, to-scale maps for participants to annotate, as the team wanted to use the mapping to see how local people interpreted and constructed their local area in relation to key landmarks and participatory spaces. The exercise resulted in varied, colourful and rich visual representations of the case-study areas and where participation happens within and beyond them. The maps identified and

recorded participation spaces and places, and the relationships between them that may not have emerged so clearly through other non-visual research techniques.

Interactivity and collaborative working
Mapping is a community-generated process of knowledge creation; it invites dialogue and enables the reflection of individual and shared experiences. This exchange of ideas was generated both during the mapmaking process and afterwards, when the groups reflected on one another's maps. Participants' comments and conversations were important because they took the workshop beyond a simple two-dimensional representation of the fieldwork areas and invited exploration of people's perceptions and experiences of participation in those areas. These conversations provided insights related to the context and quality of participation in the local areas, and brought a broader interpretive dimension to the workshops.

Participatory mapping is designed to overcome many social boundaries by focusing on visual and informal information and enabling participants to contribute ideas easily and without pressure by being physically informal - people standing around a table contributing ideas rather than a formal meeting setting. As such, mapping can involve the local community right across the social spectrum, bringing in those who might often be excluded, and encouraging collaboration, sharing and relationship-building between groups who may not usually work together.

Although attendance at the workshops was through an open invitation, some sessions attracted groups of people from a particular participatory activity or interest, which had the potential to affect the group dynamics during the mapmaking process and unbalance the content of the final map. In one workshop in Enfield, for example, several members of the local fair trade network were present in one group: this resulted in fair trade activities and networks being clearly represented on one map whereas it did not feature heavily on any of the other maps.

This relates to a wider challenge with participatory mapping: the maps created will always to some extent reflect the knowledge, world-view and experience of the participants involved in their creation.

We attempted to tackle this challenge to some extent by asking the group to map sites and spaces where "you *and* others" participate. Despite this, several workshop groups questioned whether their maps showed a lack of participatory activities geared towards young people and families with young children, but then suggested that this may have been a factor of their own age range (adults only) rather than a reflection of the areas in question.

Another factor that can influence the map-making is the way in which the group negotiate the map creation. For example, the person/people holding the pen can hold disproportionate power, and depending on the character of the penholder, can dictate the evolution of the map to varying degrees. Whilst it would not be fair or accurate to say that one person dominated proceedings in any of the workshops (and having two facilitators at each event encouraged the involvement of all participants), the maps do differ according to not only the individual knowledge of participants but also the way in which the person/people who took charge of populating the map order and present information. Some maps are more conceptual; others more spatial. Some have used coding and clearly demarcated the boundaries of the area, whereas others have not.

Facilitating local people's articulation of their knowledge

Participatory mapping can break down the barrier between the 'expert' researcher and the 'subject' of the research (Chambers, 2006). The data collection is participatory, which fits within the principles of the Pathways through Participation project. Participants generate the data and the role of the researcher is to facilitate the process, taking much less of an 'interventionist' position than in traditional approaches to qualitative research such as interviewing or focus group discussions, allowing the participants themselves to shape the mapping session to some extent.

However, participant autonomy and a less interventionist stance can result in challenges for the facilitator. The success of participatory mapping depends highly on the interests, motivations and capabilities of the individual participants involved. Thus disagreements can arise, misunderstandings can occur, one person's perception of 'boundary' can be entirely different to another's. More often than not this is of interest and part of the dialogue prompted by the exercise, but it is nevertheless a challenge for the facilitator to bear in mind and has the potential to occasionally hinder the group's activity.

Recording and analysis

The project team ensured that they fully captured the discussions in the workshops to complement the visual data generated through the creation of the maps by digitally recording discussions and by taking notes. Two members of the project team were present at each workshop so that one could facilitate and the other could take notes and ensure that the digital recorders were capturing the discussion. This approach worked well, and whilst it was useful to have the backup of the digital recordings, enough was captured in the notes of discussions, photos and the paper maps for the team not to need to transcribe recordings of group conversations.

Each researcher wrote a short report of each workshop, which included some key observations and themes, and the main sites and activities from each map. The researchers then facilitated discussion and reflection on the maps in the respective Local Stakeholder Groups to get their perspective on the maps, including helping to identify any gaps. After this, the project team met to collectively analyse the maps and identify key themes, and the researchers wrote this report. This process has ensured that the project has captured all the learning involved in the mapping workshops – from the initial rationale for choosing the method, to the practicalities

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of recruitment and designing the sessions, to capturing and reflecting on the data that has emerged from the workshops.

Mapping as part of the wider Pathways through Participation research process
The project team were clear that a technique was needed to identify places and spaces for participation locally - 'sites' of participation where potential interviewees could be recruited. It was also hoped that the mapping approach would start to build relationships with individuals and groups to facilitate the snowball sampling to identify interviewees later.

Mapping was in line with the project's wider commitment to participatory research processes. In addition, the visual element in the mapping workshop led into further development of the team's planned use of a creative, visual element in the in-

depth interviews in the form of a 'timeline'. Finally, the team were keen to use an inventive and collaborative approach such as participatory mapping as a fun, interesting and eye-catching introduction of the project to local community members in the hope that this would encourage participation in the project later.

Conclusion
Mapping has a long and rich history, yet mapping facilitated by outsiders as part of a development, change and/or research processes has become increasingly popular and prominent across the world in the last 20 years. Participatory mapping has developed a range of principles and methods that can be used in a wide variety of contexts and for many different research purposes and questions. The Pathways through Participation team found that the principles suited their aim of participatory research, and decided to use this method at a key stage in the project. The team developed quite a specific approach, relevant to the project, the contexts and the groups of people they were working with, and found that the methods chosen provided real practical benefits at this stage of the project.

The strengths of mapping as a method in helping to facilitate local people to work collaboratively to draw on their local knowledge cannot be overemphasised.

Valuable data was collected that has helped ground the next stage of the fieldwork and started to build relationships with residents in the three fieldwork communities. This is helping the researchers to identify people to invite for interviews for the next, and primary, phase of the fieldwork. The limitations of mapping, particularly that the data mapping generates and captures reflects only the views of the people in the room, is a limitation that can be found in most in-depth, qualitative approaches. Through careful and balanced recruitment, and ensuring that mapping is used alongside other methods (in the Pathways through Participation project, it has happened alongside stakeholder interviews, desk-based research and local walkarounds), this limitation can be addressed.

Participatory mapping, in all its different guises and forms, is a valuable social research method, as we hope to have illustrated through the use of mapping in the Pathways through Participation project. We hope that this report will feed into the continuing development of this valuable approach, and welcome readers' comments and feedback about how you have used mapping in your work – please comment on our website: http://pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/2010/06/using-participatory-mapping-to-explore-participation-report

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Further information

About mapping

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technologies and communication', *Participatory Learning and Action* (54), April 2006. Available at: http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/14507IIED.pdf

Online development and communication publication, *The Drum Beat 322,* published a special edition on Participatory Mapping and PGIS with a lot of links and resources: http://www.comminit.com/en/node/341/307

The international online journal PLA Notes has many articles on participatory mapping: http://www.planotes.org/pla_backissues/54.html

Integrated Approaches to Participatory Development (iapad) – online gateway to community mapping, PGIS and PPGIS: http://www.iapad.org/

Useful resources on mapping, including a PDF on how to do participatory mapping: http://www.participatorytraining.co.uk/How%20to%20do%20participatory%20mapping.pdf

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For more information on the project or to subscribe to our newsletter visit the website http://pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/
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