



Culture Hack Method: **Map**

How to make relationships amongst people and power visible.

This process is directed towards locating actors and their power dynamics in a conversation with the intention of creating map with clear agents and relationships where the main actors, messages, spaces of engagement and frequency of participation can be pointed out.

Who

This process is directed towards listening to a narrative with the intention of locating the participating actors and their power dynamics. The result from this process should be a map where the main actors, messages, spaces of engagement and frequency of participation can be pointed out.

/ CHM - Ask Index

Who	0
CHM - Ask Index	0
How to engage with this step	1
MAP	1
Theory	4
Further Reading	5
Stories	5
Fees Must Fall	5
Wallmapu	5
Embodied Networks	6
Listening Network	8



The Narrative Map	9
Topography	10
Communities	11
Momentum	11
Sentiment	11
Symbols	12
Tech Tools	13
Culture Hack Labs	13
Gephi	13
Small data	13
Teachings	14
Glossary	14

How to engage with this step

The nature of this process requires a defined time frame for listening and analysis. It requires people committed to gathering (either digitally or analogically), systematizing it, and analyzing data. For digital data it requires access to a computer, a software that can help arrange databases (spreadsheet) and sometimes connection to internet; for analogical data it requires a system for gathering information (like polling or collective mapping), something to write with and a mounting to represent your map.

MAP

During the process of mapping, we take both a broad and a granular look at the shape of the narrative we're engaging with. Mapping explores the relationship of interlocking parts of a narrative, such as the spaces, actors, and struggles.

Narratives are all around us and, to a large extent, we can identify them intuitively. Narratives are systems of how stories are told. Any aspect of life is told and imagined a certain way, depending on the narrative that dominates its space. There are big, overarching, fundamental narratives, like the narrative of colonialism. More specific narratives - what we often think of as "issues" - instantiate the fundamental narratives in real life. The systems of stories told about business and success are downstream from the narrative of capitalism.

Mapping aims to find out how the narratives (at whatever scale) we are engaging with or fighting come alive in the world. We construct a listening model to set the parameters for an inquiry, this is a sort of entry points for the narrative we want to analyze.

Once we find the conversation, we use network theory to analyze the relationship between the actors and the messages they are engaging with. Depending on capacity and the nature of the conversations tracked we can use various forms of analog or digital mapping tools. Either way the important thing is to be able to see the landscape of a narrative, the main actors involved, the spaces (physical and digital) where it takes place, and the most shared messages that are being exchanged.



Theory

As social movements become increasingly plugged into technologies, both for organizing and communicating, there is a need to understand the ways in which this involvement shapes social movements and in turn how they are hacked and reinterpreted for the purposes of mobilization. Contemporary social movements insert themselves in processes of technopolitics where the use of networks is key to expanding and feeding a movement.

The practice of analyzing networks to understand patterns and social configurations has been applied in anthropology for a long time, however it has a parallel development in mathematics. The terms used in this field come from math and are developed in graph and network theory.

A network is a group or system of interconnected people or things, connected through nodes and vectors. Taking a conversation as an example: the nodes are people and the vectors are interactions among those people. In mathematics having one node connected to another node is enough to maintain a network; but in social networks connections are nurtured and maintained differently.

One useful analogy is that of two people - two nodes - in a relationship. If these two nodes only have connection with each other, lacking vectors to any other nodes, they are not only factually disconnected from the rest of the world, but the relationship between them will soon wear out, information sent back and forth along the same vector will be redundant. In their isolation, the nodes might become overly dependent on one another, getting stuck. Social networks are dynamic and need nurturing to endure. If the relationship breaks, these nodes will become completely isolated.

When we analyze networks for narrative change and social movements, we are able to locate echo chambers, narrative communities (as well as their growth throughout time) and nodes who enact heavy influence in a conversation. Through this analysis, we get to see the landscape of the narrative. Once we know what the landscape looks like, we can begin to understand what languages are spoken in the place we find ourselves, who the influential people are, and the size and politics of each city, village, and outpost.



Further Reading

Linked: **The New Science of Social Networks** by **Albert-László Barabási** is a simple introduction to graph science. As the first edition was written prior to the invention of internet 2.0, this book explains concepts we usually associate with digital spaces using everyday, analogue examples.

Radical Cartography: [This is Not an Atlas](#) is a project by the Oranotango collective that gathers knowledge from the global South and North about counter-cartography and collective mapping. Their book with the same title includes tactics, numerous case studies and theory around radical cartography.

[Iconoclasistas](#) Is a Chilean collective that dedicates to critical cartography, using collective itinerant mapping, collaborative investigation and open source graphic resources.

Stories

Fees Must Fall

Fees must fall We conducted and designed a model of listening for the fees must fall conversation in the movements of Fees Must Fall and Zuma Must Fall on twitter which later allow us to articulate key areas of intervention and opportunities for transformation.

Wallmapu

Decolonizing the map of Wallmapu , building cultural cartography in Mapuche territory, is a case study of a group of activists and critical cartographers who took on the task of gathering stories about the territory from different Mapuche communities, in order to create an alternative map of the region known to them as Wallmapu.



Embodied Networks

We often forget that networks have been a key aspect of social interaction throughout human history and that the ways in which we connect, on and offline, adhere to some basic principles of graph theory:

1. A node needs at least one connection with another node to be considered connected and have the possibility to be part of a network.
2. Different topographies emerge from different interactions, and these topographies show different possibilities of connection.
3. Different levels of connection translate into pathways through which information can travel.



This exercise is designed to show that the groups in which we socialize are organized by our interaction networks; that we can make visible these networks using our own bodies; that the messages that travel through these connections are not exclusively verbal. The exercise helps us consider the basic network topographies that can be found in our everyday life, and asks us to question how network theory applies to organizing.

Gather the group you are working with in a large room, or an open space. Ask them the following:

Who brought us to this space/workshop/collective?

It can be the person who physically brought us here, or perhaps the person through whom we got word of this space/event. If we found out about this space/event through some form of media, who was responsible for putting out that information? Or even who posted it?

Instruct the participants to:



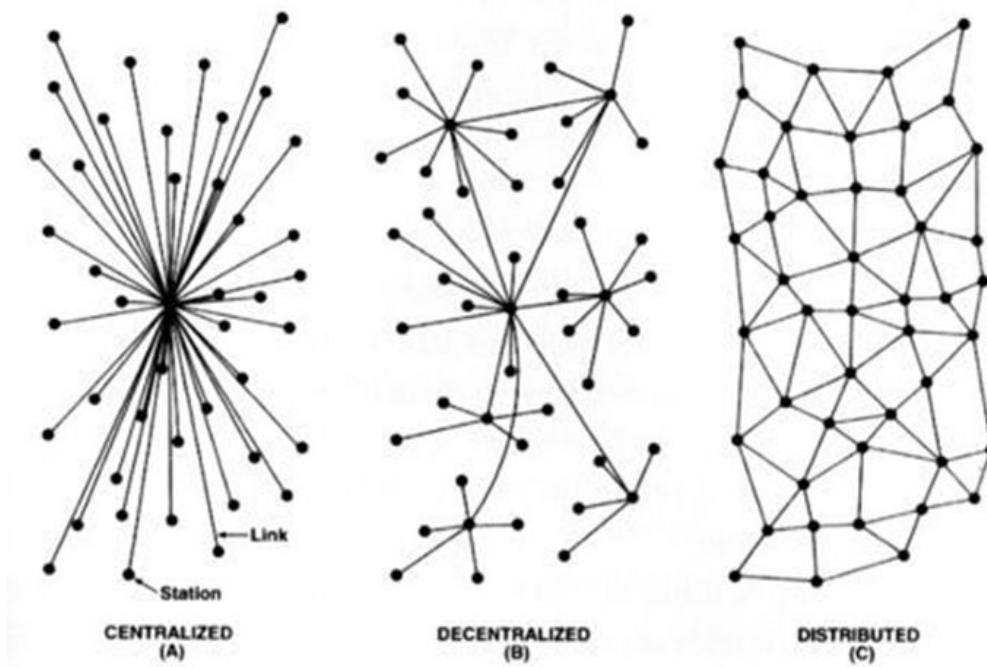
Find that person in the room, grab their arm lightly. If more than one individual brought you here, find and grab them both.

Once the whole group is linked to at least one person, choose either a very well-connected node (aka a person that is being grabbed by or grabbing the most people) or a node that is far away from the main hub - a less connected person, and gently squeeze their arm.

If you feel someone squeezing your arm pass it on and squeeze the arm of the people you are grabbing as well.

How long did it take for the message/squeeze to travel through the whole network? Did everyone receive the message? Where there individuals separated from the network who didn't get the message? Was there a part of the network where the message got mixed up? What happened in the most connected parts of the network?

The resulting grouping will most likely take one of three forms which represent the basic topographic structures of networks: centralized, decentralized, distributed. Identify the shape that best fits the grouping and name it, explain the characteristics of said form/topography; if you can identify more than one shape explain its characteristics as well.



The next part is trickier as it depends on the context of your group, but the idea is to ask a question similar to the first that forces the people to reconnect in a different shape or under a different scheme; useful questions can be:

Who here speaks a language other than English (or Spanish or the language that the group is using to communicate) as a first language?

Who here is a parent?



Who here lives in (country, continent)?

With the different groups that form you can explain the concept of communities and clusters.

With the example of language, you can explain how code makes a significant impact on the ways in which a message can reach a network.

Takeaways: the goal of this exercise is to show an analog version of networks which helps to make the connection between social interactions and the visual representations of social media networks. The intention is to show how a narrative is a web of social interactions and can therefore be mapped and utilized as such.

Listening Network

Where is the narrative that you want to listen to?

When we talk about big narratives like capitalism or colonialism, it's useful to make a distinction between the system and the narrative. A system might operate on a large scale in different contexts, but the conversation about said system emerges from somewhere.

In the social discourse a narrative is made up by a number of conversations that occur on the public space, public opinion develops from the way in which different social groups engage with and value events. In mapping a narrative there is a need to listen to the current conversations relating to it.

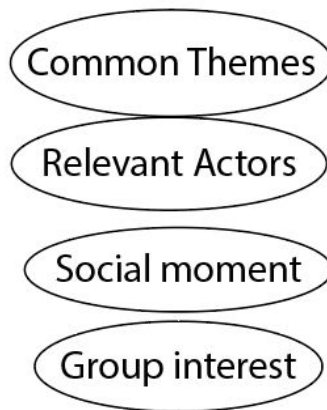
How to find your conversation

*What have been the moments when the public opinion about an issue changed? From here will emerge themes.

*Who has been influential in bringing this narrative to the general public? From here will emerge relevant actors.

*Is there a momentum around a narrative you are interested in? This can help us show the social moment in which the narrative is insert.

*What do we want to know about mainstream/public opinion about a subject? This shows the main goal we have in analyzing the narrative.

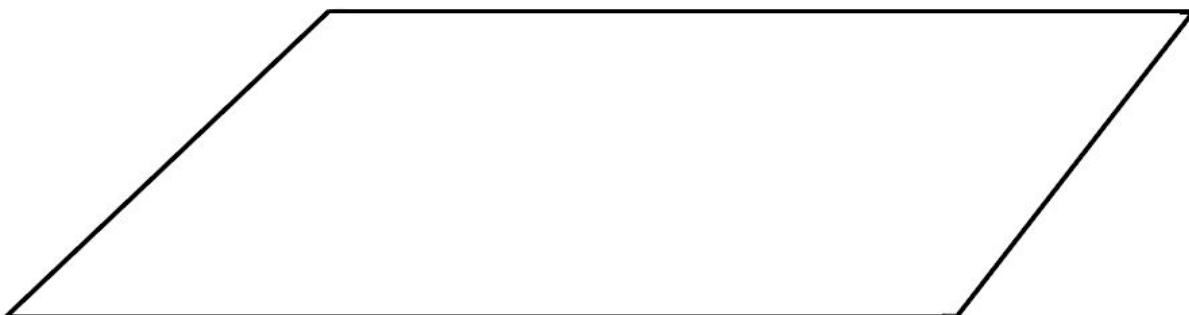


On the other hand when we are starting from a specific **issue** there might be “no conversation” about it on the public discourse, but there are always elements that pertain to the bigger narrative.

- *What is the system of oppression that this issue relates to?
- *Who is the manifestation of that system? Institutions, people, social dynamics
- *Who is against this system? What are they talking about?

/ The Narrative Map

Independently of the kind of conversation you find there are certain aspects that will be present in any social discourse:



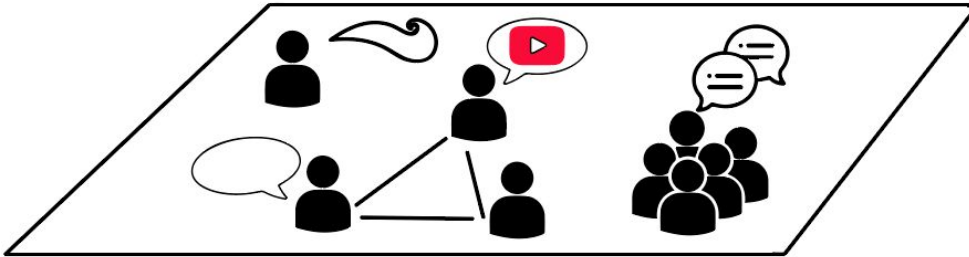
There is a platform in which this conversation is occurring, this can be a social media platform, of course, but it can also be communitarian radio, it can be public assemblies, even less direct forms of communication like academic papers and a universities curriculum.



There are actors who are stating messages throughout the conversation.



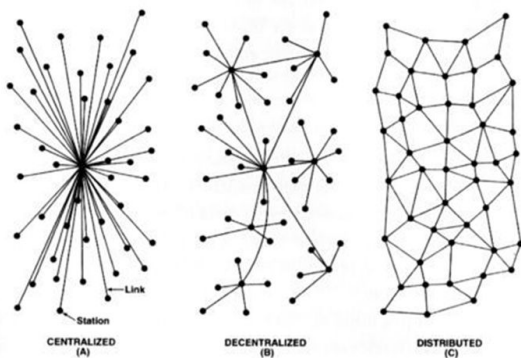
These messages are set on a specific media: audiovisual (late night shows, youtube, film, documentaries, etc), visual (illustration, vignettes, photography, memes, etc), text (tweets, academic papers, headlines, articles in journals etc) oral (radio, podcasts, audios on whatsapp, participation in assemblies and even peer to peer talk)



In a way we can say that this responds to the where, The who, and the what of a conversation as in the basic questions of journalism.

However the notion of mapping conversations has to do with adding the element of network theory to this analysis that answers the question: How do these elements interact?

Mapping networks is essentially locating the sort of interactions that nodes have with one another and the shapes that these interactions take. There are many ways to do network analysis and some are through statistics software and big data, gephi and R are some useful tools for that, but the basis of network analysis is not so much in the bulk of data to analyze or in specific functions, it has to do with locating specific aspects that all groups of human (and non-human) interactions occur.



Topography

The topography of a network is quite simply the shape that it takes when it's nodes interact, there are many shapes that interactions from living things look; these are the most common shapes you will find in a public conversation.

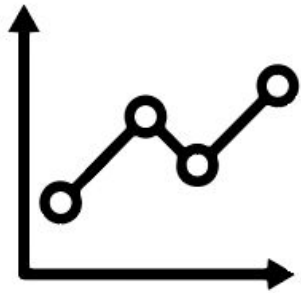
Communities

The most important aspect of network mapping we are going to focus on is the formation of communities. This happens when a number of users interact amongst each other and hence form clusters. Communities are not necessarily formed by like minded individuals or specific social groups, in this case a





community is a group of people that interact with each other at a time in the conversation.



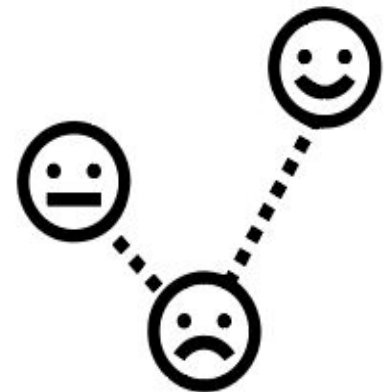
Momentum

Conversations evolve over time, they have peaks of engagement, they have lull periods and then they might die out completely. The key for an intervention on a narrative has a lot to do with identifying the pivotal moments of a conversation, for example: when does a subject become widely discussed? when do people engage with an issue?

Sentiment

The sentiment relates to how emotionally charged a conversation is and the sort of emotions that are present in the conversation. In processes of organization the sentiment component of the conversation is hugely important to decide interventions; for example: after a massive repression from the government the atmosphere might be charged with fear, anxiety and grief, but they might also be heavy with anger and indignation. These two sentiments create different atmospheres and the tone of communication must necessarily be a tune with this.

Opposing emotions might also be present; it's our experience that feminist protests in latin america can combine anger and grief for the violent situation, but also share a common aspect of joy and celebration for the act of being together as women in a protest.



Symbols

Symbols are signs that represent a relation with a reality, often in an abstract way, what this means is that while a sign or an icon might be directly related to a visual cue or fact about an event or object, the relationship between a symbol and what it represents is less direct and it is socially built. The green scarf in latin america relates to the campaign for the legalization of abortion, the feminists that created this symbol (which has



become a meme) did it as a tribute to the white scarf that the Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo used (a collective of grandmothers looking for their stolen grandchildren). What does a green scarf has to do with abortion? Nothing technically, but in the collective imaginary and public opinion green scarf now mean abortion in Latin America.

Looking for the symbols in conversations is key to understanding what the communities value, what political spectrum they are in and especially what they consider legitimate or with authority in the matter.





Tech Tools

Culture Hack Labs

The Culture Hack Labs tools investigate a narrative through its online or digital trail. This trail of data and information allows us to make hypotheses about the narrative a means for strategic action.

It starts by collecting data about a narrative and then generates topics and other key analytics, showing how these topics change over time. Our algorithms collect data about three dimensions of the narrative - Network, Topics and Dynamics.

Network - Analyzing the networks and structures within a narrative, the platform generates a topology of the key network features.

Topics - Analyzing the linguistic content of the narrative gives us a cluster of related tweets or articles that define the key topics present in the conversations we are analyzing.

Dynamics - Segmenting data collected over different time periods, the platform begins to develop a map of the changes that occur within the shape of the narrative, how communities form and and, and the unity/diversity of expression within the narrative. These are the morphogenetic features of the narrative.

These three data processes allow us to determine the Power, Themes and Change within the narrative.

Gephi

Gephi is a free open source software for visualization of networks and graphs. It can handle big-data sets, reading files in .csv, .gexf and .gephi. It includes a number of useful metrics such as centrality, community detection and random layouts. It can do real time visualization as well as over time comparisons of data.

Small data

Is a repository of methodologies and tools that takes you through the process of gathering and analyzing data, all with free open code software.



/ Teachings

Gephi basic tutorial: Explains the basic notions in which network analysis via gephi is done, explains the uses of gephi as well as some basic features and layouts:

/ Glossary

Node Unity, the user/subject who is connecting.

Technopolitics It's the tactical and strategic use of networks and collective identities online for organization and collective communication; the particularity of tactics of Technopolitics is that it can turn sympathizers, voters, militants into activists and that into groups.

Visualization/Graph 2d or 3d visual representation of a network.

Analogue mapping A community's knowledge of the narrative field they're engaged in provides fertile ground for collective mapping. Mapping comes naturally: defining the who, what, where, how, why

Digital mapping This method is sometimes known as "social listening" and involves using software to observe and collect data online, in the communities and outlets that propagate a narrative. The tools we have developed (linked below) focus on making relationships in online networks visible and usable for strategic social justice work.