

Mapping for Civic Action: Inclusive Neighbourhood Planning in the Elephant and Walworth

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Maps of urban (public) assets uncover untapped resources performing the existence and availability of that resources, and, therefore, a new field of possibility that enables new forms of collective action. In that sense, the map creates a new reality rather than describes an existing one.

Adrien Labaeye, 2018¹

Introduction

Neighbourhood planning, introduced through the Localism Act 2011, gives communities a right to shape development in their areas through the production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan, empowering communities to have a direct say in how their neighbourhood is shaped in the future. In theory, neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their locality and shape the development and growth of their area. This might include choosing where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, or having their say on what new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided. Powers include granting planning permission for the developments they want and confirming that the aspirations of the neighbourhood are aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.

The UK Government's guidance states that

Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop over the next 10, 15, 20 years in ways that meet identified local need and make sense for local people. They can put in place planning policies that will help deliver that vision or grant planning permission for the development they want to see.²

However, there is criticism over how far the process genuinely promotes democratisation of local planning. Critics argue that it is poorly funded and time consuming and that 'rather than ushering a new era of local engagement, perhaps we are simply granting power to those with deep pockets and a lot of spare time on their hands'.³ In practice, people get caught up in a complex process, leaving them little time for campaigning and direct action which may be more productive in realising their aspirations.

In addition, the powers given to communities through neighbourhood planning are limited in that they are not able to affect local authorities' strategic priorities for the scale of development in the area. The community has to approve the same level of development already agreed by the council. Less development is not an option even if this is the majority view of the residents.

The positives are that neighbourhood planning provides an opportunity for community representation in the planning process and for citizens to sit at the table when decisions are being made about their neighbourhood. It is also a platform for collective action on which people can come together and collectively re-imagine the future.

The Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forum

Confronted by huge development pressure in the area the residents of Elephant and Walworth came together to form the Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forum with the aim of promoting inclusive neighbourhood planning and drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan which would ‘ensure that the benefits of the redevelopment can reach existing residents, existing businesses and existing groups.’⁴

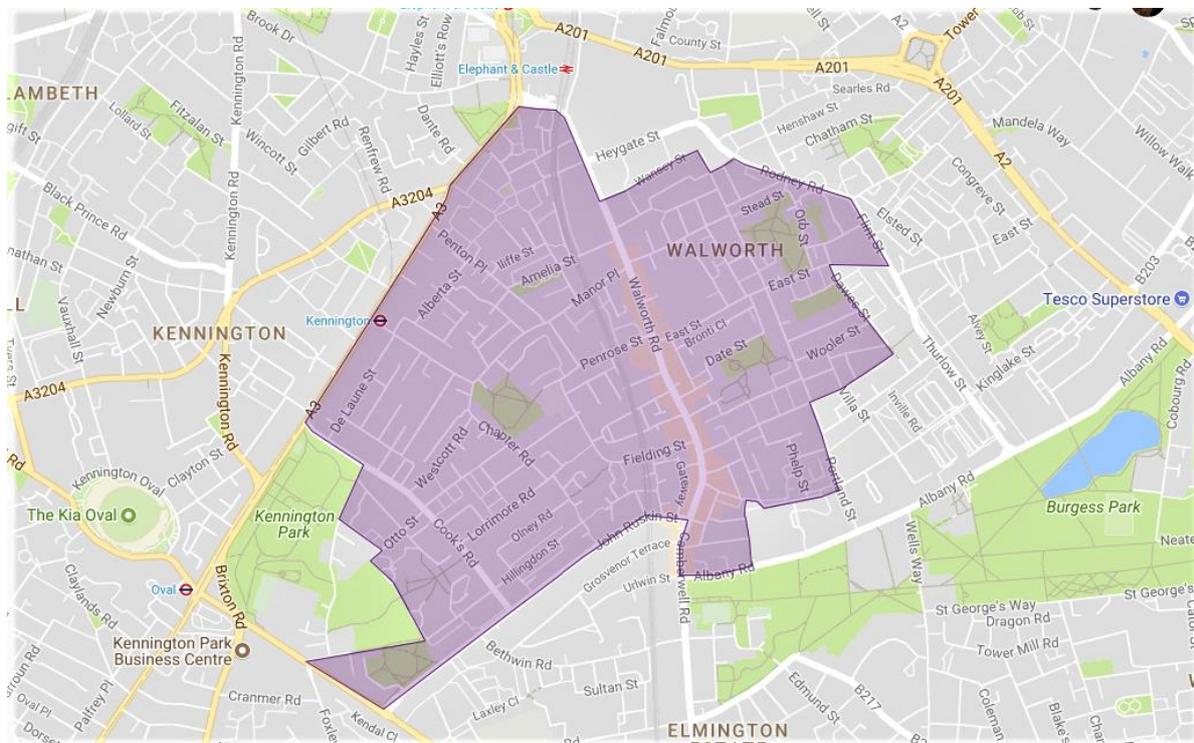


Figure 1. The Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Partnership Area: Walworth is located on the South of Elephant and Castle. Kennington is to the West, Old Kent Road to the East and Burgess Park and Camberwell to the South.

Key aims of the initial work are to ensure that the Plan is community-led and that individuals and all communities of both place and identity are involved in the consultations to ensure that it represents the needs and aspirations of all citizens. The challenges facing the forum in achieving these goals are:

- How to identify and record the resources and assets of the community?
- How to identify local needs?
- How to capture the aspirations of the many diverse local communities going forward?

In response to these challenges, JustMap were commissioned by the Forum to organise mapping workshops at a series of five neighbourhood festivals and events during the late summer of 2017, followed by a mapping game about community assets at a major public meeting held in October 2017.⁵

The aim of the events was to use the map as a tool to capture data and to raise public awareness of the Forum, increase attendance at the public meeting and inform the Neighbourhood Plan by gathering local knowledge and feedback from local residents. The festival settings provided an opportunity to engage with a wide range of participants, especially those not involved with the Forum or who would not normally attend community meetings or workshops.⁶

The JustMap Approach

The JustMap approach to the mapping project directly references the work of Aldo de Moor in which he proposes an iterative process of mapping with a community to define collectively its issues, priorities and next action.⁷ He proposes a cyclical approach to enable communities to make better sense of, and strengthen their collaboration through, participatory community network mapping. This evolutionary process consists of two interconnected cycles. They are both driven by the mapping process and named after the main purpose of the cycle - a community network development cycle and a community network sense-making cycle.

The community network development cycle can be summarised as follows:

1. mapping the community network through visualizing the most relevant pieces of the community network into map elements, connections, and views,
2. using these mapping artefacts to make sense of the collaborative common ground of the community network in terms of issues, priorities, and next actions,
3. designing and implementing community network interventions needed to carry out these actions, and so building the community and making its collaboration grow in the context of its wider network, and
4. evaluating the effects of these interventions in terms of collecting stories, data and indicators to provide the inputs for the next round of mapping. This process is to be repeated continuously, resulting in ever richer and more situated maps, a deeper joint sense of awareness and ownership of the collaboration ecosystem the community network consists of, and more effective community building interventions, the results of which are measured in terms of stories, data, and indicators that help inspire the next round of development (see Figure 2).

This iterative process of mapping, collectively discussing the map and mapping again has been conceptualised by de Moor as the practice of *sense-making*, a process of a community mapping its resources, networks and objectives to give meaning to their collective experiences and to gain an understanding of who they are and what they aspire to. It is therefore essential in this process to include aspirations as well as to identify assets and resources, so that the mapping becomes a collective process to make sense of the neighbourhood and to build a collective vision.

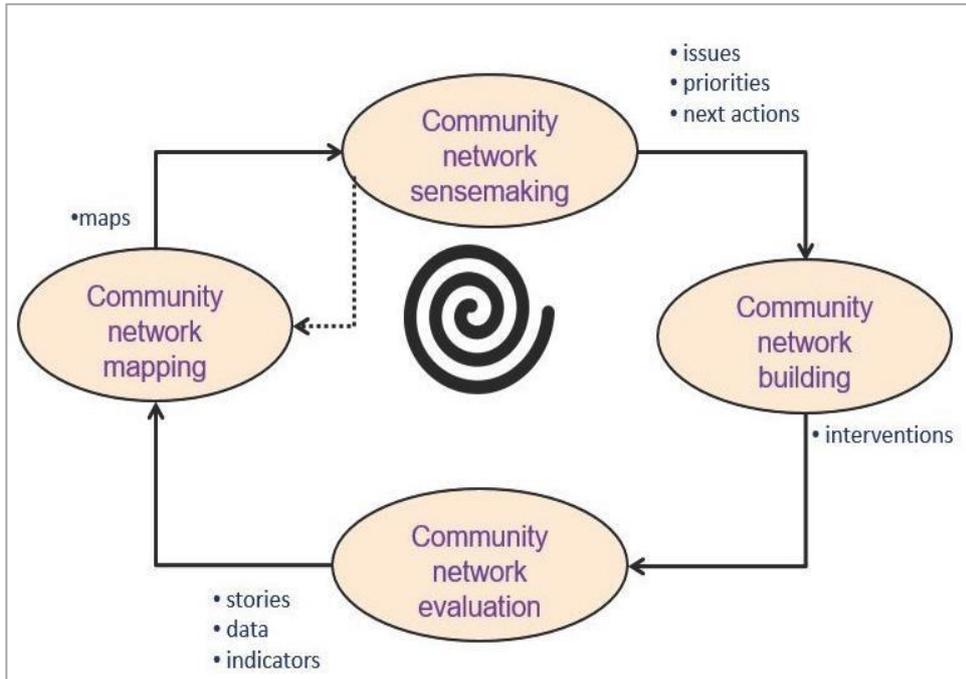


Figure 2. The Community Development Network Cycle (de Moor)

Four elements make up the community network sense-making cycle,

- setting the conversation agenda
- capturing conversations
- community network mapping
- community network sense-making

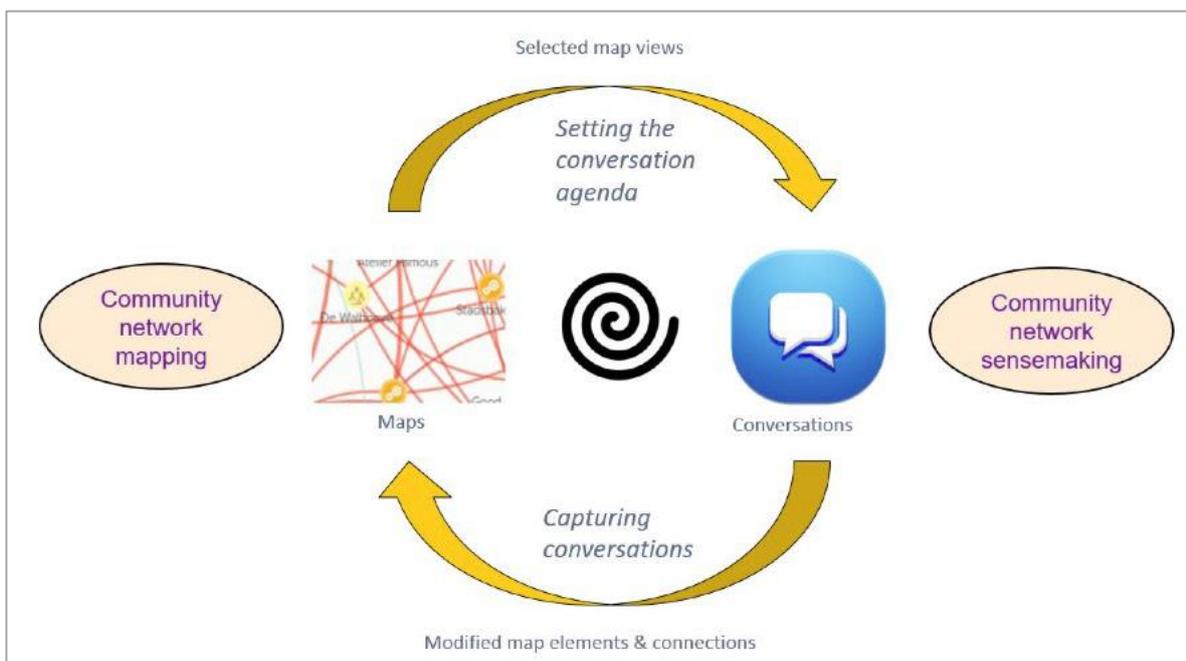


Figure 3. The Community Network Sense-making Cycle (de Moor)

Setting the Conversation Agenda

The categories used for the mapping conversations were framed by the six priority themes of the draft Neighbourhood Plan:

Heritage and Community Assets: *Protect and enhance the use of heritage buildings and other community assets which are of enduring importance for the local community*

Housing: *Protect the affordable housing stock in an area undergoing deep development pressure and advocate for social housing quota in new developments*

Green Spaces and Links: *Link the area's myriad small parks and amenities together to create a network of traffic-light biodiversity-friendly walking and cycling routes*

Food Growing: *Support local people reclaiming land for growing food across the Walworth and Elephant area*

Local Economy: *Ensure that existing local and independent businesses are able to thrive in the area. Encourage the creation of affordable business space*

Simultaneously, we focused on community actions, community campaigns, and community projects (long and short term), using inspiring stories from the past and present to inform and sustain the Neighbourhood Plan.

Capturing Conversations

Participants at the mapping workshops were invited to pin their places, stories and proposals to a large scale paper map with a colour coded flag which were added to a data reordering sheet.



Figure 4. Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forum mapping stall at the Westmoreland Road festival (19 August 2018)



Figure 5. Walworth Society festival, mapping community resources with residents (August 31st 2017)

Community Network Mapping

Following the workshops, the data was transposed from recording sheets to a spreadsheet and was uploaded online to produce geographic and affinity maps using Carto and Kumu mapping tools.⁸ Printed editions of the two maps were taken to each festival workshop so that people could add more data and discuss the data gathered during the previous events. The iterative maps grew as interesting and evolving tools for sense-making of the neighbourhoods and to build up a collective vision for the Neighbourhood Plan.

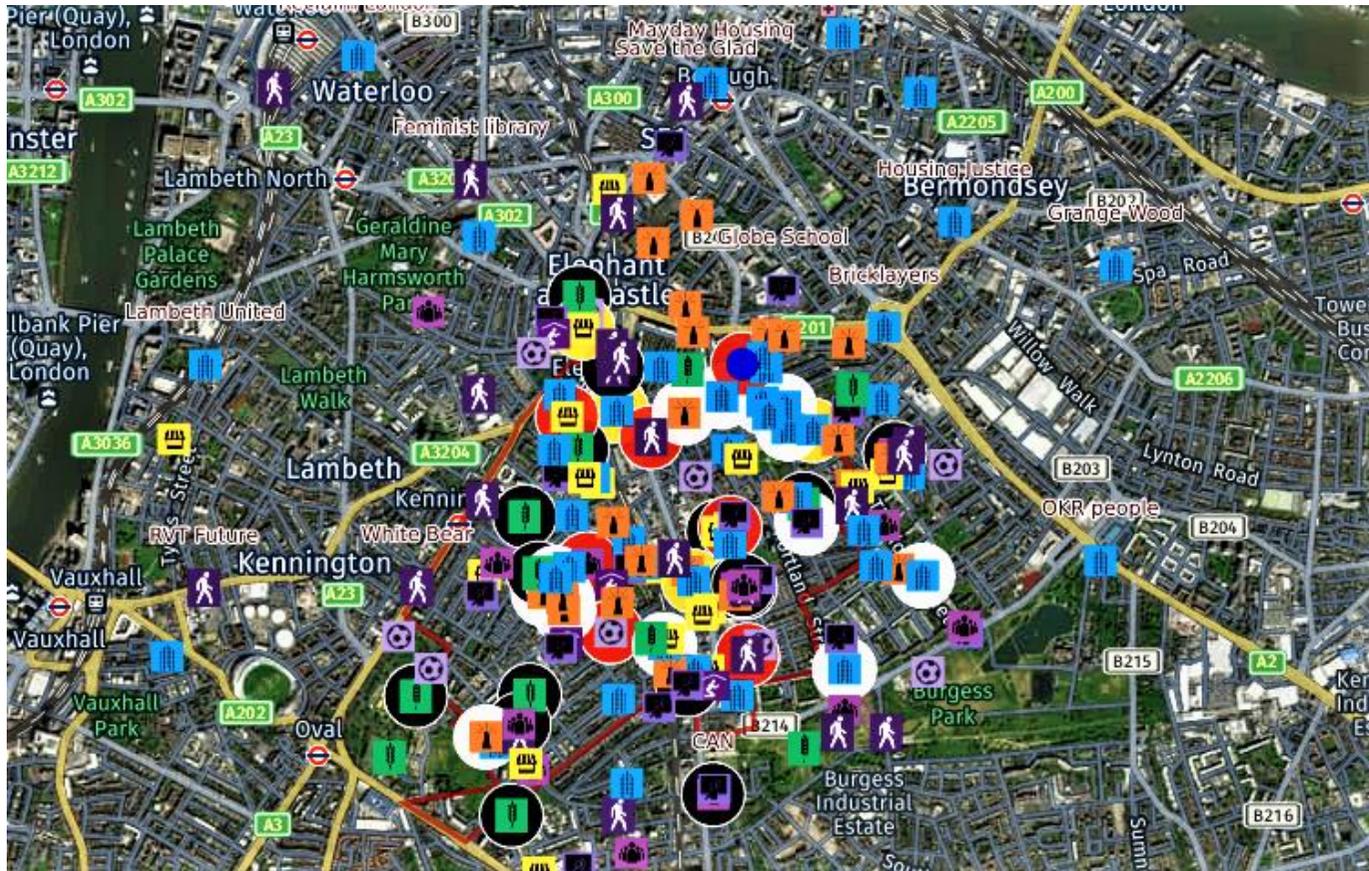


Figure 6. Geographic mapping of places, groups and stories from the workshops



Figure 7 Key to geographic mapping

The geographic map can be explored in more detail on the [JustMaps web site](#).



Elephant & Walworth Treasure Hunt!



*Your quest is to spot hidden treasures that only a special few know.
 It could be: places, groups, stories or projects that need to become a reality*

But not any items... something original, something exciting, something inspiring in our community...
 If you know a hidden treasure mark it on the map with a flag! And pin more if you know more !

Informally during registration and lunch

1. places and groups that matter for the community that are still not on the map.
 Show off your local knowledge!
"A butcher who always does me a great bargain!"
"The group of grannies who get fit together in my local park every Friday"
 What else? We don't know - but you do! Tell us

2. inspiring stories about local places, groups or events
 An interesting tale! - speaks to wider issues in the area
 uses the past to teach us about today and tomorrow

During the working sessions

3. projects related to one of the six action areas
 Short term (quick wins by working together)
 eg : create BBQ in Pasley Park | restore the pub | add a shed to the community garden
 Longer term (think BIG! dream BIG! - megaprojects!)
 eg : create a new path along the railway line (the Low Line)

We will collectively vote for the best projects, and the group with the most votes will win the whole bundle of prizes !

Figure 9. Community mapping game rules

The results of the mapping and voting are presented here as a concept map. It shows the six topics as clusters exploring the different long-term and short-term projects that were proposed, and their relative popularity. The short-term proposals are highlighted in red and the long-term ones in pink. The size of the bubbles represents the number of votes. Community agents in the neighbourhood, campaigns and inspiring stories which were shared during the conference are linked to each theme.

decision making. Participatory mapping ensures that local communities of place and identity are fully involved and provides a platform for just, inclusive and cooperative planning. The mapping we carried out in Walworth shows that social capital is being lost. This is particularly true of community spaces which are under pressure from development pressures. It also shows the beginnings of a positive vision for the community's future.

The mapping process must be a collaborative, innovative participatory processes, with a physical presence in grass roots public spaces and events. It is a powerful tool for making the place-based evidence created by communities available for inclusive neighbourhood planning. This is essential if the Neighbourhood Plan is to deliver a fairer Elephant and Walworth, where residents will have access to the services they need and where people of different ages, genders and ethnicities work together to make decisions about the places in which they live.

Participatory mapping has helped the EWF to define shorter term campaign priorities for 2017/18 and longer term proposals for the future. It has enabled local people to find information about local campaigns and projects and get involved in taking action themselves. Some have become engaged in the campaign to save the Library from redevelopment, and in a community fruit growing project.

By following de Moor's approach of cyclical mapping we have started conversations, collected them, created community network maps and begun the process of community sense-making which grows richer with each iteration of the map. The mapping is a collection of views from local residents which expresses many different points of view, including issues of tension and debate which were subsequently openly discussed and addressed to resolve conflict. We hope that the collection of conversations revealed through the mapping process is an authentic representation of the community's voice and perception.

ENDNOTES

¹ **Adrien** Labaeye, 'Collaboratively mapping alternative economies', *Netcom* 31-1/2 2017, <http://journals.openedition.org/netcom/2647>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

³ Neighbourhood plans – democracy in action or just a sham?

<https://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/2011/nov/28/neighbourhood-plans-democracy-action-sham>

⁴ Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forum website <http://ewnforum.org/about>

⁵ <http://justplace-london.blogspot.co.uk/p/elephant.html>

⁶ The meetings were held at the Walworth Society festival, Westmoreland Road 31 August 2017), informal workshop with members from Pembroke House (1 September), The Beehive pub (8 September), the Pasley Park Festival (16 September) and the Nursery Row Park Autumn Fair (23 September).

⁷ de Moor, A. 'Community Sensor: Towards a Participatory Community Network Mapping Methodology', *The Journal of Community Informatics* (2017) ISSN: 1721-4441 <http://ci-journal.net/index.php/ciej/article/view/1382/1254>

⁸ CARTO is a Software as a Service cloud computing platform that provides GIS and web mapping tools for display in a web browser; URL <https://carto.com>. Kumu is a visualization platform for mapping systems and relationships. URL <https://kumu.io/>

