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CULTURAL ASSET MAPPING IN URBAN COMMUNITIES

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What Is Cultural Asset Mapping?

Maps offer us knowledge *about* the world, while attempting to make assertions about the *realities* of the world. They are not neutral; maps are contested documents that can tell different stories depending on who is doing the work of creation, interpretation, and dissemination (Duxbury et al. 2015, 1; Redaelli 2019, 51). One form of mapping is cultural asset mapping. Cultural asset maps identify information about a community's cultural resources. Cultural asset mapping is a methodology that can be used by communities, planners, and policymakers to understand the strengths, resources, opportunities, and use patterns of the cultural assets in a community's cultural landscape. Cultural asset mapping is a collaborative process undertaken by a variety of community stakeholders.

This kind of mapping, also known as cultural mapping or asset mapping, has become an important planning tool to help cities better understand the value and impact of their cultural assets, and to integrate knowledge about these assets into the city's planning process for economic and community development. Cultural asset mapping is often a tailor-made process that fits each city's unique needs, but commonly includes a mapping exercise that asks community members and stakeholders to define, identify, and map their own cultural assets (CAMP n.d.). Mapping can be used to identify and spatially locate community networks, trusted institutions, availability of services, cultural practices, and many other characteristics related to an area's cultural assets. Cultural asset mapping involves more than visual and performing arts, which are sometimes seen as elite art and not part of the cultural life of a community. A full representation of a community's cultural life includes traditional arts, religious, and other cultural practices. A community's cultural landscape also includes both tangible and intangible assets. Tangible assets include: 'physical spaces, cultural organizations, public forms of promotion and self-representation, public art, cultural industries, natural and cultural heritage, architecture, people, artifacts, and other material resources)' while intangible ones include: 'values and norms, beliefs and philosophies, language, community narratives, histories and memories, relationships, rituals, traditions, identities, and shared sense of place' (Duxbury et al. 2015, 2).

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Cultural mapping is a process of gathering and recording information about cultural capital, defined as a cultural asset or resource.[1] It is also a method for building and accumulating socially created value by gathering cultural capital through participatory processes (Cook and Taylor 2013, 289). Information learned through the process and products of cultural asset mapping can inform cultural policymaking that specifically addresses the needs and interests of urban communities. Cultural asset maps can be used in support of a range of policy activity including: marketing and promotional efforts for residents and tourists; economic development and investment efforts; and policy planning and decision-making efforts related to land use, urban and heritage planning, and creative placemaking. They can also support the development of networks and collaborations among the people and entities involved throughout the mapping process (Voight 2011).

Cultural asset mapping has a history that goes back several decades.[2] The practice traces its roots to projects undertaken with Indigenous communities in the Canadian and Alaskan Arctic in the 1960s. The goal there, and in many subsequent cultural mapping projects, was to represent previously unrepresented worldviews (Duxbury et al. 2015, 4). As such, it is an asset- or strengths-based approach, rather than a deficit mindset, in that mapping seeks to uncover and promote what is present and vital in communities, not what is lacking (Kretzmann and McKnight 1996).

Cultural asset mapping provides multiple benefits to communities. Among these: 'cultural asset mapping builds capacity among community leaders; it creates a foundation for future community action; increases community connectivity; improves feelings people have toward a community; and, cultural asset mapping increases clarity about what's happening in a community' (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021, 5–6). There are a few challenges or limitations as well. These include limited funding, process design challenges, limited community understanding of cultural asset mapping processes, getting the relevant people involved, and establishing a strong leadership team around the effort (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021, 7–8). Another challenge is that these mapping projects are often one-time efforts, which fail to account for evolution and change over time.

Maps are representations of the inputs received during the mapping process, but also new creations in and of themselves (Duxbury et al. 2015, 3). Thus, cultural asset maps can have a purpose extending beyond policy utility. As Cook and Taylor (2013, 3) note, 'A cultural map may be created as an end in itself or provide an input into another endeavour.' Duxbury et al. (2015, 3–4) observe that, 'Five main trajectories of cultural mapping practice or 'use-contexts' have influenced its current methodological contours and practices: community empowerment and counter-mapping, cultural policy, municipal governance, mapping as artistic practice, and academic inquiry,' and that maps are a form of social action. When considered this way, 'Cultural mapping, broadly conceived, promises new ways of describing, accounting for, and coming to terms with the cultural resources of communities and places' (Duxbury et al. 2015, 2).

This chapter provides an overview of cultural asset mapping for urban cultural planners. Building upon existing guides, it explores the process, ethics, and responsibilities of cultural asset mapping, describing different types of mapping efforts as well as their relevance and applicability to the urban environment.

Ethics in Cultural Asset Mapping

Cultural policymakers must understand the ethical responsibilities and implications of cultural asset mapping as well as the practical elements of the work.

In keeping with cultural asset mapping's inclusive, community-oriented approach, it is important to work with residents to identify tangible and intangible assets within the mapped area. This civic engagement enables a deeper, richer understanding of a community's cultural assets that leads to the discovery of, 'little known activities, unexpected relationships, new cultural actors, and 'visibilized' patterns, overlaps, and gaps,' elements which give maps greater relevance and deeper meaning (Duxbury et al. 2015, 10). Using an interdisciplinary mixed methods research design[3] and integrating data from multiple sources and perspectives is recommended for asset mapping projects.

Data Comes in Many Forms

Mapping multiple forms of cultural asset data can surface new or previously unrecognized revelations and insights about activities, relationships, concentrations, and gaps in a community's cultural ecosystem (Duxbury et al. 2015, 10). Data for cultural asset mapping can come from a variety of sources, including what we may expect – existing datasets from government, nonprofits, or other entities that regularly collect and organize statistical information about buildings and physical structures, organizations, creative workers, events, attendance, and the like.[4] The use of this kind of data is referred to as 'resource mapping.' However, data for cultural asset mapping can also come from people in a community with different identities, perspectives, and lived experiences. The layer of data that comes from those people's contributions is what is known as 'identity mapping.' Identity mapping captures and presents stories that honor the past, celebrate the present, or envision the future (Voight 2011).

Account for Power Dynamics

Multiple visible and hidden agendas can co-occur in a cultural asset mapping process, and power structures are an important consideration in asset mapping (Duncan 2006). Cultural asset mapping is affected by politics and power dynamics; no mapping process occurs absent these factors (Duxbury et al. 2015). Therefore, understanding the social, political, economic, and demographic contexts of a community is critical to the successful design and implementation of a mapping process (Cook and Taylor 2013, 267–268). It is also vital to develop a collectively shared reason (also referred to as a map's mission, or purpose) for mapping at the start of the process (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021, 9).

Alongside identifying a map's purpose at the outset, it is necessary to empower a diverse range of people in an asset mapping process, as the meaning of assets can differ based on who is identifying them and how (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021; Soma et al. 2022). Maps and the foundational methods used to develop them have been criticized for their lack of representation in the mapping process (Duxbury et al. 2015, 1). It is also necessary to develop a strategy for how identity-based mapping data will be used before collecting it, and to communicate this to potential participants, as it informs their choice of whether to participate (Voight 2011).

How to Conduct Cultural Asset Mapping

Because it is a participatory, citizen-engaged process, cultural asset mapping supports public involvement in government (Duxbury et al. 2015, 2). Engagement in cultural asset mapping can be broadly categorized as one of two forms – 'broad' or 'deep' – though projects can incorporate both (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021; Jeannotte 2016). Broad engagement involves large-scale public efforts to gather information from as wide a range of participants as possible, whereas deep engagement seeks more detailed input, involvement, and collaboration with a smaller group of representatives. There can be challenges to both methods, particularly as they relate to sustaining and continuing to develop or refresh a cultural asset map over time.

Extend a Generous Invitation

In any cultural asset mapping project, it is important to consider participatory and iterative strategies. To the greatest extent possible, project leads should encourage widespread community engagement and buy-in to the process. Extending a generous invitation and welcome to the various identified communities that will affect and be affected by cultural asset mapping will set the tone for the project. At every stage, from project design to data collection, to interpretation, to dissemination of finding, this welcome needs to be kept open, with opportunities to engage occurring regularly and intentionally. To make this welcome authentic, the project should account for the positionality of the organizers, including race to class, age, gender and sexual orientation, education level and more. This will form the backdrop of the power dynamics of the effort and allow organizers and participants to have an honest discussion of the nature of the relationships present in the mapping project. For a project to be impactful, it must keep these channels of communication open, and allow for collaborative iteration in project design and implementation.

Likewise, it is important to learn and use the terms that the people and groups involved in a mapping process use to identify themselves and their role(s) within the community, as these may differ from the titles or labels that they would be (or have been) assigned by others (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021). Cultural organizations, for instance, may not describe themselves as such, and people leading artistic endeavors may not refer to themselves as artists. All participants in a mapping process, as full partners in the research, should be afforded time and resources to learn from experts about mapping tools, technologies, and practices. Familiarity with the technologies and tools of asset mapping increases the confidence of 'non-experts' in a mapping process to contribute their own knowledge and ideas, resulting in a greater likelihood that they will positively influence the broader utility of the results through supporting broader inquiry and more diverse story-making opportunities in the mapping process. This familiarity also helps avoid the 'map tyranny' that can occur when privileged knowledge about the mapping process is held by others with social, organizational, or other political power (Duncan 2006). When powerful actors seek to control the process by withholding information or hoarding resources, it can have a chilling effect on cultural asset mapping.

Decide How Data Will Be Gathered and Used

The ownership, accessibility, and sharing of all data involved in a mapping process are important considerations to discuss with the community in the early stages of the effort before

any data is gathered. This is to ensure that community members exercise power and control over the data, information, and stories they own that could become part of the mapping process and products. Additional opportunities to involve community members in these discussions can also occur throughout the mapping process as information is gathered and products begin to take form. Questions to consider in the conversations include how the community feels about sharing its information, where the information can be displayed, and whether and how the data itself can be shared with the broader public (Martin et al. 2012, 52–53). Facilitators in an asset mapping process should not view themselves as the authors of a community's stories (Jeannotte 2016).

Another aspect of data use concerns weighting, or how the information that surfaces throughout the data-gathering process will be represented in the final outcomes of the work. The methods used in data gathering, analysis, and interpretation of all cultural assets (tangible and intangible) have consequences, as every step of a mapping process involves decisions about what counts (and what does not), what will be represented (and not), how, and why. These decisions are inherently political (Duxbury et al. 2015; Sandercock 2004). Jeannotte suggests that 'Assigning weights or values to a community's intangible culture can only be done by the people who live there' (2016, 40). This can hold true for tangible cultural assets, as well.

Defining the scope, range, and boundaries of the community(ies) to be mapped is another important part of understanding a map's purpose. Though there is no clear consensus that asset mapping works best at any particular geographic level (block, neighborhood, city, region, state, etc.); different levels naturally lend themselves to different challenges and opportunities (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021). For example, a block- or neighborhood-level map enables greater attention to minute details, while a region- or state-level map may have more readily available data about tangible cultural assets.

Consider a Variety of Methods to Collect and Represent Information

Data gathering to develop an asset map need not be limited to surveys and questionnaires, though these can be helpful ways to develop an initial base of information about tangible cultural assets that people can react to and build upon. Using GIS to map out large existing datasets, such as where cultural organizations are located, is a common practice. These maps can also be layered with other existing demographic and community data to explore patterns including concentrations of cultural organizations, artists, audiences, philanthropic support, or facilities. In this process, it is also useful to identify and incorporate or build upon any prior research that identifies these elements within a community (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021).

In addition to data about tangible assets, cultural asset mapping can involve creative, artistic, and other engagement processes to identify and explore intangible cultural assets. Data gathering about intangible assets can be less straightforward a process than it is for tangible cultural assets, as intangible assets reflect to a greater extent the differing perspectives, knowledge, opinions, and complexities present in a community's cultural ecosystem (Jeannotte 2016). Engagement processes can also produce products other than traditional maps, such as collections of stories or works of art (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021). Approaches that emphasize collaboration, exploration, and creative freedom are helpful to this

process (Voight 2011, 2). Jeannotte notes that collecting data about intangible assets and their value, in particular, '…cannot usually be captured by simple questionnaires or one-off consultations,' and that, '…community engagement is vital to the substantial portrayal of its intangible culture and must be maintained in some form if the cultural map is to remain relevant' (2016, 41).

Cultural asset mapping ultimately explores both knowledge about what exists as well as the experiences of those who live that existence (Redaelli 2019, 51). Cook and Taylor note that 'cultural mapping is a tool of mutuality – a tool that creates togetherness' (2013, 8). However, mapping can also be a form of activism, known as 'counter-mapping,' when used by a community to develop alternative maps challenging the status quo and types of representation found in existing maps created by official entities. The purpose of counter-mapping is two-fold: to incorporate alternative knowledge, information, and perspectives that are not represented, and, by doing this, to build bridges to the dominant perspectives reflected in existing maps (Duxbury et al. 2015, 4). For this reason, it is critical to ensure that a mapping process does not begin with the end product(s) fully determined but remains open to discovery and adaptation as part of the process (Duxbury et al. 2015, 16). In doing so, cultural asset mapping embraces a balance of deliberate and emergent strategy in that while it begins with some structured elements to start the process, its facilitators remain open to learning and adjusting to what works along the way. This flexibility and adaptation help ensure that a mapping process' end products are relevant, respectful, inclusive, and useful to those it represents.

Examples of Cultural Asset Mapping

In this section, we provide selected examples of cultural asset mapping projects to lay the groundwork for identification of best practices. These come from the different urban contexts of Philadelphia, PA, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Austin, Texas and Sheboygan, Wisconsin. By including a variety of geographies, we have been able to showcase a diversity of approaches found in one state, two large American cities and one small city. These efforts were both supported by the United States federal government agency the National Endowment for the Arts but differ in their scope and approaches. After this, we discuss in greater depth two mapping projects undertaken by the authors, ten years apart in one of the US's largest, most diverse cities and across a socio-economically, politically, and racially diverse state. These provide a unique lens through which to explore and understand the evolution of best practices and ethical considerations relevant to the practice of cultural asset mapping in urban environments.

We recognize that this chapter presents a small sample of cultural asset mapping projects. The efforts we describe below are meant to be illustrative of a range of practices and projects. We encourage readers who want to see more examples of cultural asset mapping to seek out the other projects generally available on the Internet.[5]

Cultural Asset Mapping Project (Austin, TX)

Austin, Texas' *Cultural Asset Mapping Project* (CAMP) report was published in 2018 and is a comprehensive documentation of that city's cultural resources. Supported by the City of Austin's Economic Development Department (Cultural Arts Division), this project is the

result of an extensive effort in a large American city, world renowned for its arts and culture scene, particularly for music. CAMP was a citywide, two-year effort funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and ArtPlace America (a ten-year arts funding coalition of foundations, banks, and government agencies which sunset in 2020). The goal of the project was to develop a crowdsourced map and cultural directory through a series of district-level mapping sessions, online surveys, and focus groups. It eventually resulted in a crowdsourced listing of over 3,000 facilities and cultural assets.

Initially, Austin's Cultural Arts Division worked with the Social Impact of the Arts Project (organizers of the CultureBlocks asset mapping project in Philadelphia, which we discuss below) to develop an initial dataset from publicly available records and local partners. Then, cultural mapping sessions were held in each of Austin's ten Council Districts, in which participants were invited to place points on a map that corresponded to cultural, artistic, or creative resources. One innovation of the Austin effort was CAMP Kits, which allowed participants to conduct mapping exercises at home in their own communities. CAMP Kits included maps, data collection worksheets, and how-to guides and were essentially a mapping section in a box that could be shared back with the Cultural Arts Division.

The next element of CAMP was an online resource that allowed participants to add data points directly to an interactive database and map. The CAMP report makes it clear that this tool had limited functionality as it was not searchable and required editing and data cleaning by hand. But the online map is itself a resource and is publicly available online.

Finally, the organizers held a series of focus groups at the tail end of the project that brought together maps of cultural assets with participants to add points to the map, to discuss patterns and look for trends. Focus groups were open to the public but focused on cultural stakeholders from throughout Austin.

The result was a mapping tool and directory. Though it is a one-time snapshot of Austin's cultural inventory, it generated a greater awareness in the city government of the possibilities and limits of the cultural assets in Austin. It also led to a number of cultural policy recommendations outlined in the final report. In terms of long-term impact, Austin's Cultural Arts Division continues to maintain the directory of assets on its website and encourages citizens to undertake their own mapping exercises through the downloadable CAMP Kits.

Communities in Conversation (Sheboygan, WI)

Communities in Conversation is a cultural asset mapping project that came out of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, a Midwestern city in the United States of about 50,000 residents, in 2021. It was grounded in the community and the work of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, which commissioned a local consultant to conduct asset mapping. The project featured 43 one-on-one interviews (with individuals and organizations), a survey, and open-ended discussions among participants. The project hosted an interactive art experience, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts' Our Town program. In this exhibit, participants were asked to map where they were from and where they called home, both globally and locally, within Sheboygan's neighborhoods. They were given an opportunity to use Post-Its on a gallery wall to self-define tangible and intangible cultural assets. Participants were also encouraged to submit their own photographs to the exhibit.

The initial exhibit was designed for data gathering; a final exhibition was held several months later that allowed attendees continued engagement with the project. As part of this final exhibition, local artists were commissioned to create works based on the mapping project to date, and there were interactive opportunities for participants to offer more feedback on the findings.

To gain a deeper perspective, the consultants conducted a report-back event and community discussion at a local library. The consultants presented the findings to date for the project, then divided participants into smaller groups to engage in deeper discussion of themes of youth engagement, participation and engagement, and diverse representation. Feedback from the groups helped keep the focus on what the community has (assets) versus what it lacks.

There was also a direct youth engagement component to the Sheboygan mapping project. In spring 2021, the team visited 12 area schools and engaged 350 first-through-eighth graders. Students participated in interactive activities to envision things about their community that were important to them and learned about cultural asset mapping. A printed book was created and given to each school to commemorate the process. This approach allowed the project team to engage more youth directly than would be possible through surveys and interviews alone.

West Philadelphia Cultural Asset Mapping Project (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.)

In early 2013, we (along with our Drexel University colleague Dr. Neville Vakharia) received funding from Drexel's Office of University and Community Partnerships to produce a cultural asset mapping project based in three neighborhoods adjacent to Drexel's campus. These neighborhoods, Mantua, Powelton Village, and West Powelton, had been deeply affected by the development pressure resulting from the expansion of Drexel, as well as the nearby University of Pennsylvania, University City Science Center, and the Penn Presbyterian Medical Center (those pressures have only increased in the subsequent years). These neighborhoods also face high rates of student rentership or 'studentification' (Smith 2008), as well as significant pockets of poverty, lack of access to fresh food, and a history of population decline. It was our sense that they also were some of the most culturally and artistically active neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Major institutions call these neighborhoods home, including the Philadelphia Zoo and the Please Touch Museum as well as many smaller, community-based arts and culture organizations. The goal of this cultural asset mapping project was to determine participation in, and access to, arts and culture in these three neighborhoods.

From July to December 2013, our team engaged in a mixed methods process that included interviews, focus groups, intercept surveys, and community meetings. To document the cultural assets of these neighborhoods, we worked with four graduate and two undergraduate students who supported the research effort. We combined our field research with data pulled from the Census, the National Endowment for the Arts, and CultureBlocks, a Philadelphia-wide asset mapping website developed by University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts Project, in collaboration with The Reinvestment Fund (a community development financial institution) and Philadelphia's Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy.

We began the process by interviewing key stakeholders in the civic, and arts and culture community. These expert interviews helped us develop our understanding of the cultural ecosystem, and to develop our focus group and survey materials. In September and October 2013, we held six focus groups at the West Philadelphia Community Center, with a total of 45 residents and community leaders. Finally, the graduate and undergraduate students conducted approximately 450 short intercept surveys that took place throughout the neighborhoods on street corners, at community events, in local businesses and other places where people gather. We presented initial findings of the research at two community meetings in March 2014. This process of 'member checking' was important to understand if the findings of the research matched the perspectives of the neighborhood residents and culture bearers whose experience we were hoping to depict (Birt et al. 2016).

We mapped the cultural organizations and artists in the neighborhoods and determined that there were organic 'cultural clusters' that occurred on several of the area's commercial corridors (Stern and Seifert 2012). There were also other groups that produced cultural programming in the neighborhoods such as schools, religious organizations and citywide arts and culture organizations that were not based in the study area. Finally, there were major anchor institutions like Drexel University and the aforementioned Philadelphia Zoo and Please Touch Museum that were major drivers of culture in the city but were not always deeply connected to their local neighborhoods. We learned through this mapping process that the study neighborhoods had a higher number of resident artists, a lower level of public investment in the arts flowing to them, and fewer cultural businesses than some other neighborhoods in the city. From these findings, we were able to develop a set of recommendations for strengthening the cultural infrastructure that included: engaging multiple generations of participants together; building marketable job skills; employing local artists; and providing opportunities for cultural activities that take place in the evenings, weekends, and after school, to maximally engage audiences. The recommendations were further informed by extensive focus group research, intercept surveys and expert interviews in these neighborhoods.

This mapping project had several limitations. The first is that it was a one-time effort, which blunts its explanatory power over time (ArtPlace and Spire + Base 2021). The second limitation is in the methodology itself. We could have involved artists and other community members as researchers in a participatory action research scheme (Kindon et al. 2007). This would have more actively engaged the local population and could have produced richer results and even more buy-in for the effort. Finally, we used organizations' mailing addresses as a proxy for their location, and not all organizations necessarily present their work where they have their offices.

We also want to note, in what is a recurring theme for this chapter, that one of the databases we relied on for this project, CultureBlocks, was a one-time effort, and the data have not been updated in several years. Presumably CultureBlocks did not have the funding to continue past its initial build-out. At the time of our study, this was not a limitation because the data were still being regularly updated, but since then the project has gone dark. As we will mention in our recommendations and questions for practitioners later in the chapter, it is vital to ask whether success in a mapping project requires ongoing maintenance and updating, or if it is just a one-time effort, and to secure the continuing availability of related resources as necessary.

The West Philadelphia cultural mapping project was embraced by cultural organizations in the neighborhoods and was employed by some of them as evidence in grant writing and advocacy campaigns. Overall, it was a valuable project that set the stage for a future collaboration in the PA Humanities Discovery Project nearly a decade later.

PA Humanities Discovery Project (Pennsylvania, USA)

In the summer of 2022, we began work on another, somewhat different cultural asset mapping project. PA Humanities, a quasi-governmental organization that supports the humanities[6] in Pennsylvania, contracted with Drexel University to conduct the first-ever asset mapping of humanities practitioners around the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The PA Humanities Discovery Project, as it was named, was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The effort was supported with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021) and the National Endowment for the Arts, which gave us significant resources to work with. The research design consisted of a large-scale electronic survey and a set of focus groups around Pennsylvania (in-person and virtual). This mapping project was different from previous efforts to explore humanities practice because it focused primarily on individual humanities practitioners as its unit of analysis, though organizations were represented as well. It was also less of a spatial mapping project and more of a mapping of the tangible and intangible assets of the humanities community.

It was a much more extensive mapping effort than our previous project in 2013–2014, which covered just a few West Philadelphia neighborhoods. This project attempted to craft a comprehensive view of the humanities in the whole state. The project also had its own advisory boards, with both a national advisory board and a Pennsylvania working group (both group's members were offered compensation by PA Humanities). These advisors met with PA Humanities and the research team regularly and offered feedback that shaped the data collection and interpretation of findings, leading to a collaborative effort that was informed by national and local experts in the field. The advisory and working group members represented a wide range of perspectives and experiences in the humanities, community engagement, policymaking, and research. They came from government, nonprofits, and individual practice, from large and small organizations, from different areas of the arts and humanities, and from a mix of geographic locations. Collectively, they ensured that the project shifted away from professional and academic language and toward using people's own words to describe their work and experiences. The advisory and working group feedback throughout the development and analysis of the research helped ensure that people felt comfortable participating, and that the results would be relevant, meaningful, and useful.

The first data collection strategy was an online survey that intended to capture the breadth of humanities practice in Pennsylvania. We asked a mix of closed- and open-ended questions (the advisors favored open-ended questions so that participants could expound upon their practices in their own words). We asked respondents what cultural practices they do and how they do them; who attends or participates in their activities; how they describe their work to others; the themes explored in their work, and other thematic questions. We also asked if participants use the term 'humanities' in their work, and if so, when? (We learned that many respondents do not use that term regularly, and if they do, it is often in the context of grant

applications.) We asked several questions about the working lives of humanities practitioners, including how often they are paid for their work; how many hours per week they devote to this work; how they gained their experience to do this work; and their motivations for doing it. Given that the survey came on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 racial uprisings in the United States, we asked how the last three years had affected their practice. We also included a social network analysis, asking respondents to name people or organizations with whom they work, and to indicate the strength of those associations.

We deployed the survey between September 2022 and January 2023. We had regular check-ins with the advisors and staff of PA Humanities to determine how the survey was performing, in terms of overall response rate as well as demographic and geographic distribution of responses. We also leaned on the advisory groups to get the word out about the survey. We were very lucky to have a team of several collaborators with intimate knowledge of the humanities field and a strong desire to see the project succeed. Because of their robust engagement and work to encourage people all over Pennsylvania to respond to the survey, we received nearly 550 complete responses. Nearly every geographical district in Pennsylvania was represented, and there was robust demographic diversity in the sample.

The second phase of the research project was a set of eight focus groups conducted between January and March 2023. These were intended to go into greater depth than surveys would allow. We asked questions about the same thematic areas but probed more and allowed for participants to reflect at length about the issues they face as humanities practitioners in Pennsylvania, including a version of the social network mapping exercise and a discussion of the future of the humanities. A total of 87 people participated in the focus groups, reflecting significant diversity in the areas of gender identity, racial identity, age, education and more. We hosted three of the focus groups in person around Pennsylvania (in Philadelphia, Reading, and Pittsburgh), and five of them virtually. We segmented the focus groups, with deep dives into the experiences of practitioners such as rural Pennsylvania, traditional arts and culture/humanities organizations, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) culture bearers, Black cultural workers, Spanish language speaking practitioners, and young people (18–30 years old). Notably, we recruited members of the Discovery Project advisory groups to moderate four focus groups that were drawn from the communities being studied (BIPOC, Black, young people, and Spanish-speaking).

The data analysis portion of the PA Humanities Discovery Project was considerably more extensive and time-consuming than that of the West Philadelphia asset mapping project of a decade earlier. First, there were over 500 surveys, each with over a dozen open-ended questions. Then there was the social network analysis, which was part of both the surveys and the focus groups. Also, the focus group analysis was extensive, with lengthy transcripts and notes to analyze. In the summer and fall of 2023, we engaged with PA Humanities staff in a process of member checking and participatory engagement to ascertain whether our interpretations of the data were sound and were being offered in formats that would be useful to practitioners and humanities advocates.

Recommendations on Conducting Cultural Asset Mapping

In this final section of the paper, we provide recommendations on how to conduct a cultural asset mapping project. Based on the history, existing literature, and examples of cultural asset

mapping discussed throughout this chapter, the following recommendations provide guidelines to develop and implement a cultural asset mapping effort in an urban community. We offer suggestions for the process of developing cultural asset maps, the use of the resulting products, and ways to sustain the community engagement fostered through mapmaking efforts. Finally, we provide guiding questions for those pursuing cultural asset mapping efforts.

Process

- Begin with identifying the mission of the work. Collectively agree upon and clearly communicate the purpose of the mapping effort. Discuss and agree upon what kinds of data will be gathered, how it will be used, and who will own and have access to both the data and any final product(s).
- Recognize that cultural asset mapping is a participatory process of community engagement. Consider who is involved, why, and how. Learn and use the terms that the people and groups involved use to identify themselves and their role(s) within their community(ies). Acknowledge and discuss positionality and power dynamics that affect the process.
- Employ an iterative approach throughout the process, providing multiple opportunities for communal check-ins about engagement, representation, ownership, and products.
- Engage translators at live events and ensure that all activities are accessible.
- Engage artists and embrace the use of artistic methods, like photovoice,[7] that bring forward local knowledge and allow for a greater sense of buy-in.
- Secure adequate financial resources to undertake the process of this work fully. These costs are in addition to those of producing the final product(s) of a mapping effort. Expected process costs of doing this kind of work, particularly in a larger geographic context, include dedicated staff, artists, and/or consultants' time, software licensing, equipment purchase or rental, data purchasing and agreements, and site rental fees for meetings or related events as well as meeting materials and recording, translation, and transcription services. They also include community participant-related costs such as childcare, refreshments, and incentives to participate.
- Seek ways to sustain community participation after the initially planned mapping effort has concluded, as well as funding to support ongoing maintenance, updates, and continued community engagement.

Products

- Remember that multiple formats are possible, and be open to including a variety of outputs, including artistic presentations or products.
- Consider how product(s) will be made available online, and/or in print, and what is best for the community(ies) the product(s) represent. Online products offer more accessibility and interactivity in some ways, yet they are not universally accessible or useful in others. Make sure that documents are available in multiple relevant languages.
- Encourage the use of community-engaged cultural asset mapping and its product(s) to inform cultural policy and advance the practice of participatory structures of data collection, interpretation, and dissemination.

- Recognize that cultural asset maps are living documents that require revisiting, updating, maintenance, and continuing development to achieve their full value and retain their relevance. Be aware that some of the data sources relied on in an initial mapping effort may not exist going forward, as was the case for us with CultureBlocks in Philadelphia.

Lessons Learned

Cultural asset mapping is a powerful tool for engaging communities in reflective practice and meaningful action. When done with care, attention to power dynamics, and broad inclusion, the results can bring a transformative awareness to the needs of the given place. This asset-based approach should be part of the toolbox of every urban and cultural planner as they seek to co-design generative futures. Guiding questions for the process include the following:

- *What is the purpose of the cultural plan and study?* What information is sought and what is missing? The team involved in cultural asset mapping should think carefully about the goals and outcomes of the study before involving members of the public.
- *Who is the audience?* It is vital that the mapping team consider who this project is for; the intended audience affects the way the stories will be gathered and told, the format of any deliverables, and the overall process and products of the cultural asset mapping. Possible audiences include the arts community, philanthropic funders, policymakers, and local residents. Establishing a sense of the audience before beginning ensures that the data and interpretation are appropriate and achieve the desired purposes of the project.
- *Who needs to be consulted, and who needs to participate in the creation process?* The mapping team should do an inventory of who needs to be consulted before the process begins, and throughout the project. Making sure the right people are at the table will enhance the validity and reach of the findings of the project. In the case of the PA Humanities Discovery project, we had a national advisory board and a Pennsylvania-based working group comprised of a diverse cross-section of cultural leaders that helped shepherd the project from conception to fruition.
- *Whose stories need to be told, and whose stories have historically been suppressed?* As we note above, cultural asset mapping emerged historically to uncover and center narratives that had previously been marginalized. In any community, there are going to be stories that have been suppressed. It is important to account for the range of possible narratives and narrators present in a project, and to work to amplify those. In addition, the team should anticipate the power dynamics present in the effort, and make sure there is adequate engagement and representation of voices of all sorts throughout the project.
- *What resources will this study need to be successful?* Cultural asset mapping projects range in size and scope, but they all require resources in the form of time, money, and more. A careful assessment of the resources required to pose the relevant questions will ensure that the project is right sized for the questions it seeks to pursue. Be sure to account for staff time, facilities rentals, incentives for participants, translation services, childcare at meetings, and more to fully grasp the costs involved. Include funds for maintaining and updating any data, maps, or websites that are created in the process.

- *Who owns the findings, and how will they be disseminated?* Make clear at the beginning of the process who owns the findings and who will be responsible for dissemination. The work of telling these stories is important and complicated; ensure the party with adequate capacity for dissemination and stewardship is identified at the outset of the cultural asset mapping effort.
- *How will you know if the effort has been a success?* In addition, discuss as a team early on what success for this project looks like. Is it just an exercise in information gathering, or is there a policy, funding, or community change that is the intended effect? What would a world in which this mapping effort is successful look like? This can only be defined on a case-by-case basis, with all the participants involved.

Notes

1 According to Emery and Flora (2006, 21), "Cultural capital reflects the way people 'know the world' and how they act within it, as well as their traditions and language. Cultural capital influences what voices are heard and listened to, which voices have influence in what areas, and how creativity, innovation, and influence emerge and are nurtured."
2 For a thorough history of cultural asset mapping, please see Duxbury et al. (2015, 3–16).
3 Mixed methods research designs involve both quantitative (numerical) data and qualitative (non-numerical, descriptive and explanatory) data.
4 In the U.S., state and local arts and humanities agencies, local visitors bureaus, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Location Quotient Calculator can all be useful sources for this type of data (ArtPlace and Spire + Base n.d.).
5 A number of additional examples can be found in the "Further Reading" section on page 10 of ArtPlace and Spire + Base's report, "Mapping Out Cultural Asset Mapping" (n.d.).
6 The definition of humanities from the United States' 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act states, "The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life."
7 For an example and discussion of photovoice in a participatory action research project, please see Wang, C. C. 1999. "Photovoice: a participatory action research strategy applied to women's health." *Journal of Women's Health* 8 (2): 185–92. doi:10.1089/jwh.1999.8.185.

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