

COMMUNITY MAPPING



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A Guide to Community Mapping for PLACE-EE

22nd November 2018



Northern Periphery and
Arctic Programme
2014–2020



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What is Community Mapping?

Community mapping is the process of identifying and logging the strengths, resources and assets of a community in order to address needs and encourage development. Also known as participatory or asset mapping, this model highlights everything that can elicit positive change. By focusing on the opportunities that are available rather than the problems that need addressing, asset mapping will mobilize the existing people, culture, skills and organisations to be the collective power behind this change (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993).

Community mapping is a capacity-based, internally focused and relationship-driven process (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993) that is usually conducted by a group of volunteers within the community and facilitated by project representatives. Before any data collection can begin, those who are driving the project should determine the size of the community, who will be available to collect information and what resources will be required to do so. A plan should also be in place for analysing and disseminating the results of the mapping exercises. Only once these queries have been addressed can participants begin to map their community.

Those involved in this process may find it useful to record resources on to a physical geographical map, as this can provide an informative visual aid in identifying assets and areas that may need attention. Asset mapping can also be a valuable means to illustrate less tangible assets, such as social, cultural and historical knowledge (Corbett, 2009, pg.6). Alternatively, maps may be creatively sketched by hand, annotated on to a printed or 3D map, inserted into digital software or recorded using a combination of multimedia and internet-based techniques (Corbett, 2009). Each method has benefits and challenges and the suitability will depend on the resources and skills available within the community.

Rapid Participatory Appraisal

Developed by the World Health Organisation (Annett & Rifkin, 1995), rapid participatory appraisal starts the process of determining the needs of groups or communities, especially those who are vulnerable and marginalised, and involving them in decisions and actions made towards improving their health and wellbeing. Planners and community members work together to rapidly and effectively collect and analyse relevant information, which can inform reform and community development. This method is particularly suited to projects that have limited time and resources available and will compliment community asset mapping techniques to guide the process of mapping the PLACE-EE demonstrator areas.

“Community mapping is a capacity-based, internally focused and relationship-driven process”

(Kretzman & McKnight, 1993)

Benefits and Challenges of Community Mapping

It can be challenging for researchers or project representatives to understand the intricacies of social issues such as isolation or loneliness in a particular area and to work towards overcoming them without having direct engagement with those at risk of such difficulties. Participatory mapping uncovers the most pertinent and relevant issues within a community at any one point in time alongside assets that could be used to dispel them by engaging key informants and expert participants, i.e. those who reside within that community. When external aid may be unavailable or limited it can prove beneficial to direct attention inwards and make an inventory of what a community already has to offer (McKnight & Kretzman, 1990), and who better to conduct this than those who live and work there. Residents will have the most detailed, first-hand knowledge of what their community actually has to offer, such as the physical spaces that are available or the skills and talents that their neighbours possess, and by itemising these strengths they will in turn grant researchers or facilitators a deeper insight into their perspectives and needs (Murray et al, 1994).

However, in order to gather the most pertinent and personalised data, it will be important for participants to feel empowered and free to engage and express themselves in whichever way they desire. This can be a time and resource demanding process, particularly if participants are typically detached from their community or have special requirements (Fang et al, 2016). Amsden and VanWynsberghe (2005) recommend enlisting community groups who are closely associated with those whose voices researchers wish to hear, reiterate that these individuals are the experts and accept all forms of creative feedback. Such requirements also render a rapid participatory appraisal approach ideal. The value in reiterating the importance of efforts by participants has also been emphasised. Reflecting on community mapping with youth groups, Amsden and VanWynsberghe (2005) report that the young people involved in their project did not perceive that they were actually doing “real” research work, indicating a lack of confidence and awareness of their own skills and attributes. The authors purport that by “encouraging more knowledge creation at the community level” (pg.366), citizens will be empowered to be their own experts and to instigate the change that they wish to see. They emphasise a responsibility on behalf of researchers or project planners who engage with citizens to support them in developing their capabilities and skills, not only for the initial project at hand but in the long-term, so that they can continually update their maps and maintain community cohesion.

Documenting all of the assets within a neighbourhood or wider area, including those that are less tangible than others, can be a means of archiving local knowledge and culture (Corbett, 2009, p.9), which may in turn reinvigorate an interest in local history, particularly among younger citizens. This reignited interest may also generate a greater awareness and understanding of current and past issues among those who live there and subsequently strengthen relationships within the community (Fang et al, 2016). These relationships do not need to exclusively exist between residents but can extend to include those who provide services or create and implement policies within the area. Fang et al (2016) report that participatory community workshops are effective in developing relationships between elder individuals and service representatives within the same community. Nevertheless, while there is evidence that community mapping can engage those who may be at risk of isolation, it is commonly reported that those who voluntarily engage are not typically the most “hard to reach” individuals (Fang et al, 2016, p.226).

Collating and presenting the strengths and assets of a community in a manner that can be understood by all, i.e. a map, can “influence public policies and institutions and exercise greater negotiating power in the market” (Corbett, 2009, p.9). In other words, this can bring the community together as a cohesive force that is at the forefront of its own progression.

Benefits and Challenges of Community Mapping

By focusing on the positives rather than what is lacking, positive change can be encouraged and it is the collective perception of the community that is most important in instigating this change (Kansas University Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development, 2000). By encouraging participants in a mapping exercise to focus on the strengths and assets of their surroundings this positive perception is engendered, bringing about a sense of ownership over changes and strengthening community pride and identity.

Participatory community mapping is most successful when all stakeholders subscribe for the long-term. This not only includes the individuals at ground level but also the groups and organisations who support them and each other (Corbett, 2009, p.28). The challenge exists in providing long-term support for everyone involved so that their commitment is sustained. This is where the benefits of empowering everyone within the community to be their own driving force for positive change have a far reaching impact. Community asset mapping extends far beyond the task of itemising the resources available to counteract an immediate issue; it encompasses the training and nurturing of all individuals associated with that area to be the voice and force behind long-term development.

Community Mapping: Key Messages

- Community asset mapping is a process of mapping the strengths, resources and assets of a community, in order to bring about development and reform.
- It is usually conducted by those who live and work within the community, utilising their unique knowledge and insight.
- Assets can include individuals, businesses, associations, public services and spaces, welfare and information, as well as local history, culture and talents.
- Data can be collected through a variety of methods, including face-to-face conversations, meeting local community groups and identifying current policies and procedures.
- Resources can be recorded by hand on a geographical map or in digital format using software or multimedia techniques, depending on the skills and resources of the community.
- Rapid participatory appraisal is a method of assessing needs and promoting change when limited time and resources are available.
- It can, however, be challenging for residents to understand the value that they offer in the position of expert informants, particularly among those who are not familiar with the process or who may be marginalised.
- Groups and associations within the community can act as an important bridge between researchers and residents and also provide long-term support to ensure the sustainability of changes made.
- Asset mapping can improve relationships within the community and ignite an interest in local culture among younger citizens.
- It can strengthen the collective power that the community has to influence policy reform and can instil a sense of ownership and cohesion.

Why are we Mapping for PLACE-EE?

The purpose of the mapping exercise is to examine and compare service provision for older people in diverse rural sparsely populated areas, taking into account cultural, geographical and structural differences. These are likely to be areas that exhibit some of the features of, and challenges faced by, rural and isolated communities. This information will provide us with excellent background contextual data and descriptive material for publicity purposes and assist us in our understanding of the challenges for the implementation of intergenerational exchange interventions. The information from the mapping exercise will also assist PLACE-EE demonstrator sites in connecting with useful organisations in the various sectors and in the recruitment of appropriate voluntary sector organisations and the potential schools for participation.

A Guide to PLACE-EE Community Mapping

For PLACE-EE, the community engagement officers (CEO) will map and assess community service provision and assets, publicise the project and recruit key stakeholders to a Community Coalition. As they will have unique knowledge and good community relationships, the CEOs will collect and organise most of the data while maintaining close communication with their respective agencies and networks. Local residents, voluntary agencies, faith-based organisations, elected representatives and facility representatives, such as health and social services, local businesses and housing officers, may be key sources of information. This list is not exhaustive and CEOs will have the flexibility to engage with anyone who they feel is relevant.

McKnight and Kretzman (1990) explicate the structure of assets within a community and label those that are most readily available for mobilisation towards community generation as primary building blocks. These include the assets of individuals, local businesses, cultural organisations and citizens and faith-based associations. Secondary building blocks are those assets that are still within the community but may be controlled by external sources. These are private and non-profit organisations, such as schools, hospitals and social service agencies, as well as public services, including emergency services and public spaces, and physical resources, such as vacant structures and spaces as well as waste resources. Additional potential assets include external resources such as welfare and public expenditure and information.

Data can be collected through a variety of methods, including face-to-face conversations, meeting local community groups and identifying current policies and procedures. Focus will remain on the positive attributes of the community and potential solutions, as this is a process of action planning. It is important for CEOs to record the data collection process, including who is involved, how and where data is gathered, and how it is organised and analysed.



What Information is Required?

The following sections explicate the information that will be gathered for PLACE-EE in each of the demonstrator areas during processes of community asset mapping. This data will inform a transnational comparison of service provision for older people in rural, sparsely populated areas.

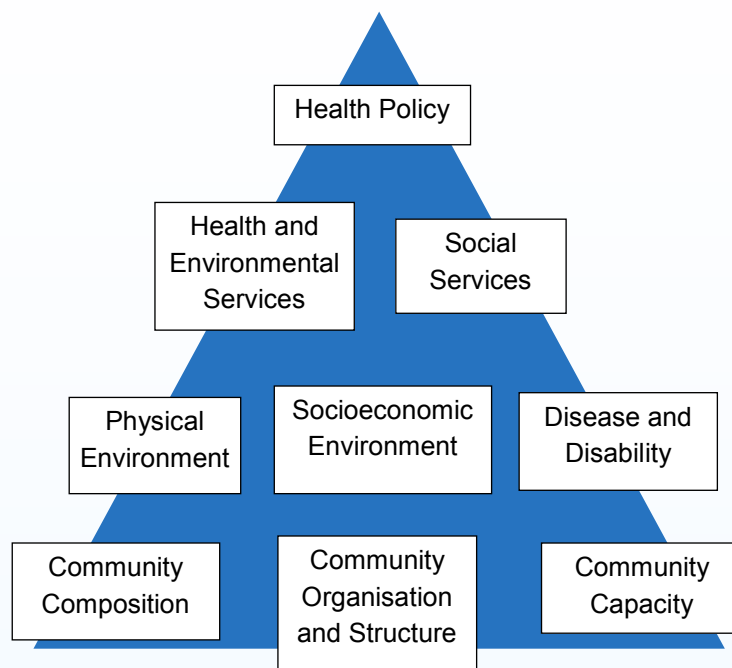


Figure 1: Rapid participatory appraisal information pyramid

Figure 1 (above), taken from Annett & Rifkin (1995, p.10), demonstrates the information that is generated in a rapid participatory appraisal and the categories it is organised into. The categories can be further grouped within each level of the pyramid to comprise a significant theme that is relevant to the structure and operation of a community. The themes of each level and the specific queries to be addressed for PLACE-EE are as follows:

The bottom row of the pyramid, shown below in Figure 2, highlights how the community is made up, the organisations within it and their capacity to act. This will include the strengths and weaknesses of leadership, organisations and structure (Annett & Rifkin, 1995, p.10).

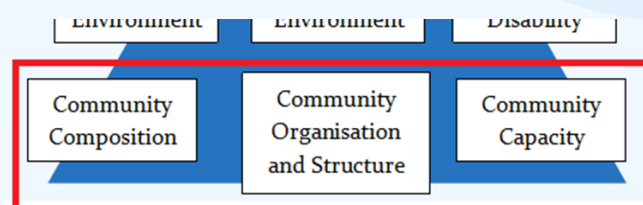


Figure 2: Bottom row of the information pyramid

Regarding the bottom row of the information pyramid, the CEOs in each of the PLACE-EE demonstrator areas will be required to address the following queries:

- How many people live in the target area;
- The age profile of the population (10-year age bands);
- Are there any specific populations or communities that are particularly disadvantaged?
- The geographical distribution of the population, i.e. the number of towns and villages and their average size; what percentage of people live in areas with less than 1000 people?
- How many secondary schools are in the area; and
- What local organisations, clubs or groups are in the area for older isolated people? What do they offer now and what can be available in the future? For example, funding opportunities, staff, spaces, networks and connections.

Moving up the pyramid, level one relates to socioecological factors that influence health and wellbeing, as highlighted below in Figure 3. Specifically, physical and environmental factors that influence health; social aspects, such as cultural values or traditions that may influence behavioural change; and economic opportunities within the community.



Figure 3: Level one of the information pyramid

Socioecological topics of interest within the PLACE-EE demonstrator areas are:

- Mortality and morbidity rates;
- Common health problems;
- The percentage of people aged over 60 who have a disability, chronic or life-limiting condition;
- The percentage of people aged over 60 who live on their own;
- Physical issues that may influence health and wellbeing. For instance, living in an isolated area and having limited access to transport, services or technology;
- Social aspects that may influence health, wellbeing and behavioural changes. This can be positive or negative, such as cultural social gatherings that bring people together or a resistance to new services;
- Examples of creative expression within the community or the potential to do so;
- Funding opportunities for community groups that could influence health and wellbeing; and
- Opportunities to attract investment and jobs and to support local businesses.

Level two, highlighted below in Figure 4, covers the existence, accessibility and acceptability of health, environmental and social services within the community, paying particular attention to those targeting elder and isolated individuals.

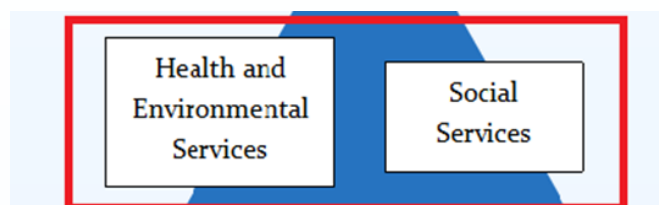


Figure 4: Level two of the information pyramid

PLACE-EE CEOs will be required to map the following information in their demonstrator areas:

- Health services in the area: the number and size of general hospitals and clinical services, general practices, number of GPs and GP/population ratio;
- Social care services in the area and the range of provision for older people;
- The profile of voluntary and community organisations in the area, with particular attention to those providing services to older and isolated citizens, e.g. Faith-based organisations (organisation name, what service is provided, number of volunteers, and number of people who are beneficiaries);
- Transport services and local access; and
- How many people are dependent on and/or regularly use public transport.

At the top of the pyramid is health policy, which is national, regional and local policies about health improvements for low-income areas, see Figure 5 below. This may require some general knowledge on behalf of the community engagement officers and should include digital copies of policy documents where possible.



Figure 4: Top level of the information pyramid

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