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EXPERIENCE MAPPING AND PLANNING

A rough guide

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A ROUGH GUIDE TO EXPERIENCE MAPPING AND PLANNING

WHY? The mapping of experiences (E-mapping) in parks and open spaces introduces a unique additional layer of information in a planning situation. The information tells where the important recreational zones are located in urban parks and open spaces. E-mapping therefore tells us something about the potential recreational value of a particular urban park or open space. The recreational value should be evaluated against the preferences of the various groups of visitors.

Information gained through E-mapping may be used for multiple purposes depending on the planning situation. Potential purposes include:

- Site analysis
- Identification of improvement potentials
- Valuation of recreational value and quality

EXPERIENCE Sustained research efforts have shown that we as humans evaluate potential recreational experiences in our environments through altogether eight main categories (experiences). The eight experiences frame the recreational activities and features we typically search for when visiting urban parks and open spaces. The eight categories are labelled and shortly interpreted as:

Nature	Sensations of the free growing, untouched, and vital (e.g. nature on its own premises)
Serene	Sensations of undisturbed peacefulness (e.g. a place for contemplation)
Species	Sensations of richness in flora and fauna (e.g. gather mushrooms or watch birds)
Space	Sensations of a coherent universe (e.g. a beech forests or a horizon at the water front)
Refuge	Sensations of safe enclosed surroundings for play and activities (e.g. a play ground)
Prospect	Sensations of open and free surroundings for play and activities (e.g. a common)
Social	Sensations of an organized and entertaining social scene (e.g. a market place)
Cultural	Sensations of a cultivated and historical place (e.g. a baroque garden)

E-MAPPING Information about recreational experiences in a space is primarily gathered through on-site analysis (E-mapping). The information can be summarised in data tables, E-maps, supporting site reports, and finally integrated in GIS. The tools for on-site analysis are a printout of an aerial photos and a pen. The presence and strength of individual experiences are identified through (several) on-site visits. The strength may be decanted on a scale from 0-3 (none to full experience). Experience zones are marked on the aerial photo. Experiences may overlap, create multi-dimensional spaces of experiences, be identified at different scales, or be associated with particular pre-defined areas. The presence and strength of experiences are interpreted through both sensation of the particular space and the use of background information.

Accuracy of an E-map may depend on several aspects. These include the ability both to filter certain influences away and take information into account. It is important to filter away influences from the

weather, personal preferences or daily mood. Equally, it is important to take into account knowledge about visitors park use or park features such as plants.

Both the ability to create and read an E-map meaningfully requires knowledge on how to interpret experiences in particular circumstances and understand their importance for the recreational value. It is advisable to consult an experienced 'E-mapper' in order to facilitate learning.

E-PLANNING E-mapping is not an exact measurement of 'facts' in an urban park or open spaces e.g. similar to a tree inventory. Neither is a 'one-size-fits-all' approach appropriate. E-mapping depends on the planning situation and the usefulness depends on how well it is integrated in the overall planning situation and purposes.

To customize E-mapping in a planning situation is to turn it into E-planning. A range of questions needs to be addressed in the planning situation. At least five themes for framing questions can be highlighted:

- Planning context (e.g. policies, objectives, plans, resources, available site information).
- Mapping of experiences (e.g. as described above).
- Uses, needs, and preferences (e.g. integration of stakeholders in the analysis).
- Action and development (e.g. recommendations, action plans, scope for development).
- Communication (e.g. graphical representation, information for external or internal use).

Together, the five themes make up an interactive framework where the answer for each question depends on answers given for other questions. It is of no use to create an E-map that do not fit with overall planning objectives, organizational resources, or scope for new investments.

HINT TO GOOD E-MAPPING/PLANNING PRACTICE

- Learning the method require guidance from a skilled 'e-mapper'.
- Mapping of experience is not an exact measurement method.
- Learning to E-map should take place in parks and open spaces with clear and strong experiences.
- Consistent mapping through time and space require guidance, repetition and dialogue among 'mappers'.
- E-Mapping needs to be rooted in a consensus about interpretations and not personal ideas.
- Definition of experience zones should be pragmatic
- An experience has only recreational value if it matches a visitor's needs and/or preferences.
- The framework for the eight experiences is an expert based language not immediately suitable for direct communication with visitors.