CultureCase

A participatory approach to cultural mapping

This research was conducted by **Morgan Currie** and **Melisa Miranda Correa** at **Edinburgh University**

Summary

This paper describes a cultural mapping project in the Scottish city of Edinburgh. The project produced 'a tool that artists, art institutions, and policy makers can use to better understand Edinburgh’s cultural geography and guide further research on arts equity and access'. It is not a comprehensive picture of the rich cultural life in the city – that would seem impossible to capture in one map. Rather, by undertaking a participatory approach to cultural mapping, and being attentive to the narratives and inequalities attached to cultural spaces, the map usefully prompts questions and discussion between planners and community and artistic leaders.

Participatory mapping was used to uncover what counted as culture and what categories to assign to places

The participatory approach helped the researchers to understand the relationships between people and places, especially those outside the city centre. The draft map was physically taken on a tour of public events among cultural groups in the city and through these the researchers captured the perspectives of 115 people. Once a place or a space was added to the map the team then added data about it. The process uncovered 759 cultural spaces, many more than the 95 yielded by initial desk research using existing data about the city. The categories describing these assets also grew in number as a result of the participatory approach.

Although the map is now accessible online, its digital form is different to what prompted such energetic participation

In addition to "point data" about places and spaces, the mapping exercise also revealed layers and lenses that connected different points on the map. These layers, like the many stories attached to each cultural space, were not easy to render and interact with in the map's digital incarnation, which differs from the distinctly tactile and participatory version shared in the consultation phase.

Keywords

participatory **UK** **mapping** **consultation** **cities**

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