

Title

Approach to new cultural decision-making tools used by observatories:
Cultural mapping

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Abstract

One of the tools most frequently used to obtain information about cultural reality is *mapping*: a concept in which we locate ourselves on the basis of the following document: “Cultural mapping has become the favoured approach at national level for governments to study and understand their creative industry sectors before making policy decisions” (UNESCO, 2006:5).

This poster offers a global panorama of the phenomenon of cultural *mapping*. For this, we begin with an approach to the concept of a map applied to the area of culture. The origin of cultural maps is in the cultural statistics developed by the organisations in charge of producing statistics. Its development can be observed in the chronological description of the main experiences, beginning with the maps and studies developed in the Spanish State. Next I analyse the case of the United Kingdom, which has always played an innovative role in the development of analytical models. Finally, I analyse the experiences of maps made on the initiative of the cultural observatories.

Keywords: cultural mapping

1. Political-cultural environment of the maps

At the beginning of the 21st century, the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* states that culture is at the centre of contemporary debates on identity, social cohesion and the development of a knowledge-based economy. Cultural diversity is considered to be a source of economic and personal development, understood both in terms of economic growth and as a means of access to a satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. The wealth and complexity of cultural diversity are manifest in the originality and plurality of cultural identities and expressions (UNESCO, 2002). Years after the Declaration, the cultural panorama has been enriched with other documents of reference which focus the debate on cultural policies from a different perspective: *Cultural Agenda 21*, the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, and the *European Agenda of Culture*.

*Cultural Agenda 21*¹ arises as a contribution to formulating answers to the challenges of cultural development which humanity faces in the 21st century. It is a proposal of the cities, which makes plain the central role of culture as a factor generating wealth and economic development in the era of globalisation. The Agenda defends the open character of culture, cultural diversity and the importance of cultural creation and participation. The Agenda, recognising the relevance of information and knowledge in new knowledge societies, indicates the will to promote the implementation of forms of evaluation of cultural impact,

¹ Cultural Agenda 21 was approved at the IV Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion in Porto Alegre, within the framework of the Universal Forum of Cultures, that took place in Barcelona, in 2004.

generally, and the creation of a proposal for a system of cultural indicators that gathers the principles indicated in the Agenda, in particular (IV Forum of local authorities for social inclusion, Porto Alegre, 2004).

UNESCO, conscious of the role of cultural diversity as one of the main motors of the sustainable development of communities, towns and nations, emphasises by means of the Convention the need to incorporate culture as a strategic element of development policies. Also, the Convention indicates that equitable access to a rich and diversified range of cultural expressions and access of cultures to the means of expression and diffusion, are important elements for the valuing of cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2005).

Recently a strategy has been approved to introduce a more structured system of co-operation between Member States, denominated the *European Agenda of Culture*². The Agenda considers as its objectives in the era of the globalisation, to promote: intercultural dialogue and diversity; culture as a catalyst of creativity; and culture as an essential element in the international relations of the European Union. Among the five high-priority areas proposed for the period 2008-2010 is promoting access to culture; as well as developing data, statistics and methodologies in the cultural sector to improve its comparability (European Commission, 2007).

The value of these documents is that they allow us to determine the main challenges, at both global and local level, which cultural policies face at the beginning of the 21st century. Among these are: the central and strategic role of culture in development policies; the preservation and promotion of diversity; diversity as a motor of sustainable, economic and personal development; participation and accessibility as guarantors of diversity; culture as a catalyst of creativity and the relevance of information and knowledge, among which are data and statistics, in societies of knowledge.

Against this background arise new organisms, like observatories, which allow culture to be approached as a strategic sector, and favour the cultural development of territories based on respect for diversity. The main responsibility of observatories with regard to the challenges raised is to generate information and knowledge in relation to each of them. Cultural maps are located in this framework, as instruments that allow the contribution of data and statistics on the sector, with the aim of evaluating the impact of cultural policies that are designed to respond to the challenges raised. This is the political-cultural environment in which this work is developed and which gives cultural sense and value to the study of observatories and maps at the beginning of this century.

Observatories are organisations instituted to promote the conversion and transmission of information in knowledge. To this end they have information systems that, by means of the gathering, analysis and intelligent use of information, constitute the first step for generation of knowledge and, therefore, political decision making. One of the most frequently used tools to obtain information on cultural reality is *mapping*; a concept in which we are located by the following text:

“Cultural mapping has become the favoured approach at national level for governments to study and understand their creative industry sectors before making policy decisions. Mapping,

which involves a comprehensive effort to identify all relevant cultural economic activities, organisations, employment and links in a given area such as a town or region, has the added advantage that the actual mapping process itself can generate substantial awareness and foster collaboration across a wide range of creative stake-holders, building momentum that can then influence the political sphere and encourage suitable public policy-making” (UNESCO, 2006:5).

The panorama that is offered begins with an approach to the concept of a map applied to the scope of culture and continues by giving a presentation of the main experiences. To this end we analyse the main cultural maps developed in the Spanish State. Next, we concentrate on the case of the United Kingdom, as a referent in models of analysis of cultural reality. The study concludes with the identification of maps generated by cultural observatories.

2. Approach to a definition of a cultural map

Maps arose with the aim of satisfying man's need to know the world. When we speak of maps we associate them with geographical representations of the Earth or part of it on a flat surface; also with geographical representations of a part of the Earth's surface, in which information regarding a certain science is given (SAR, 2001). [Geographic information systems](#) (GIS), which associate spatial elements with data bases, have revolutionised the cartography of the 20th century. They appeared for the first time in the 1970s and were applied extensively in the 1990s. The application of new technologies to cartography has multiplied its possibilities and, therefore, the types of maps. Among these are thematic maps, used in research, which represent the elements of a phenomenon: a) considering its nominal or conceptual character (qualitative analytical map); and b) according to its numerical importance expressed in frequencies or percentages (quantitative analytical map).

In this work, which focuses its attention on thematic maps, by “cultural map” we understand the state of the question of culture in a specific space, or of a parcel of a cultural system, from a essentially quantitative point of view, represented through cartographies. This mode of understanding cultural maps is deduced from the distinguishing features that we will now comment on.

The set of cultural maps analyzed shows a series of common characteristics and, conversely, some particularities that allow to different models be established. The main condition that distinguishes a map from another type of research in the cultural scope is the identification and location of the elements that are the object of study: activities, agents or infrastructures pertaining to a certain cultural sector, subsystem or scope, with the purpose of defining the state of the question of the same. Some maps contemplate to culture as a whole (*Cultural Map of Galicia, Map of the Cultural Supply of Bizkaia, Map of the Cultural Supply of the Province of Almeria*) and others, in contrast, contain a subset of cultural systems (*Map of Cultural Infrastructures, Operators and Resources MIOR, Inventory of Cultural Infrastructure in Santafé de Bogota, Municipal installations of proximity. Study of the situation, Creative Industries Mapping Documents*).

Maps show mainly quantitative information, although maps do exist that also offer a qualitative vision, like the *Cultural Map of Galicia*, the *Cultural Cartography of Chile. Atlas*, or the *Inventory of Cultural Infrastructure in Santafé de Bogota*. The description of the situation is usually carried out on the whole of the data, except on those occasions when the maps have another purpose. As an example we can mention the Computerized Map of Stage

and Musical Locations of Spain, MIREM, which contains a detailed description of each of the stage and musical locations which comprise the map, or the *Cultural Map of Sabadell* which describes each cultural installation through a technical file. The inventories and directories which usually accompany the maps imply an additional value. This is the case of MIOR, the *Cultural Map of Sabadell*, the *Cultural Atlas of the Municipality of Seville*, *Municipal installations of proximity. Study of the situation*, *Inventory of Cultural Infrastructure in Santafé de Bogota*, *Cultural Cartography of Chile. Atlas* or the *Cultural Infrastructure Atlas of Mexico*.

The form in which this updating of material is carried out is one that facilitates the establishment of different models of maps. On one hand, we have the maps that reflect a given variable cartographically, with the aim of presenting the quantity and the place where it is found, through maps. This model is followed by the *Québécois ATLAS of Culture and Communications*, *Cultural Infrastructure Atlas of Mexico*, *Cultural Cartography of Chile. Atlas*, *City of Buenos Aires Annual of Cultural Industries*, or the *Cultural Atlas of the Municipality of Seville*. Each of them accompanies the maps with commentaries, except for the *Québécois ATLAS of Culture and Communications* which represents a selection of indicators cartographically, reflecting the state of the question of culture and communications in each of the regions of Quebec (Gouvernement du Quebec, 2003). *The Cultural Infrastructure Atlas of Mexico* collects reliable, updated and systematized information on the geographic distribution, by state and municipality, of those fundamental subjects for decision making with respect to infrastructures and cultural supply in Mexico (Castellanos, 2003). *The Cultural Cartography of Chile. Atlas* is defined as a cadastral map that facilitates information on who cultural citizens are, where they are and what they do. Applying cartography to faces comprises a map of facial appearances for each of the regions of Chile (Soto, Smith, Bernasconi and Lopez, 1999). In the map section of the *City of Buenos Aires Annual of Cultural Industries* different industries and cultural services of the City of Buenos Aires are identified and located by sectors (Puente, 2004). The basic element of the *Cultural Atlas of the Municipality of Seville* is a cartography of a variable in urban areas, which implies a technical operation like the development of maps in specific zones. An objective is considered to be knowing the number of existing facilities and where they are in Seville, relating to a particular concept of culture (Cano, 2002).

The weight given to the representation of the variables through cartography is less in other types of maps, which make greater use of other media like graphs and tables. This is the case of the MIOR, *Map of the Cultural Supply of Bizkaia*, *Map of the Cultural Supply of the Province of Almeria*, *Municipal installations of proximity. Study of the situation*, *Cultural Map of Sabadell*, *Inventory of the Cultural Infrastructure in Santafé de Bogota* and the *Cultural Map of Galicia*. The identification and location of infrastructures in the MIOR is carried out in equal measure through maps and other means. *The Map of the Cultural Supply of the Province of Almeria* and the *Map of the Cultural Supply of Bizkaia* constitute tools of knowledge of reality that identify and analyse a series of elements of cultural supply like agents, programs, services, activities, installations, plans and budgets (San Salvador del Valle, Ortega and Lazcano, 2003a and b).

The study on installations of proximity (i.e. those which are both physically and socially near to citizens) proposes to study installations by approaching their reality: who are they, what material means they have, what they are becoming and how. That is to say, it identifies the installations and reflects their characterisation, quantification and qualification of the contents in printed and electronic media. *The Cultural Map of Sabadell* is the sum of ideas, inventory

and plan that comprise a tool for knowledge and reflection to make the municipal cultural policies meaningful (Marcé, 1995). *The Inventory of Cultural Infrastructure in Santafé de Bogota* is a project that includes: a) a directory which, to the extent that it is given an interactive character, will serve to harness the dynamics of the cultural infrastructure; and b) an investigation report that implies a balance of cultural infrastructure in Santafé de Bogota, in which its geographic and social location is indicated, basic indicators are established, and tendencies for debate considered (Zamudio, Toledo, 1999). *The Cultural Map of Galicia* carries out in a precise way the representation of the associative sector through maps.

There are some maps, like the Creative Industries Mapping Documents, which do not exclusively offer data through cartographies but by means of graphs and tables. The Creative Industries Mapping Documents reflect updated data with the aim of offering the state of the question of the creative industries, considering the difficulties of the definition and existence of statistics on this type of industries (U.K., DCMS, 2001).

We might add that maps can also be distinguished by the media in which they are disseminated. Some maps are in digital media and their diffusion is carried out through the Internet. This medium allows the user to gain immediate access to up-to-date information. Maps that respond to this model are the MIREM and the *Québécois ATLAS of Culture and Communications*. The MIREM focuses on each of the stage and musical locations, offering a detailed technical description with the purpose of facilitating quality information to the producers of spectacles (SGAE and Author Foundation, 1998). *The Québécois ATLAS of Culture and Communications* has offered statistics on culture and communications in Quebec updated until the middle of 2007.

After this description of the essential characteristics that distinguish cultural maps from other types of studies in the cultural arena, and from the characteristics which differentiate maps from each other, we conclude that a cultural map presents the state of the question of culture, generally, or of a section of a cultural system, in particular, of a specific space, mainly from a quantitative vision. The essential characteristics are: a) the identification and location of study units; and b) their representation through cartographies. One of the main characteristics that differentiate them is the selected visualisation of the rest of the variables and indicators, which are carried out either by means of maps or other media like graphs and commented tables.

3. Experiences of maps in Spain

In the Spanish State the first map of cultural supply, which analyses culture from a structural point of view, is the *Cultural Map of Galicia*, published in 1991. It arose from the need to establish strategies that allowed for rationalisation and the use of the economic resources available, in relation to: the balanced distribution in the different zones of the territory; and their adjustment within the process of cultural development, which must involve all social groups as participants. The cultural habits and demands identified would serve as inspiration for a participating process of cultural development of the Autonomous Community of Galicia. *The Cultural Map of Galicia* is composed as an tool of systematised information on the resources and habits of the Galician population, with the aim of serving as a foundation for the planning of interventions, in the short and medium term, to be carried out by different administrations (Bouzada, Pidal, Rodriguez, 1991; Caride and Requejo, 1991; and Pintos de Cea, 1991).

Four years later, the Ministry of Culture published the *MIOR - Map of Cultural Infrastructures, Operators and Resources*. The MIOR arose from the Ministry of Culture's need for objective data, with the aim of developing a strategic reflection on the whole of cultural infrastructure, operators and resources in Spain. The MIOR “seeks to be an objective document that synthetically reflects cultural reality from the point of view of the competences of the Ministry of Culture” (Ministry of Culture, 1995.XI). This does not mean that its vocation is to be a cultural directory, rather that its reason for being is to become an instrument of reference for public decision-making in the area of culture. The MIOR becomes a tool of great value, facilitating the definition of priorities, in the medium and long term, regarding cultural matters, both generally and specifically in infrastructures, operators and resources. It therefore provides the people in charge of decision making with the necessary knowledge to guarantee citizens access to culture, guarantee equitable access with regard to territory and favour cultural diversity and plurality. Also, in the medium and long term it constitutes the foundations of a project of lines of action, which, subsequently, gave rise to the *Map of Cultural Needs MANECU*.

That same year, in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, on the initiative of the Town Hall of Sabadell, a cultural map for this municipality was produced. *The Cultural Map of Sabadell* is a tool for reflection, knowledge and planning that was designed with the aim of making sense of future municipal cultural policies, as well as guiding the cultural policies of other institutional and cultural agents present in the city (Marcé, 1995).

Since 1998, the Author Foundation and the General Society of Authors and Publishers, SGAE, have been developing the *Computerized Map of Stage and Musical Locations in Spain*, MIREM, which provides permanent information about more than a thousand spaces. Since 2005, concert halls for pop music have been included in the map. It is mainly aimed at public cultural institutions, technical directors and managers of stage spaces, artistic companies, producers and distributors, documentation centres and equipment companies. The MIREM constitutes a tool for identifying the stage spaces that are best adapted to a specific show; to plan tours; to analyse in depth the technical aspects of a space; and to know the equipment standards of the spaces (SGAE, 1998).

The year 2002 saw the conclusion of the work undertaken by the Area of Culture of the Town Hall of Seville to create the *Cultural Atlas of the Municipality of Seville*. It began from the fact that, as a basis for future activities on infrastructures and participation, the town hall needs to know beforehand the number and location of existing facilities in Seville, related to a certain concept of culture. To this end, the Atlas offers a descriptive study of the existing cultural spaces in Seville, structured by districts and neighbourhoods (White, 2002).

The Institute of Leisure Studies of the University of Deusto began, in 2001, with two processes of *mapping* of cultural reality: in the historical territory of Bizkaia and the province of Almeria. The volume of human, material and economic resources allocated to improve the cultural level of society in Bizkaia and Almeria, in the last twenty-five years, has been very important. Nevertheless, the cultural demand of the citizens, cultural practice, habits and consumption have not grown in the same dimension. This factor led the Foral Delegation of Bizkaia and the Delegation of Almeria to want to know the cultural supply and demand of their citizens better. With this aim, they began with the analysis of the supply through the creation of the *Map of the Cultural Supply of the Province of Almeria* and the *Map of the Cultural Supply of Bizkaia*, which culminated in 2003 (San Salvador del Valle, Ortega and Lazcano, 2003 a and b).

The maps of the cultural supply of Bizkaia and the province of Almeria aim “to improve the offer of services that result in a quantitative and qualitative increase of the quality of life and well-being of citizens through culture, by means of the optimization of policies and management at local, county and territorial level” (San Salvador del Valle, Ortega and Lazcano, 2003 a: 16). They are aimed at the people who design the policies, those who manage or promote them, and the citizens themselves. In this sense, it gives the politicians and technicians a tool for knowledge about reality, and a series of proposals for improvement, aimed at advising municipal policies, as regards culture, which will also affect the citizens.

In that same year, 2003, the Kaleidos Foundation published the map of installations of proximity, which was eventually entitled *Municipal installations of proximity. Study of the situation*. The Kaleidos Foundation, composed by local organisations of the Spanish State, works to “analyse and advise local policies of proximity by promoting an inter-municipal network in which specific programs related to installations and services of proximity are approached” (San Salvador of Valle and Lazcano, 2003:15). The foundation, conscious of the need to have up-to-date knowledge of the different installations of proximity existing in the State, carried out a study to approach this reality. The map thus becomes one of the tools on which the foundation bases its activities, to define the necessary criteria and phases of action, in territorial planning and the construction of proximity equipment.

4. The United Kingdom as an example of systematised experience

An extended example of systematised *mapping* can be found in the United Kingdom. Between 1998 and 2001, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport of the British Government carried out the Creative Industries Mapping Documents, as part of a strategy for the economic regeneration of cities and depressed industrial municipalities (UNESCO, 2006). The Creative Industries Mapping Documents emphasise the need for *mapping*, as a means to ensure the provision of rigorous data on creative industries, at regional level and lower. It is carried out with the aim of obtaining the most complete vision possible of reality, in which to base the development of policies.

The first document on *mapping* of creative industries, published in 1998, arose from the need to raise awareness of the contribution of the creative industries to the economy of a country. It was carried out with the aim of measuring the economic contribution of this type of industries in the United Kingdom. In this study the opportunities and threats are identified for the first time that must confront the creative industries in this country. It contributed to the elaboration of a first draft for the action, as much on the part of the government as of the industries. The importance of this first document resides essentially in its practical implications. The Creative Industries Task Force of the United Kingdom, after the conclusion of the report, worked on the development of recommendations, with the aim of realising the corresponding modifications, in areas related to abilities and training, financing of creative companies, intellectual property rights and promotion of exports.

The second document was published in 2001, a year in which there was already talk about the economy of knowledge and the importance of industries of this type in the economy as a whole. In this, a tentative comparison is made of the development of the phenomenon of the creative industries in relation to the previous document. The reasons for this are diverse: different sources and reference dates throughout both documents, figures that include non-comparable time series, data that correspond to different definitions, et cetera (UK Government, DCMS, 2001).

5. Atlases and maps driven by Cultural Observatories

The maps, used in the analysis carried out by the cultural observatories, constitute a new form of approach to cultural reality through data, statistics and indicators. Below, we describe those atlases and maps promoted by cultural observatories, according to the date of their creation.

In 1999, the City Research Advisory Office of the District Institute of Culture and Tourism published the *Inventory of the Cultural Infrastructure in Santafé de Bogota*. It consists of a Directory, considered as a tool to promote cultural infrastructure, and a research report, which offers the state of affairs of cultural infrastructure in Santafé de Bogota. The Inventory is “at the service of the cultural life and activity in Santafé de Bogota, as regards cultural stages, bookstores and record shops and cultural suppliers” (Zamudio and Toledo, 1999:19). The Inventory constitutes, among other questions, the starting point to evaluate the present and potential contribution of the different sectors of cultural development of the city.

That same year, the Culture Division of the Ministry of Education of Chile created the *Cultural Cartography of Chile. Atlas*, which constitutes a cadastre which facilitates the work of identifying, locating and understanding the work of Chile's cultural citizens. It aims to be a “basic tool of construction of a national identity developed from the realities of each town,

locality, and region of the country, that will deeply enrich reflection and the cultural debate in Chile” (Grove, Smith, Bernasconi and Lopez, 1999:1). The Cartography begins with a theoretical framework, to which the specific data of each locality are added, as well as stories, chronicles and testimonies facilitated by the cultural citizens. Their analysis and diagnosis constitute an instrument of great value for the decentralization of Chile's cultural policies.

The Department of Culture and Communications of Quebec facilitates information, on its Web page, on the state of the question of the sectors of culture and communications, through the *Québécois ATLAS of Culture and Communications*. The Atlas offers a selection of indicators in relation to a series of topics for each one of the regions of Quebec (Gouvernement du Quebec, 2003).

The Cultural Infrastructure Atlas of Mexico, carried out by the National Council for Culture and the Arts of Mexico in 2003, arose from the National Program of Culture 2001 - 2006. Culture in your Hands. This program raises, as one of the basic conditions for cultural development, to improve infrastructures quantitatively and qualitatively. The enlargement, improvement and creation of infrastructure will contribute, among other aspects, to: fulfill the principles of equality of access to goods and services; reinforce diversity; facilitate channels of citizen participation; and sensible regional development. The atlas facilitates information that is “reliable, updated and systematized,” on the geographic distribution - by state and municipality - of an extensive range of subjects indispensable for decision making in the matter of infrastructure and cultural supply” (Castellanos, 2003:9). *The Cultural Infrastructure Atlas of Mexico* is comprised as a fundamental tool for design and innovation of Mexico's policies, because these depend, to a great extent, on the quality of information that is available.

Among the goals defined in the Cultural Plan of the City of Buenos Aires is to turn to the city into a pole of cultural industries and companies. As a result of this, one of the objectives raised by the Secretariat of Culture of the City, is to contribute to visualising them as a productive sector. With the principle of “If information is power, democratising information is democratising power” (Bridge, 2004:8), the OIC Observatory, a central program of the Secretariat of Culture of the City, began a series of communication actions, among which was the *City of Buenos Aires Annual of Cultural Industries 2004*. The Annual had the objective to “synthesise the most outstanding characteristics of the activity developed by the Cultural Industries (IC) in the preceding year and provide a guide to the main agents involved in the sector” (Bridge, 2004:8). The Observatory OIC wanted the Annual to become the first link of a chain of information services for the cultural industries.

There are other examples that are not analysed in depth, but which form part of the global panorama, among which are: the *Atlas of Cultural Activities*, carried out by the Observatoire de l'Emploi, in 1998; the studies on Cultural Infrastructures and Events, carried out systematically by the Observatory of Cultural Activities; or the Census on People's and Public Libraries, carried out by the Cultural Observatory with Biblio-Technological Guidance and Promotion of Reading.

6. Joint Overview

The change of century has favored the update of the state of the question in the different sectors that affect the economy of a country, including the culture sector. The governments, delegations and city councils, with the aim of designing their cultural policies, feel the need

obtain objective data. To this end, for several years, they have gone to organisations that constitute sources of intelligence, among whose functions is the development of statistics, as is the case at international level, UNESCO and EUROSTAT. Nevertheless, demand tends to the development of other tools that visualise the contents through new media and platforms, and further facilitate the process of decision making. This fact, together with the multiple possibilities that arise from the application of new technologies to cartography, has had the result that, in recent years, *mapping* has become the favourite tool of cultural observatories to approach cultural reality.

A cultural map implies the state of the culture of a specific space, or a division of a cultural system, essentially from the supply and from a quantitative point of view. This updating of a specific matter presents two essential characteristics: the identification and location of the units of study; and its representation through cartographies. The particularities with respect to the form in which they are carried out are what determine that different models of maps can be established. The maps contemplate the cultural diversity of cultural systems of the different spaces that they analyze. The diversity is manifested in the heterogeneity of the elements that are the objects of study and the plurality of aspects that are studied. They include cultural expressions both past and present, as well as those whose purpose is the limited and serial production of goods, services and activities; that is to say, the industries.

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