

# Cultural mapping, a new tool for community engagement and sustainability

**Nancy Duxbury**, PhD

“Strengthening the Creative Economy and Culture Sector:  
Repositioning the Culture Sector to Secure Sustainable Development”

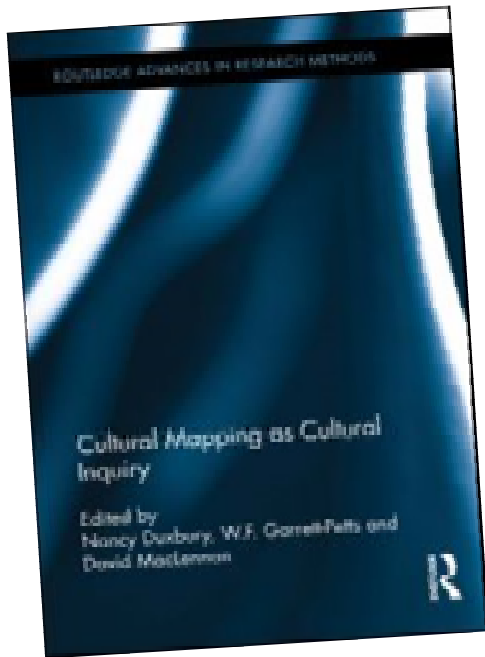
THE EIGHTH MEETING OF MINISTERS OF CULTURE AND HIGHEST APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES

Bridgetown, Barbados, 19-20 September 2019



**Centro de Estudos Sociais** **Centre for Social Studies**  
Universidade de Coimbra University of Coimbra





2015

## Cultural mapping

An **emerging field** of **interdisciplinary research** and a **methodological tool** in participatory planning and community development

- Aims to make visible the ways that local cultural assets, stories, practices, relationships, memories, and rituals constitute places as meaningful locations
- Used to bring a diverse range of stakeholders into conversation about the cultural dimensions and potentials of place

# cultural mapping

## Trajectories informing mapping practices

### Community empowerment/ counter-mapping

- cultural mapping in Indigenous communities and territories
- collective action traditions: counter cartographies or 'alternative maps'; citizen cartographies and people's atlases; and mapping for change

### Cultural mapping and municipal governance

- to build a knowledge base
- to mobilize community collaboration
- to strategize or make decisions

### Cultural policy

- the presence and development of cultural and creative sectors
- more holistic inquiries about local culture and place development

### Academic inquiry

- 'spatial turn' has influenced almost every area of academic work
- from 'the cultural nature or embeddedness of maps' to 'maps as agents of cultural inquiry'

### Artistic approaches

- critical and creative interest in maps, mapping, relational aesthetics, issues of urbanization, and social engagement
- the role of artists and the arts as agents for enhancing community self-knowledge and sustainable community development

Adapted from:  
Duxbury, Garrett-Petts,  
and McLennan (2015)

# Cultural mapping

From an **operational** perspective:

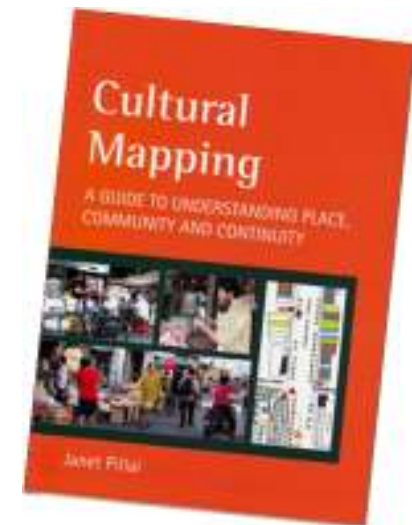
“a process of **collecting, recording, analyzing** and **synthesizing** information in order **to describe** the cultural resources, networks, links and patterns of usage of a given community or group”

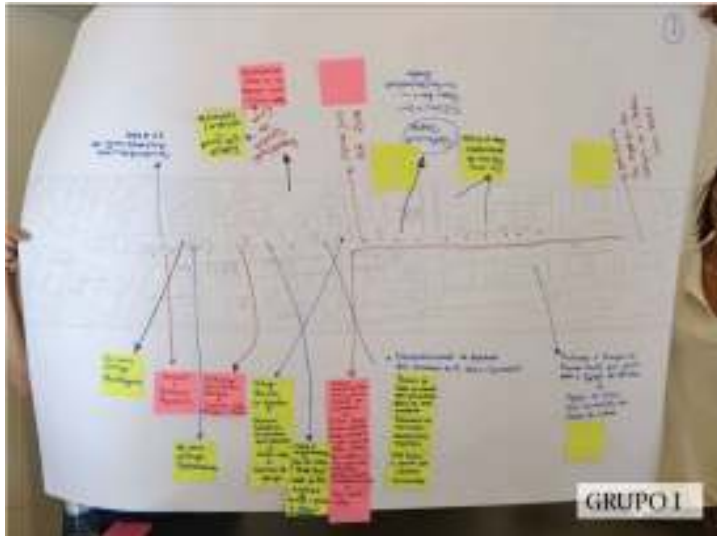
(Stewart 2007: 8)

From an **outcome-purpose** perspective (e.g.):

Cultural mapping provides “an **integrated picture** of the cultural character, significance, and workings of a place” in order **to help communities recognize, celebrate, and support** cultural diversity **for** economic, social and regional development.

(Pillai 2013: 1)





- “Putting mapping and maps in the hands of people to **allow for different points of views and ways of understanding** and **increasing agency** in understanding, rights, and use of spaces”

(Giesecking 2013: 723)

- A mechanism to **foster democratic governance, citizen-led interventions**, and “democratic responsibility in city management” based on processes that spearhead **new modes of participatory interaction** with citizens and use new technologies

(Ortega Nuere and Bayón 2015: 9; also Nummi and Tzoulas 2015; Veronnezzi Pacheco and Carvalho 2015)



## 'Ideal types' of cultural mapping projects:

Instrumental, utilitarian approaches in line with "cultural industry intelligence"

Humanistic, integrated approaches



Valletta, Malta  
Culture Map Portal (<http://www.culturemapmalta.com>)  
(screenshot, 15 September 2015)



Photo: Nummi and Tzoulas (2015)



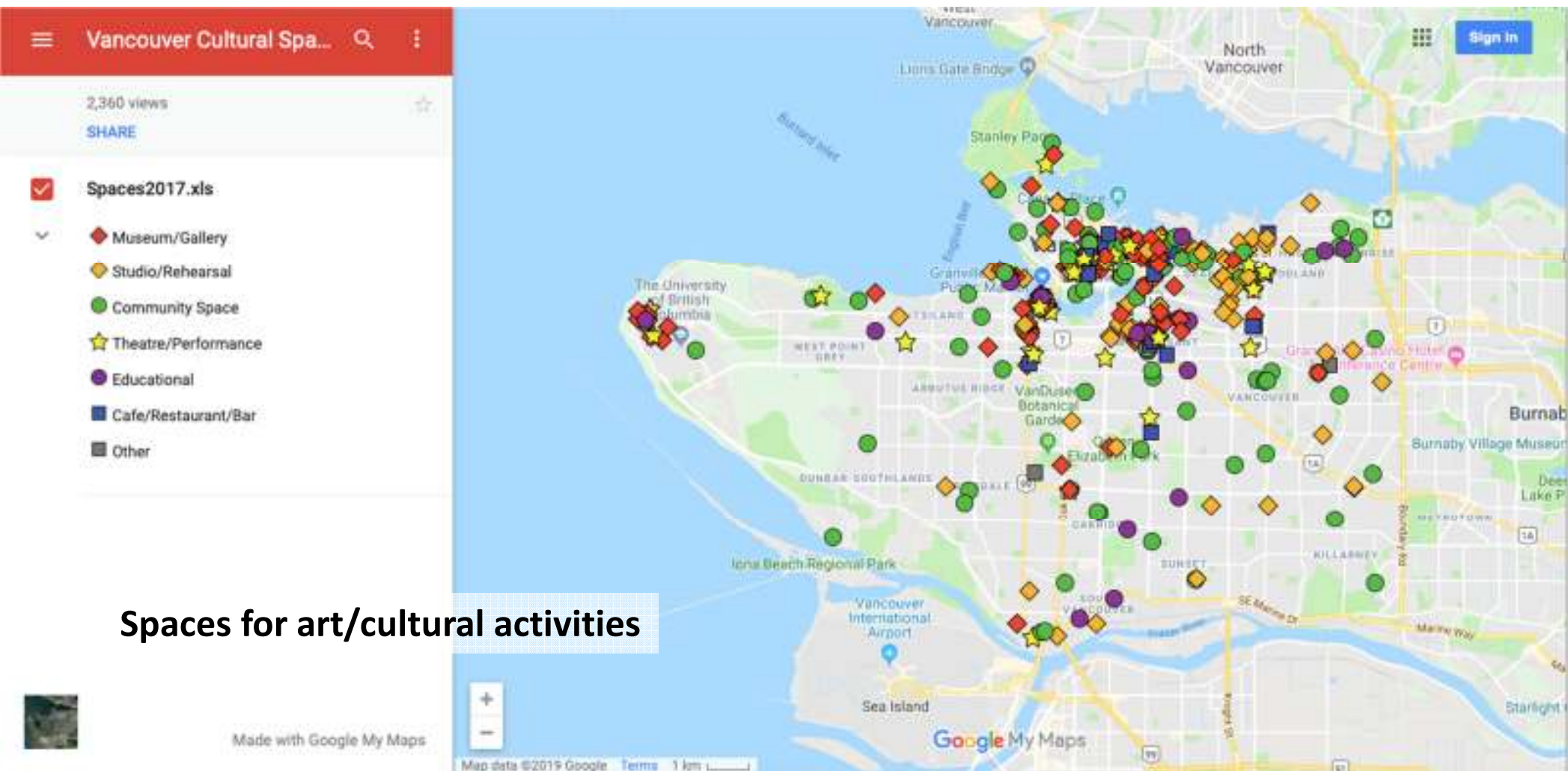
## 1. 'Cultural industry intelligence'

Inventory approach

- Develop an **accounting** of tangible cultural assets, heritage resources, cultural venues, and arts and cultural organizations
- Provide information from which to **identify relationships, clusters, and gaps**
- **Plan and act** from this knowledge base

The process of mapping can

- **Reveal unexpected resources**, build **new knowledge**, articulate **alternative perspectives**, and foster **cross-sectoral connections**
- Serve as an **advocacy tool** that can bring together cultural professionals, civil society, and government
- Provide a **collaborative space** for culture professionals, planners, and researchers in the field of culture to work together
- Point to **themes and areas** requiring additional **policy attention**







Search Advanced Overlays

☒ All  
☒ Built Heritage  
☒ Businesses  
☒ Facilities  
☒ Festivals

POSTAL CODE:   
INDOOR/OUTDOOR: Any  
Month: Any  
SUBCATEGORY: Any

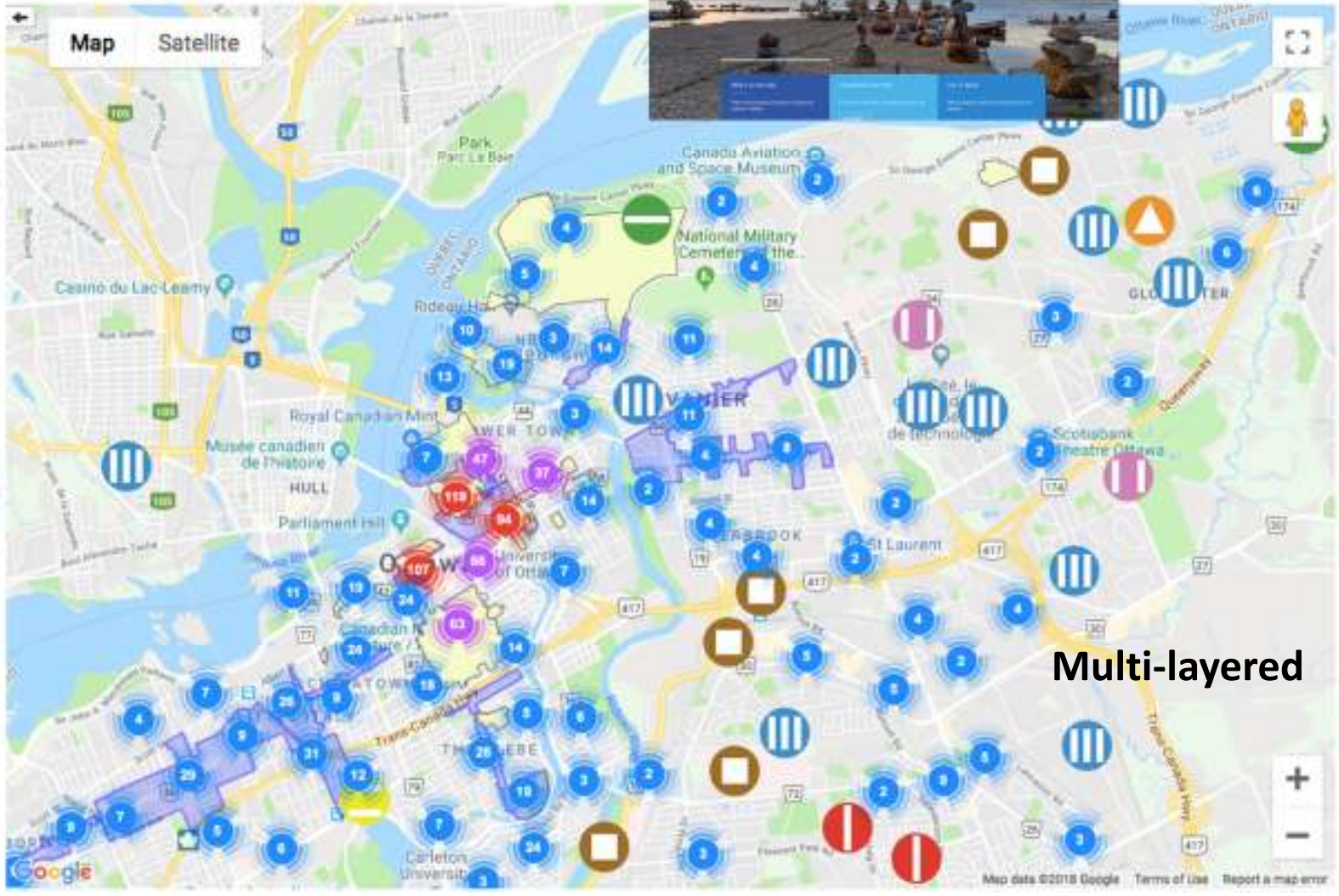
☒ Natural Heritage  
☒ Organizations  
☒ Public Art  
☒ Umbrella Organi

☒ Fairs & Food  
☒ Fashion  
☒ Film  
☒ Heritage  
☒ Identity  
☒ Multidisciplinary Arts  
☒ Music  
☒ Theatre & Dance  
☒ Visual Arts  
☒ Other  
☒ Literary

Search

Some markers are in individual markers

- Search Results:
- LIBRAIRIE COOPCO
  - COIN DU LIVRE
  - HEALTH SCIENCES BOOK STORE
  - Professional Sound & Lighting
  - ONE MARKET MEDIA
  - TV Factory
  - Brennie Construction Inc.





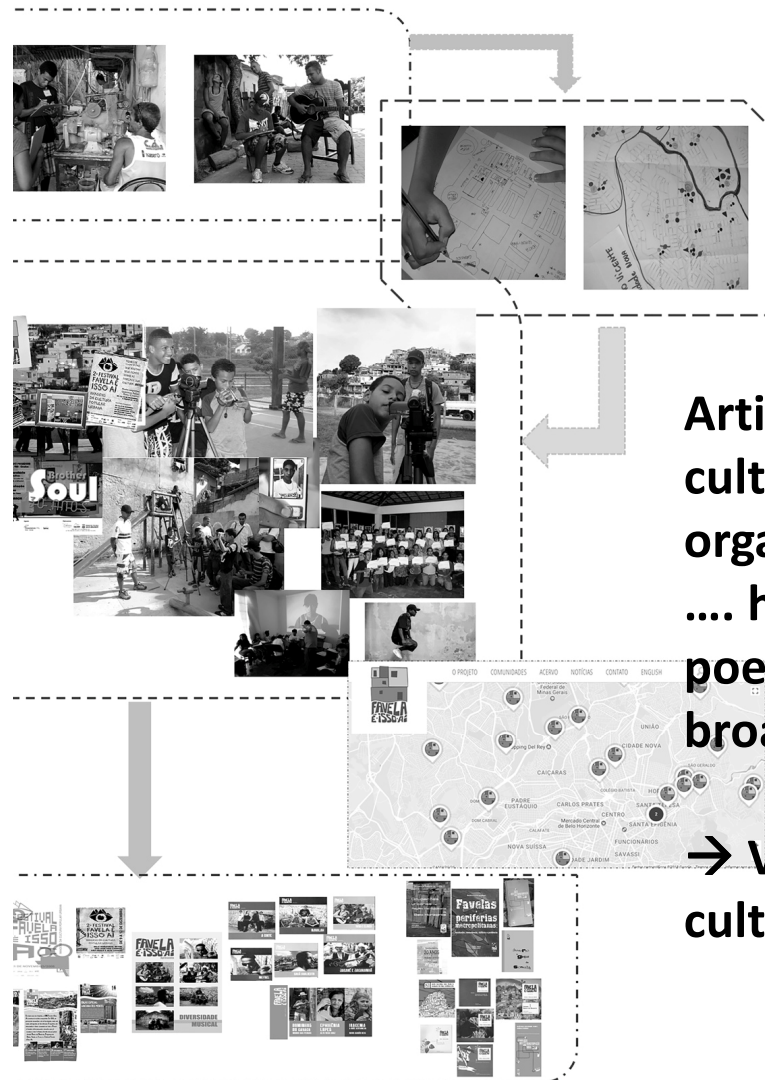


Both tangible and intangible dimensions of culture help **define communities (and help communities define themselves)** in terms of cultural identity, vitality, sense of place, and quality of life.





## Belo Horizonte favelas – Favela é Isso Aí (NGO) cultural mapping



Artists, creators,  
cultural  
organizations  
.... histories ...  
poetry ... radio  
broadcasts

→ Visibilizing  
cultural resources



# Kā Huru Manu

A project dedicated to creating a Ngāi Tahu Atlas of place names and histories

Read the story of Kā Huru Manu






Not Secure — kahurumanu.co.nz

CREATOUR Agenda CES SFU TimeZone Meeting Planner Google Translate Research Resources Plataforma DeGóis 2.2 Murray River ddesteamers Shawn Carrir...ding Website

Kā Huru Manu



Back to the Project

About

Welcome to the Ngāi Tahu Atlas.

Here you can see over 1,000 original Māori place names, kā ara tawhito (traditional travel routes), and the original Māori land allocations in the Ngāi Tahu takiwā.


- Use the search bar to search for any New Zealand postal address, Ngāi Tahu place name or land allocation.
- Click on any feature in the map to get detailed information about the location.

Earthstar Geographics

© 2018 Te Rūmāngai o Ngāi Tahu

Site by NW

Find address or place





## 2. Humanistic, integrated approaches (Locally focused participative cultural mapping projects)

Foregrounding participatory, collective initiatives, cultural mapping forms a **conversational platform** and **meeting place**, enabled through various face-to-face workshops as well as online platforms.

The projects can:

- **Facilitate direct involvement** of residents and other site users in informational gathering, discussions, and decisions regarding the development of their locale
- **Create opportunities for dialogue** between a community and local authorities, offering “diverse sources of information [that] can overcome the limitations of expert opinions” (Bettencourt and Castro 2015: 28)
- **Provide information** that does not represent a ‘final answer’ or ‘end result’ but, instead, are “**discussion openers**” that open up **new perspectives** on mapping results and local development

(Nummi and Tzoulas 2015; Pillai 2015)



# Recovery of memories

***Cherita Lebu Chulia:***  
**Living on Chulia Street 1945-1970**  
**George Town, Malaysia**



*Fig 8. Interview Team Collecting Oral Stories and Visual Images*

*Photos Source: Leonard Kong*



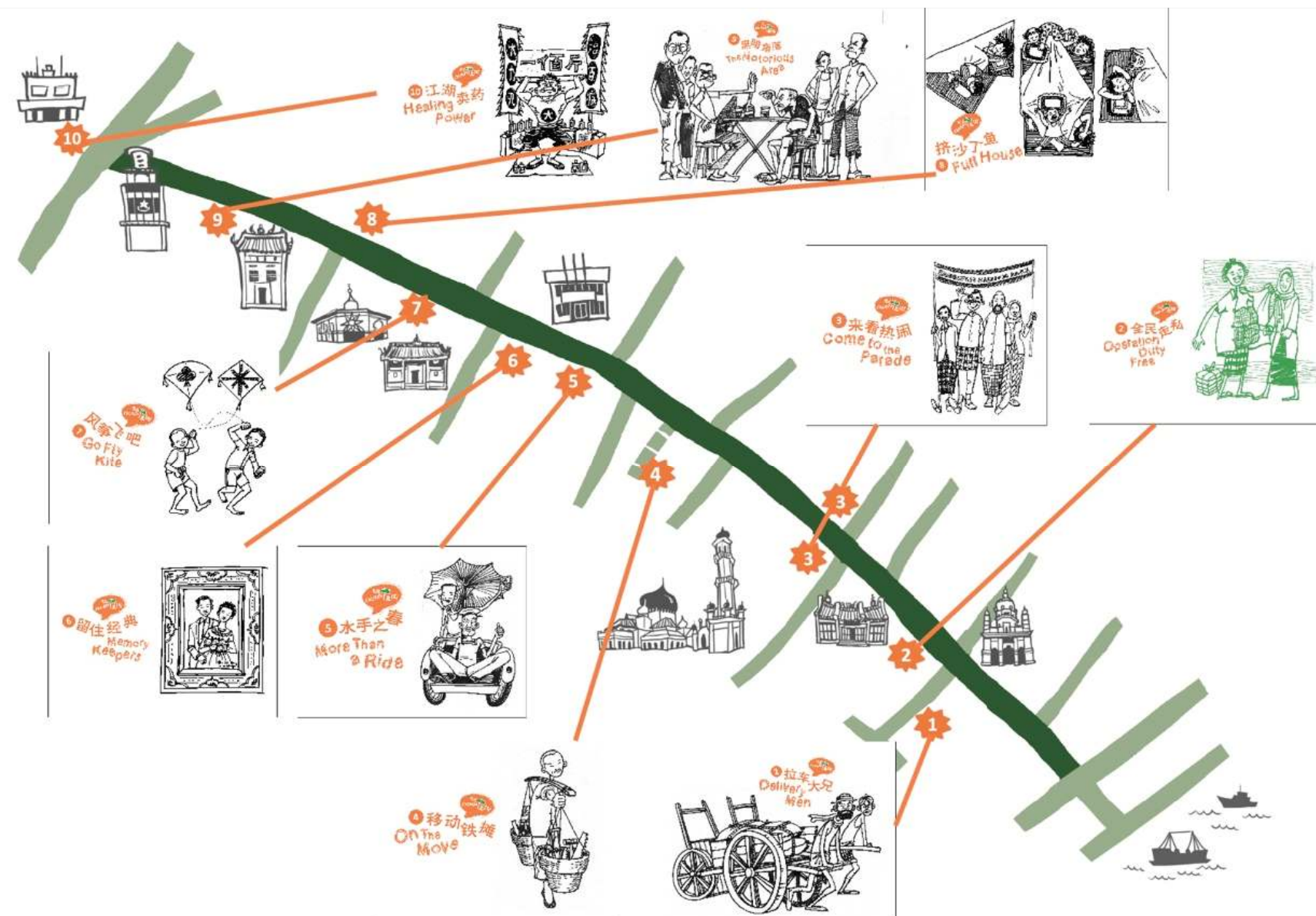
*Fig 10(a) Participatory Exhibition*



*Fig 10(b) Interactive Walking Tour*

*Photo Source: Kuah Li Feng*

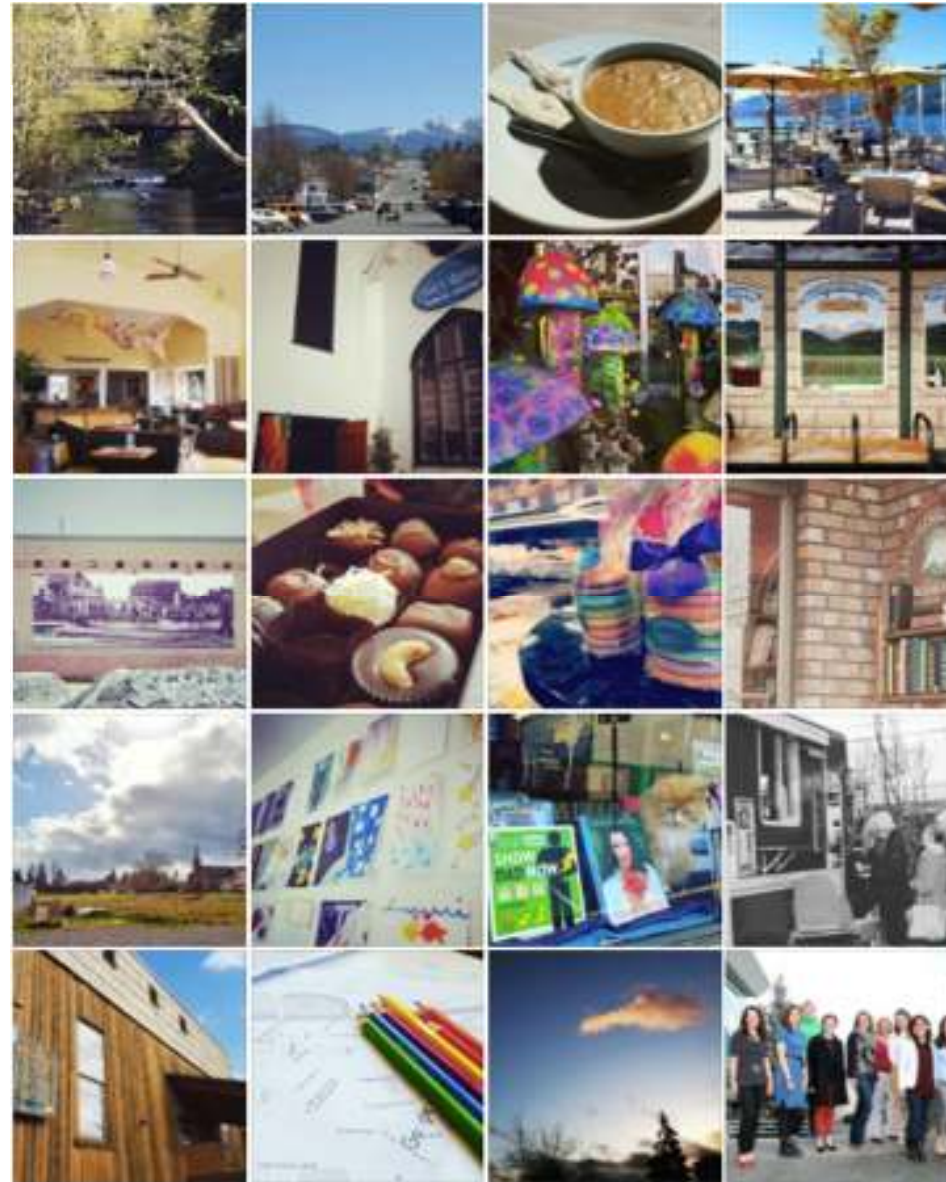
## Recovery of memories





**WHERE IS HERE?  
SMALL CITIES,  
DEEP MAPPING, AND  
SUSTAINABLE FUTURES**

Courtenay, Port Alberni  
and Nanaimo,  
British Columbia,  
Canada,  
2016



**Special and  
meaningful  
places**



THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE ACTIONS ORGANIZED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE HELD JUST TO BE CHECKED OFF AND OF POOR QUALITY. IT IS GOOD THAT THERE ARE YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS WHICH PUSH THE YOUTH TO DEVELOPMENT, STIR THEM UP.

The cultural level is low in comparison with other cities. The philharmonic society works badly, its repertoire is one and the same. The theatre performances are basically for little people. The new and original literature of new writers of Kherson is not published.

**THE CONDITION OF THEATRE LIFE OF THE CITY, BOTH ADULT (M. KULISH THEATRE) AND CHILDREN'S (THE PUPPET THEATRE) IS QUITE SATISFACTORY. I WISH THEY HELD MASS CULTURAL ACTIONS NOT ONLY DURING PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGNS.**

In our city entertaining cultural actions, exhibitions, mass actions, flash mobs are often held, but I do not have enough information of such events, it does not always reach me, so I fail to visit them.

As a whole the cultural condition is satisfactory, but makes no headway. We have just the same festivals here but would like something new, like in such cities as Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov.

# CULTURAL MAP OF THE CITY

It is necessary to arrange more art exhibitions and give people a chance to learn about an event.

**AS A WHOLE THE LEVEL HAS INCREASED FOR THE LAST 5-6 YEARS, NGOS DO GREAT CULTURE DEVELOPMENT WORK IN KHERSON.**

**Cultural actions and such entertainment as visiting clubs are different things.**

Culture in Kherson improves, and different layers of the population find common language during holidays!

Cultural actions are counter-indicative to our people who are not able to clean after themselves. The situation in Kherson is normal. It would be good, if night clubs were forbidden as they are too many here.

I would like to learn more about the European culture and different foreign arts in general. Also more galleries should be opened. Cultural life of Kherson depends on the inhabitants of Kherson, and as their mentality is far from being "cultural", the cultural situation in Kherson is not at a very high level.

**I have no time to answer, gotta go think of a cultural revolution.**

Cultural actions in the city are made for the youth and are not interesting to the senior people. They need more actions accessible to pensioners: summer dancing grounds, wind music, open air cinemas.

## Cultural mapping for cultural planning (Ukraine)

For information about the Ukrainian cultural mapping initiatives, see: Knudsen McAusland and Kotska (2015)



The maps emerging from this work do **not** propose to make physical spaces static, to connote ownership, or to claim territory



- **Articulate and make visible** the multi-layered cultural assets, aspects, and place meanings



- **Reflect and privilege pluralistic local knowledges**, perceptions of importance, and ways of understanding
  - **Capture elders' knowledge** and **inform younger generations**



- Highlight the **dynamic lives of places** in their complexity, diversity, and richness



The maps emerging from this work do **not** propose to make physical spaces static, to connote ownership, or to claim territory

- • **Articulate and make visible** the multi-layered cultural assets, aspects, and place meanings
- • **Reflect and privilege pluralistic local knowledges**, perceptions of importance, and ways of understanding
  - **Capture elders' knowledge and inform younger generations**
- • Highlight the **dynamic lives of places** in their complexity, diversity, and richness



- Catalyze processes for **actively connecting to place** and **deepening knowledge** of a locality
- Provide a **platform** for collective **expression, discussion** among different groups, and **action**
- Guide **collective decision-making** and **strategies** for future development




**Cultural mapping as platform for engagement and discussion**





# Cultural mapping as platform for engagement and discussion

→ **Participatory processes central**

- 
- **What to map and why and how**
    - Artist-run community-engaged processes
  - **Processes to identify and document resources, knowledges**
  - **Tell/share narratives, histories, stories**
    - Share with others now (participants, wider community)
    - Document for future generations, preserve/sustain
  - **Analyze, assess findings** (compilations, layers)
  - **Communicate/disseminate** (reaching to multiple audiences)
  - **Take action(s), decisions, strategies**
    - Policy/planning (challenges)
    - Local development strategies
    - Redevelopment/revitalization touchstones
    - Informing tourism – creative tourism development





Community  
engagement  
becomes more  
central to the  
creation of  
cultural maps

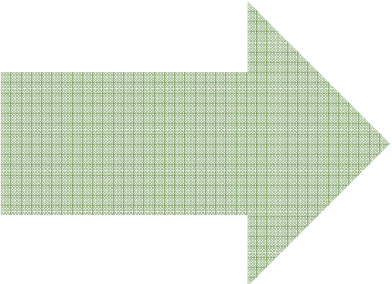
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The nature of the  
knowledge  
collected through  
participatory  
cultural mapping  
projects deepens

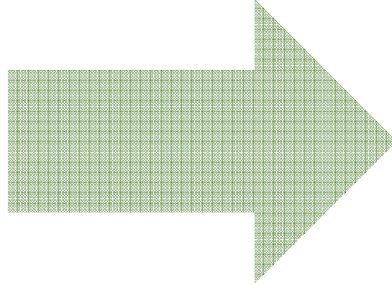
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Public questions and  
expectations about what  
will happen with the  
insights and knowledge  
created and how they  
will be used





1. A **methodological** concern:  
How to incorporate qualitative,  
complex, community-based inquiry  
and findings in policy and planning  
processes



2. A **more political** concern:  
How to ensure policy, planning, and  
political processes take up and  
consider the findings



Briony Pease and Jan Kirilby at the first workshop in 2000. Source: Jan Kirilby

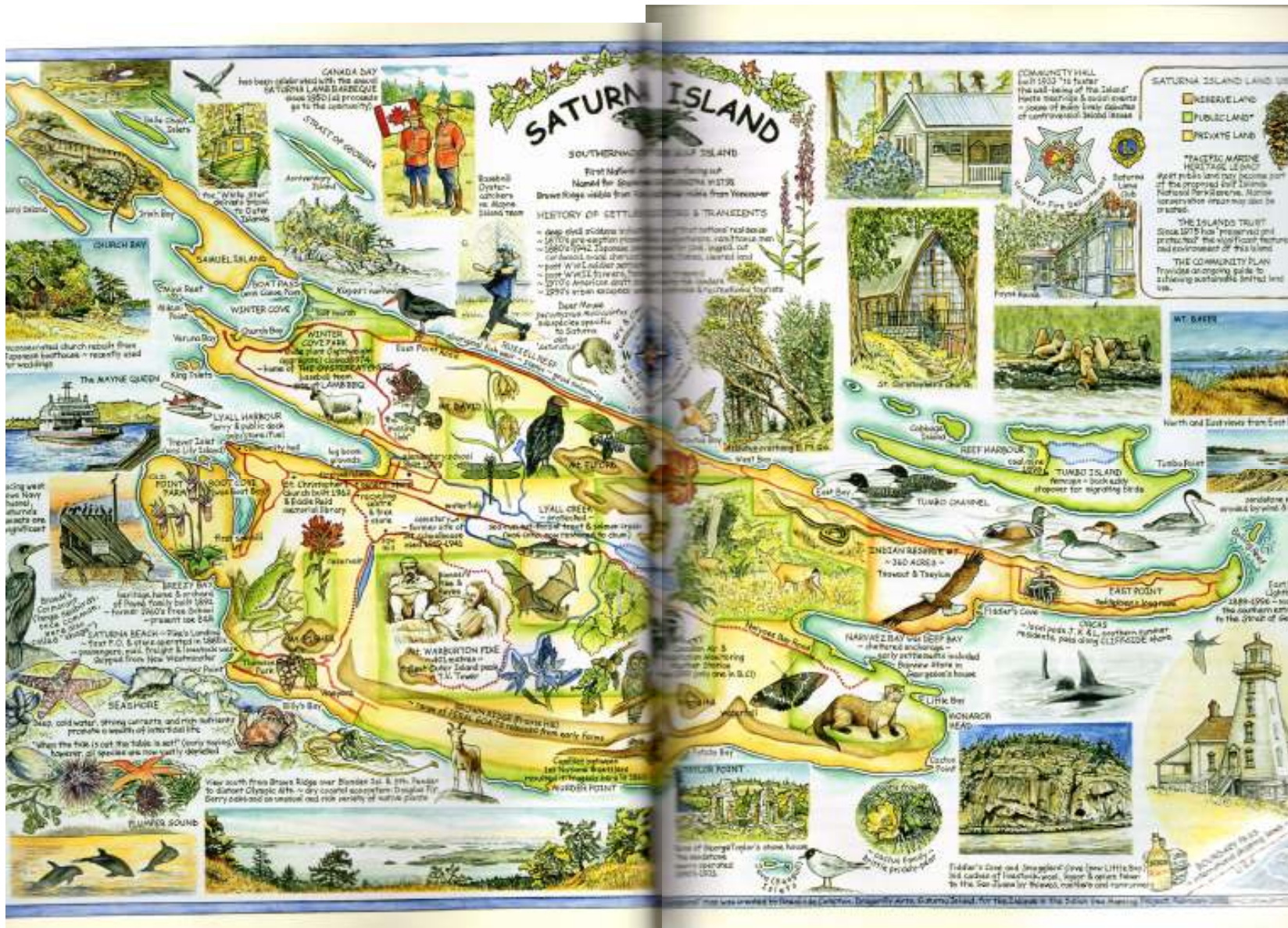


Students from Island Pacific School making their map of Bowen Island.  
PHOTO BY KATHY DUMSTER

## Culture and sustainability

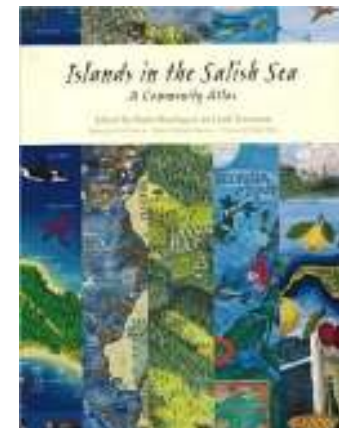
- **Culture is part of the empowerment, capacity, and identity of communities**
- Identifying and understanding cultural assets contributes to an holistic understanding of a place, its actors, and potential points of agency
- **Residents are experts of living in a place – What is important? How is culture defined and intertwined with place?**
- Cultural mapping can reveal how we attach ourselves, understand, use, and are inspired (or troubled) by the places we live – and identify issues within these storied landscapes
- **How is culture produced, expressed, made vibrant, and sustained?**
- Cultural mapping can provoke and support collective discussions of the cultural dimensions of communities – histories, memories, symbolic touchstones, other important aspects
  - To identify what is important, from plural perspectives
  - To think about heritage/cultural resources to preserve/sustain for the future + to activate
- **Maps are multidimensional and layered – e.g., Eco-cultural maps**





Eco-cultural  
mapping

Plural  
meanings of  
place

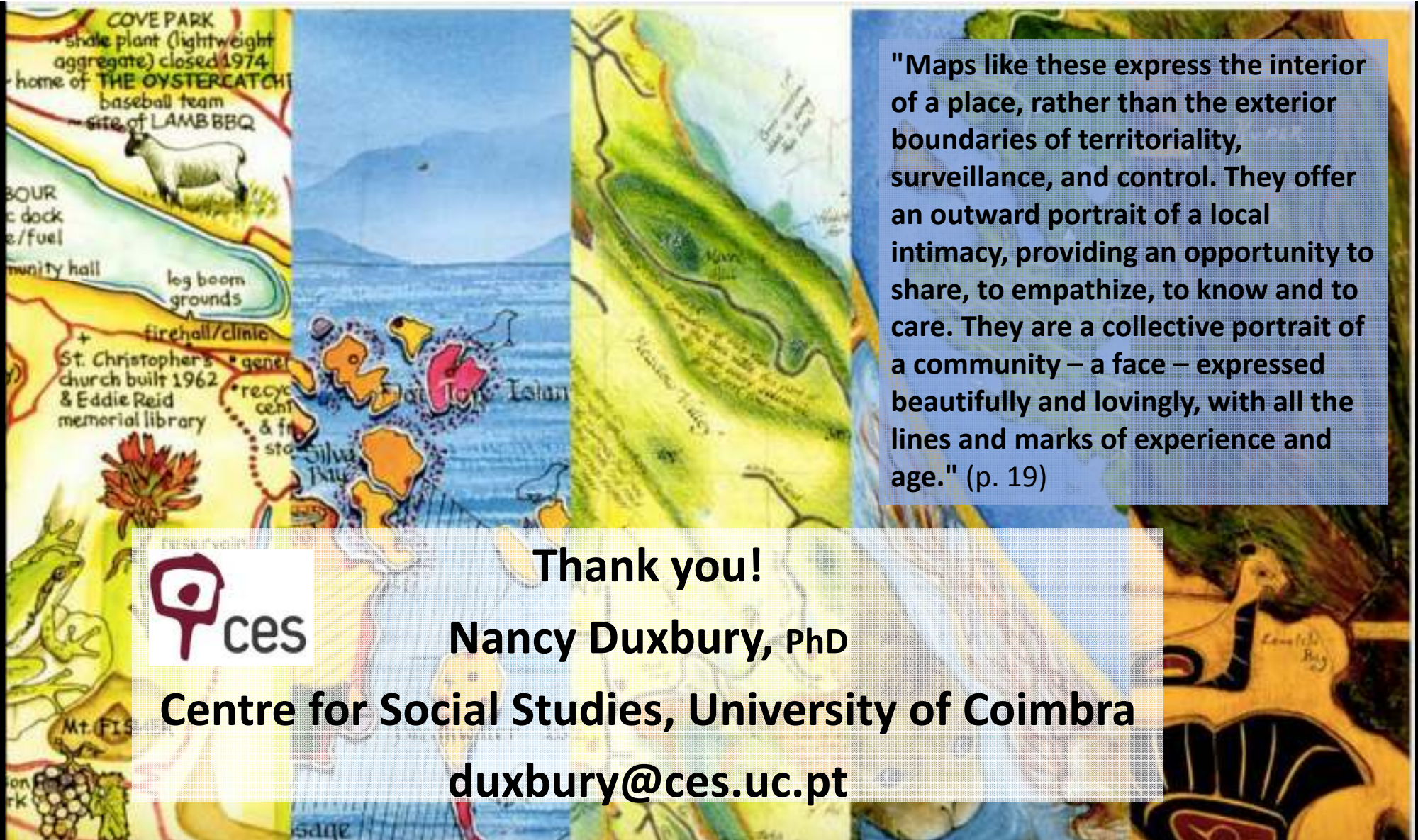


*Islands in the  
Salish Sea*

## Cultural mapping

- **Process + Knowledge-base developed + Artifact**
- Siting tangible cultural assets → articulating and “placing” resources, meanings, stories
- Plurality; multiple perspectives, uses, and practices; connecting points
- To “visibilize” culture(s), possibly within wider integrated approaches
- Participatory approaches = necessity
- Artistic approaches can engage with felt sense of place
- Can contribute to interlinking domains
- What is done next?





"Maps like these express the interior of a place, rather than the exterior boundaries of territoriality, surveillance, and control. They offer an outward portrait of a local intimacy, providing an opportunity to share, to empathize, to know and to care. They are a collective portrait of a community – a face – expressed beautifully and lovingly, with all the lines and marks of experience and age." (p. 19)



**Thank you!**

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