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CULTURAL MAPPING AND DIGITAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE FUTURE NORTH

MORGAN IP

Abstract

Arctic landscapes and communities are undergoing massive changes in the context of globalisation, technological advances and climate change. Interdisciplinary research methods involving public participation are increasingly used to harness community strengths and negotiate these dynamic forces, as diverse sets of knowledge are invaluable in understanding a fuller cultural landscape in more robust detail. Further expanding the field, location-based digital tools are increasingly used in urban planning as complementary civic forums to those of brick and mortar. This research incorporates ethnographic methods in a collaborative PPGIS mapping design experiment to investigate how digitally enhanced forms of participation contribute to future place-values and envisioning. The human imagination is captured by examining how local voices emerge and how engagement is expanded in communities in the Norwegian-Russian border region.

Keywords: cultural mapping; urban planning and design; public participation; local knowledge; digital technologies; PPGIS

Introduction

All cities were once imaginary. When you look at any urban skyline, you are looking at the thoughts, the dreams and the decisions of individuals (Anderson, (2015).



Thick, acrid smoke no longer billows through the streets of Nikel, dominated by a metallurgical smelter that towers over the eponymously named Russian city. Vegetation reclaims the formerly desolate soils and forgotten corners of the town, now nurtured and celebrated with carefully tended parks and new connections to the adjacent forests. Likewise, the neighbouring Norwegian city of Kirkenes is rejuvenated with sculpture parks, cultural amenities and expanded ski trails woven through the surrounding ancient mountains. A new seaside promenade liberates the city centre's access to the fjord and the Arctic Ocean beyond. New express boat and seaplane services whisk people from here to the small island city of Vardø, where the scents of the sea mix with those of freshly baked bread along the revitalised main street. These cities, like Italo Calvino's (1997) many fantastical invisible cities, are distilled iterations of particular elements that exist in the real Nikel, Kirkenes, and Vardø. They exist, that is, in the locally voiced desires of the people that live there - they are imaginary cities.

Citizens plotted these speculative scenarios in a digital map as part of a collaborative mapping exercise between 2014 and 2015. They form the human components of the cultural landscape; an element increasingly

Figure 1

MyBarents composite illustration showing citizen visions in Vardø. sought after by planners, politicians and everyday citizens alike. Ethnographic or anthropological methods are thus used in landscape, urban design, and planning as a way to understand communities and provide design solutions with more contextual appropriateness and relevance (Pavlides and Cranz, 2011; Southworth, et al., 2012; Awan, Schneider and Till, 2011; Askland, et al., 2014; Cranz, 2016; Kjærsgaard, et al., 2016; Ventura and Bichard, 2017). Including as many local voices as possible aims to level top-down planning decisions in favour of bottom-up, or even lateral decision-making.

Background

An interdisciplinary team, comprised of social scientists, architects and designers from the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO) and the University of Tromsø (UiT), founded the Future North project with an aim to map the landscape futures of the North and to spur collaborative research on cultural dimensions of societal change. The idea of North roughly corresponds with the concept of the Arctic, and though both have multiple delineations, the Arctic is more exact and generally corresponds to the region above the Arctic Circle, above the tree line, above the 10°C July isotherm, or within the realm of permafrost known as the cryosphere (Bravo and Sörlin, 2002; Körber, MacKenzie and Westerståhl Stenport, 2017). These areas of the Earth are significant for study from the perspective of planners, urban designers, architects and landscape architects because they are exceptionally vulnerable in an era of anthropogenically influenced climate changes (IPCC, 2014). The Arctic region addressed in this study faces many contextual challenges not encountered in other parts of the Arctic, as it is also a meeting of cultural edges demarcated by national boundaries with different historical approaches to northern development or colonisation (Forbes and Stammler, 2009; Lajus, 2013).

This paper presents doctoral research set within the Future North framework and is contingent on the bridge between the design professions of urbanism and landscape, and the social sciences. It aims to map the cultural landscape of this particular Arctic borderland where Norway and Russia meet, and with the Finnish border in close proximity. It investigates how local people perceive their community, how they envision their futures and asks: "Why is participatory cultural mapping at the Norwegian-Russian borderland important and how can it be done?"

The research-by-design project examines the potential and the impact of an online tool, MyBarents (http://mybarents.mycity.io), which enables the public to plot and discuss ideas for civic improvement on a digital map. As such, it belongs to the research realm of public participatory GIS (PPGIS), and in this case is employed towards cultural mapping and ethnography (Brown, 2015). As a collaborative participatory-plotting enterprise, MyBarents aims to bring together diverse human voices in exploring what this future might look like, and how citizens could contribute to revealing and engaging in the co-creation of their communities. Mapping the ideas and imaginaries of inhabitants allows for contextually relevant decisions to be made. These emerging perspectives constitute a cultural mapping through digital participation that is useful for planners but is not in itself a planning exercise. The result, a product of the mental maps made by the people living in the region, constitutes the cultural component of the "cultural landscape".

The Arctic communities in this study form an international nexus within the Future North project. Kirkenes, part of Sør-Varanger municipality, and Nikel, Russia were both founded as mining towns, resource hinterlands for their respective central powers – iron in Kirkenes to Norway and nickel in Nikel to Finland, which had brief interbellum sovereignty to the area, but was subsequently annexed by the Soviet Union (Rogova, 2009). This change in territorial dominion on the Soviet side underlines the sometimes drastic and ever-changing dynamics of borders. The towns share similar historical, geological, and physical contexts but are divergent by the extent of the national identities sprawling beyond both sides of the border. As an international neighbourhood, they are a cultural meeting place where societies mingle and overlap. Urban theorist Michael Dear (2013) terms this as third-nationhood, where "Connectivity and continuity along the international boundary line is molded by the mental maps (or cognitive psychogeographies) of border-dwellers" (p.175). It is these mental maps that create the identity of the place, and where the future resides. In this experimental study, the communities of Vardø, Norway, and Näätämö, Finland are included in the parameters of the digital map, as their proximity adds to the international character of the region. In the mapping phase of the research, the Finnish border site was underwhelmingly engaged and so is not analysed in any great detail here, but it remains an essential point of geographic reference.

A wide variety of people live in this particular border region – from miners to artists, diplomats to dog mushers – each with their own perspectives of place, and each with their own aspirations for the future of the region. These individual identities are also heterogeneous within themselves, as each person belongs to a variety of micro-cultures with their own distinctive character, opinions and dreams (Cranz, 2016; Lee, 2004). Following Doreen Massey (2005), allowing such "multiple becomings" gives room for multiple imaginings. This is particularly important in urban design, where the diverse spatial elements of the built environment are seen within a context of mutual interconnected relationships as opposed to stand-alone objects (Palermo and Ponzini, 2015, p.64). Capturing these disparate and sometimes dissonant voices requires casting a wider net on the elements that constitute the local cultural landscape than otherwise accumulated in many planning exercises, such as town halls or public notices (Kahila and Kyttä, 2008). In so doing, one can ascertain otherwise missed opportunities or challenges that could shape and define the region's future (Cranz, 2016). This thereby increases local knowledge and capacity for future thinking and therefore contributes to more resilient communities.

Methods

The collective mental map of the cultural landscape is dynamic and locally situated. Given this turbulence, the research-by-design method used in this exercise allows for reflexivity and adaptation to on-theground conditions. Tim Ingold (2013) refers to this as an "art of inquiry", in which anthropological research is an approach of thinking and doing, reflecting and responding in kind over the course of the study period with "the lives of those who are touched by it, and with the world to which both it and they belong" (p.7) Further, employing "digital-visual-sensory" methods such as mapping expands our understanding of spatial environments by incorporating experiential information that might be difficult to articulate in interviews or detect through participant observation alone, the typical mainstays of ethnographic research (Pink, 2014). As James Corner (1999) states, maps have agency both in revealing a set of existing experiences and relationships with the world and in illuminating new possibilities and enactments. The selection of a PPGIS tool thus enables a collaborative mapping, allowing people to input their existing perceptions and visions for the future in a discursive online arena. MyBarents was the result of the author's encounter with the tool's developers at a conference in Tromsø, the largest Norwegian city in the north. It responds to three research concerns: it is endogenous to the region and the inquiry process itself, it has potential to reach a broader group of participants by virtue of being web-based, and it uses the abstraction of cartography for participants to inscribe their visions for the future.



Interface: Development of the Digital Tool

Näätämö, Finland

The concept for this virtual platform emerged after an in-situ community workshop in Murmansk held by a student from AHO, Jan Martin Klauza, in March 2012 (Mitaki, 2015). Klauza hung a large map on the wall of a local community centre, and participants tagged their ideas for civic improvement with sticky-notes. This annotated map stayed on the wall for several months, and local digital producer Stepa Mitaki (2015) noted that the popularity of the map continued long after the initial meeting took place, "Witnessing the quality of people's ideas and the positive vibe around the activity inspired us to carry it over to the web. That way we could simplify the process of collecting suggestions and, most importantly, allow way more people to participate." Mitaki worked with fellow web developers Dennis Kreminsky and Alexey Kalenchuk to create their first digital participatory mapping platform, MyMurmansk, which they

Nikel, Russia

Figure 2

The four sites in MyBarents showing coloured dots representing some of the 257 ideas for civic improvement as plotted by citizens in the Arctic border region. later rebranded as MyCity (mycity.io) to anticipate growth of the platform and to accommodate any city. The public, or more specifically anybody with access to the Internet, could add ideas to the map of their city with the added value of acting as a forum for discussion. They had in effect created a web-based PPGIS application from a citizen's position. It became a "technology of the imagination" in that the mapping was a social and physical instrument of enactment of the heterogeneous collective memory or imaginary (Sneath, 2009 cited in Halse, 2013, p.182).

MyCity belongs to a growing collection of PPGIS initiatives that aim to collect civic ideas and increase public engagement (Kahila-Tani, et al., 2016; Rowe and Frewer, 2005). For instance, "Сердитый гражданин" (Angry Citizen) is a Russian application that aims to connect citizens to government and companies to clients in regards to complaints on a wide range of issues, from health care to infrastructure issues, physical urban fabric to legal quagmires. "Madame le maire, j'ai un idée" (Madame Mayor, I have an idea) is an online initiative of Parisian mayor Anne Hidalgo to directly engage citizens in a voting system on ideas (La Direction de l'information et de la communication [DICOM], 2016). These are but two among many diverse online platforms aimed at engaging citizens in expressing their perceptions and visions for the future of their cities or home regions. However, MyCity was developed and deployed in the study region, and it was already known in the area (Jarratt and Thomson, 2014). This tool thus became a regionally incubated and implemented PPGIS tool, further deepening the connections of a locally contextual transnational cultural landscape.

Shipley and Utz (2012) suggest that online social media may profoundly alter the way citizens negotiate their built environments with elected or bureaucratic decision-makers. The visual representation of the map in MyCity makes it easier for citizens to understand, navigate and participate in issues of planning and development of cities and neighbourhoods, where more formal processes like reading city forms and policy documents can be arduous or unintelligible (Dahl, 2015).

The author worked with the MyCity digital developers to create a pilot version of their online public collaborative idea-gathering application to complement offline Future North cultural mapping activities. MyBarents is an innovative spin-off pilot of MyCity, in that it links four different but geographically proximate communities in the transnational border region in a single platform, as opposed to the other stand-alone versions. This allows online visitors to easily navigate, explore and participate in their own town as well as in the realms of their distinctive neighbours, keeping in mind Dear's potential third nation layer of the borderland (2013).

The minimal detail on the base maps provides enough context for users to locate themselves, while at once allowing their own cognitive maps to fill in and navigate their city. Each demarcated idea punctuates the map with a vividly coloured dot. These dots become larger and darker in hue as the ideas they represent are up-voted by other contributors (Figure 2). They reference specific spatial points, as well as how people perceive their engagement with these places. Getting as many people as possible to use the tool and map their ideas is critical to yield a robust vision of civic and landscape potential.

Interaction: Tool deployment and engagement



Social media is useful as an outreach tool to engage prospective users given its widespread public use (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). To initiate the collective online mapping, informative advertisements were posted on Facebook, which is more prominently used on the Norwegian side, as well as on VKontakte, which is more common in Russia. These posts simply asked, "How do you envision your city now, and into the future?"

Earlier "pushes" in online social media were not entirely fruitful, and only small bumps in online participation in MyBarents would occur after paid Facebook advertising. Although this increased outreach, many people would visit the page without plotting their ideas. It was thus necessary to include offline outreach to reach more people; this was done via word-of-mouth, public participation workshops, public presentations at seminars, conferences and a visit to the Kirkenes high school.

Figure 3

Offline events brought many passers-by in to look at, discuss and tag physical maps in Kirkenes and Vardø, Norway in July 2015.

PHOTOS BY MORGAN IP.

Local newspapers reported on the project in both print and online news media, and Nikel civic administrators arranged for this author to talk about the project on the regional Murmansk Oblast television station. Community workshops were held in the three communities of Nikel, Vardø and Kirkenes to provide in-person tutorials. Hard-copy maps were available alongside computer workstations and projectors. This multimodal scenario allowed discussions to take place with real-time idea plotting. Each successive workshop was improved based on the lessons learned from the previous one. The final two, held in Kirkenes and Vardø, were open-house events held over several days in the respective town centres during their summer community festivals, which ensured consistent pedestrian traffic. Citizens contributed a total of 257 ideas online and offline during the mapping period.



Outcomes and findings

This was a research-by-design project in terms of developing both the interface and the interaction, and the findings respond to both of these as well as the higher aim of discerning elements of the cultural landscape embedded in the local imaginary. First, the tool and process both changed throughout the research period. The process revealed that working online and offline have advantages and disadvantages; ideas were captured in both modes varying from place to place and in response to evolving engagement methods. The tool itself was

Figure 4 Civic improvement ideas as categorised by location, theme and method.

incrementally adjusted to suit the changing conditions. For example, at one point we saw the need to expand the map of Kirkenes to allow users to include more of the region in their input on urban living. The wide-scope mapping of people's imaginings concerning various physical sites revealed a future cultural landscape of innumerable dimensions. By parsing through the ideas, we recognised a set of central reoccurring themes and assigned the following categories or tags: aesthetics, tourism, parks and recreation, commerce and services, food and drink vendors, accommodations, education, culture, health, information and communications and transportation. Ideas often related to multiple themes. For example, "King Crab Playground: Knowledge and experience centre for children of all ages, based on king crab history. Built as a model of a king crab" (MyBarents, 2015) fit within the themes of culture, education, parks and recreation and tourism. Each relates to the others and having a more precise overview of these themes revealed discernible elements of the local imaginary - the cultural landscape(s).

The cultural landscape can be broad in definition, referring to the entire globe if determined by anthropogenic influence on the atmosphere, soils, and water. However, many of the ideas plotted appeal to more direct human interaction and imagination of the landscape, exploiting the physical and historical character of the place. For example, one Kirkenes user envisaged a culture trail over Stallu mountain based on the tales of a famous local poet, Lars Stærk (MyBarents, 2015). Suggestions further included a spa in the ore-processing plant, extended ski trails, re-contextualisation of wartime relic infrastructure (such as using bunkers as foundations for outlooks, or with other artistic re-imaginings) and interpretive pathways for historical figures (MyBarents, 2015). The idea of creating a downtown waterfront was popular, and reflected an issue the municipality was already considering for implementation (Stubhaug, 2015). In Nikel, the most popular suggestion was to add scrubbers to the smokestacks of the massive metallurgical plant (MyBarents, 2015). Further out, about half-way between Nikel and Zapolyarny was a proposal for a cultural trail through the landscape that reflected Sami history. The most important categories or tags of the map were: parks and recreation; transportation and infrastructure; and aesthetics. Nikel residents described their ideas in more detail than in the other locations. and often used the word Oblagorodit' or "ennoble" to mean the fixing up, beautifying or improving of a space. We can also look more in-depth at these cultural inflexions that reveal landscape layers beyond what the tags directly inform.

Political landscapes

Erect a statue of Lenin 62 🛞	
DOMAN KKUUTZENS GATT	
This man is not running out of fashion	
△ Sam, 回 12 Februar 2015, 21:49	
🖨 Hares bra uti < Del 🗸	
Oppdateringer	
Maybe to ask some town in Ukraine to send their Lenin to Kirkenes? a <u>Denis Shirshov</u> = 5 Mars 2015, 15:04	
Убрать(хотя бы пееместить) памятник Ленину •4 🛞	Remove (or at least replace) the Lenin Monument
a contract of the second secon	
На массовых мероприятиях памятник мешает и еще это отголосок советсого времени	During big public events the monument gets in the way, and it's an echo from the Soviet times Elena
▲ <u>Enerta</u> ,	
В Поддерживаю! < Поделиться ∨	
Комментарии	Comments
Не вижу ничего плохого в Ленине и в отголоске. Можно его, конечно, сместить, а на его место зимой ставить елку, но, по-моему, вся прелесть пл. им. Ленина потеряется.	I don't see anything bad in Lenin or the echo. It's possible, of course, to place him somewhere else and instead put a Christmas tree in that place. But in my opinion the square would lose its charm Katya
≜ <u>Катя</u> , Ш 19 мая 2015, 21:12	
я предлагаю вместо памятника Ленину сделать фонтан, например - считаю что будет отличным архитектурным решением ▲ <u>Роман</u> , ==27 июня 2015, 21:45	I suggest replacing Lenin with a fountain, for example. I think it would be an excellent architectural decision Tomas
Согласен. Вообще, в городе металлургов и шахтеров, уместней памятник металлургам и шахтерам. Можно тематический - в виде зимней горки для детей. Все-таки фонтан, большую часть времени, будет заморожен⊟	Agreed. Generally, in a town of metallurgists and mineworkers, it would be appropriate to build a monument for them. It could be thematically in the shape of a snowy mountain for kids. Anyway, a fountain would be frozen for most of
▲ <u>Alexander</u> , 🔲 13 июля 2015, 02:26	the year Alexander
Тоже, согласна. Он уже давно ни к месту, и площадь можно реставрировать, поменять асфальт и заменить плитку, вид сразу измениться! ▲ Ekaterina Lashchenko, □23 сентября 2015, 11:09	I agree, also. It has long been out of place, and the area can be restored. Change the asphalt and replace the tiles. The view would be changed immediately! - Ekaterina Lashchenko

Political annotations emerged in the plots of both Kirkenes and Nikel, but not in Vardø, with rivalling ideological suggestions for statues and banners, and whether existing ones should be removed, or new ones put in place (MyBarents, 2015). However, there were more of these posts and comments on the Russian side. The commentary associated with each such post was also far more extensive here (Figure 5).

Figure 5

An example of the platform commentary: (top) A suggestion to place a statue of Lenin in front of the Russian consulate in Kirkenes; (bottom) A suggestion to remove a statue of Lenin in Nikel.

Transnational landscapes

There were points in all maps that reference the neighbouring international communities, supporting Dear's (2013) third-nation concept. In Kirkenes, such ideas included border webcams to facilitate easier border crossings, as well as a bus station in the city centre for buses to and from Russia (MyBarents, 2015). In Vardø, there were requests for swifter or expanded transportation links to Norwegian and Russian communities (MyBarents, 2015). The sole plotted point in Näätämö desired an "Alko," the national Finnish alcohol monopoly (MyBarents, 2015). Plotted by a Kirkenes resident, this request reflects the importance of cross-border shopping for Norwegian locals to travel 50km for cheaper groceries (Gerlach and Kinossian, 2017). It is a place that is part of the Kirkenes regional everyday, as is Nikel and even Murmansk, Russia (Rogova, 2009). Although the international or transnational third space reveals itself in the maps, this theme is not of utmost consequence.

Everyday landscapes

Most ideas closely correlate with everyday lived experiences and spaces. In Nikel, there were many calls to fix potholes, renovate or demolish dilapidated buildings, renovate or create new parks, add bike lanes, and generally improve the public sphere of the city. In Vardø, there were similar requests for improved and maintained parks and streetscapes, as well as greater recreational opportunities, such as a service station for mobile homes and a beachside sauna. In the smallest towns, there were also visions of a future microbrewery and bakery (the town does not have either). Likewise in Kirkenes, ideas of the everyday included an improved waterfront promenade, parks with exercise equipment, longer ski trails and suggestions for alternative uses for empty buildings. One Kirkenes citizen suggested safer street-crossings in various locations in response to personal difficulties faced by traffic in the area (MyBarents. 2015). However, the authority to enact this particular change depends on collaboration between state and municipal actors, as the road in guestion is state-controlled but intersects municipal roads. Everyday users do not immediately perceive the physical latticework of authority over places, but quickly and directly observe everyday challenges such as the problem of crossing the road.

Landscapes of mixed tenure

The mapping indicates that the border is marked by systemic political differences, which impact frames for civic engagement. As shown, the imaginary extends from within the confines of the maps to beyond them, from the local to the regional, national and global. Even within the map, boundaries do not appear relevant concerning tenure, ownership or stewardship. Some plotted ideas are on private residential or commercial properties, such as those of Norilsk Nikel – the owner of Nikel's cornerstone industry and a corporation of international expanse (MyBarents, 2015). The authority over each plot may require different levels of

collaboration to meet an end, and it is not always easy to discern what agency is in charge of which parcel of land (see Figure 5). The nature of the ideas themselves adds another element to landscapes of authority, as retail or service-oriented ideas were commonplace in Norway, but conspicuously absent on the Russian side. This suggests that Norwegian contributors saw the map as a tool not only for citizen-to-government action but also as a citizen-to-citizen or citizen-to-entrepreneur tool. Russians mainly used the maps to place ideas for transportation and infrastructure, parks and recreation, and other public amenities that tend to be the responsibility of municipal or state governments. This may suggest a mental relic carried on from before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As entangled as communities are, regarding responsibility and authority, they nonetheless exist seamlessly in our perceptions of place and visions for the future. This collaborative plotting of ideas shows that the entire built environment is public in the sense that it resides in our mental spaces, if not in the realm of decision-making authority. It does, however, lead to questions of how to achieve the aim of putting ideas into action.

Refugee housing

Boutiques / stores Torget oppgradert Info center Viewing point Tennis and volleyball courts
Kirkenes map and clock
Light up the Kimek building
City map
Ham operator headquarters
Dirt and dust protection Park Benches and play area Pedestrian street Canoe rentals Coffeebar/ "small talk" café Activity Park Longer ski track Canoe rentals Coffee Stally culture trail Renew facade
 Stally culture trail
 Crosswalk
 Description
 Renew facade

 Stally culture trail
 Workout / Training Park
 Bridge to Jakobsnes
 Home for the elderly
 Renew facade

 Førstevann Outlook
 Promenade along the waterfront
 Municipal floating dock
 Private elevator
 Paint

 Walkway
 Walkway
 Description
 Hurtigruten ferry quay
 War reconcilitation travel
 Walkway Ski trail Renovate the city square Border Webcams Housing Renovate the facades Border Webcams Housing Renovate Beautify the roundabout Activate the park Parking Artwalk Hostel Kiosk for truck drivers Crosswalk Camping place King Crab Playground Icehall New kiosk Skatepark Contemporary arts and scultpure park Express boat from the Hurtigruten Factory Facelift Camping places Urban fitness park Webportal Stop for Russian buses Viewing point University of Tromsø: Residential and Commercial area Pull rope Kirkenes Campus Train station for passenger trains Wastebins Bunker safari Wastebin Lenin Statue Forsoningsreise Small stage Small outdoor stage Housing New future for abandoned building BMX track World's tallest wooden building Park and play equipment Skateboard park

PUBLIC Kirkenes Nikel

PRIVATE

Fix ramp Park Fix lawn Passage to Lake Luchlompolo Double-decker parking Plant trees New stream crossings Sculpture of border cooperation Park "Welcome to the New Russia" Billboard Historical markers Plant trees Restore or decorate the bridge Modern waste disposal Modern illuminated monument Downhill bike track Rental boats or catamarans Observation of politicians Trail lighting Regulate alcohol sales further Fix streetscape Indoor ice rink Renovate the bridge **Smokestack filters** Snow park Mini-park New asphalt Fence around football field
 Street Improvement
 Fence around football field

 Make Linea street greener
 Viewing point
 Large bann

 Renovate school
 Park
 Currist trail
 Banner Large banner of Putin Banner Mini-libraries Culture palace roof webcam WWII billboard memorial Demolish building Cycle lanes Stadium Fix the hill Neolithic site marking signs Tourist infocentre Reconsider bus stops and parking Recon "Military tank" park Cycle lanes Robotics club Banner Park with excercise equipent Paint electrical box

Discussion

Several issues emerge from the research that require reflection as to the production of cultural landscapes through local perceptions of landscape and urban space. This includes discussing digital participation in planning, urban design and related future thinking, but also examining

Figure 6

Public versus private allocation of all plotted ideas in Kirkenes (top) and Nikel (bottom) in the study period. Text size indicates the popularity of the idea. engagement as a critical component concerning both how one engages the citizenry, and who participates in broader democratic processes around city development.

Outreach and public participation: Online vs offline

Planners on both sides of the border were enthusiastic about the potential of the platform but remained cautious about the economic costs of adopting new technology (Stubhaug, 2015; Dahl, 2015; Molodtsov, et al., 2015). Kirkenes urban planner, Ørjan Stubhaug suggested that the webbased research environment was an excellent opportunity to extend this gathering of voices that Sør-Varanger could not afford to do. In the end, a purely online and digital rollout was ineffective; in-person workshops and open houses were necessary to educate the public about the tool. The act of outreach generated an equal amount of alternate futures to be transposed onto the digital map, essentially doubling the size of the imagined future borderlands. Online and offline methods appeared, in this ad hoc case, to be equally effective in instigating participation and recording the human imagination. This does not confirm that either format is more valuable than the other. Rather, each has its merits given the objectives, abilities, and constraints of those conducting the mapping exercises (Dahl, 2015). Financial limitations to cover vast territories in the north could mean that it is cheaper to deploy an online system covering the desired extent (Dahl, 2015). However, choosing the right time and location for a collaborative mapping event to engage people in-situ might be used to achieve similar amounts of data from participants. Each mode fed the other, with in-person workshops and open houses allowing a more significant understanding of how to use the online tool, and the online tool only benefiting from a wide variety of outreach. Combining the two thus appears to expand civic engagement and expand the multiple becomings that create the future visions of place.

The different engagement levels shown between the public meetings and online activity in this project suggest that virtual tools are not a complete substitute for offline methods. More users engaged online in Nikel, whereas in Kirkenes there was an equal amount of online and offline contributions. In Vardø, citizens contributed the majority of future visions during the offline co-mapping installation. However, this was perhaps less indicative of participatory cultures in each location and more a result of the research-by-design process.

As demonstrated in the improved upon in-situ events, the use of tangible maps in offline social settings invited a flurry of responses that did not similarly occur in such a singular timeframe online, thus showing that public events of physical interaction remain of great importance. The online and offline methods of engagement were complementary; online activities were more slow, ongoing and archival, whereas offline activities generated information much faster, but with impromptu details often failing to be archived. Each had their own different ability to reach out to the local population.

Citizens created a cloud of points on the map without the ability to differentiate them thematically. A lack of categorisation made it difficult for people to locate spaces of particular interest to them, which is problematic for contributors and decision-makers alike. Increased focus on the theme of an idea could more directly connect interested collaborators across the decision-making and enacting participants. Knowing that authorities would consider all ideas could increase the legitimacy of engaging in the first place (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Such a promise was not extended during the documented mapping iteration.

Participants sometimes requested new features during the mapping process – another essential dimension of design experimentation. One request was to expand the boundaries of the maps, questioning the parameters of what parts of a region form the everyday mental and physical spaces of the user, in contrast to where planners or application designers prefer to focus. Another idea was to add an option to share photographs and other media to create a fuller understanding of the spaces and visions. These two challenges of map extent and multimedia capacity placed limits on citizens on how they could express their ideas according to their individual mental maps. Enabling more flexibility could engender a greater sense of ownership, thereby encouraging more citizens to act (de Lange and de Waal, 2013).

Casting a wide net

The Internet is an excellent tool to reach out to as many people as possible, given the ubiquity of its use and consequent diversity of differing opinions suggested in the "wisdom of the crowd" (Surowiecki, 2005, pp.226-227). Vast swathes of the global population have already joined and regularly participate in online communities, which have become virtual territories linking global assemblages to local contexts via groups, causes, as well as other virtual and thematic orderings. Here people are increasingly getting their news, sharing opinions and experiences, and creating content on local issues in special interest groups (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). However, it is a vast ether-scape, and sometimes groups in close physical vicinity may be separated by a chasm regarding online proximity. For example, students reacted well as potential users to the collaborative mapping concept during a presentation on MyBarents at the Kirkenes high school in the autumn of 2015. However, one student inquired why Facebook was not used to promote the platform. Although it was, this comment showed that the broad Facebook advertising "pushes" did not breach the separation between our social networks. Greater links between these social networks and virtual planning tools could potentially increase participation in the planning process (Evans-Cowley and Hollander, 2010; de Lange and de Waal, 2013).

During the mapping phase, it was noted that different modes of participation on Facebook and VKontakte might reflect differences between online and offline cultures in respective regions; for example, there are higher risks to activism on the Russian side (Gladarev and Lonkila, 2012). This might also indicate a difference in the uptake and use of MyBarents between Russia and the Nordic countries. For example, the Russian side had more political and civic related issues than in Norway, which leaned more towards consumerism and tourism.

There was an observable disconnect between enthusiasm to participate and the actual action of idea-sharing concerning direct online plotting by users. People are more likely to have the motivation to contribute concerning issues more urgent in everyday life, while voluntary civic acts take second place (Clary and Snyder, 2002; Iannaccone and Everton, 2004; Innes and Booher, 2004; Evans-Cowley and Hollander, 2010). On several occasions, people offered up suggestions on the MyBarents Facebook or VKontakte pages, in emails, or in casual conversation as opposed to actually logging onto and using the application. These were spontaneous actions of engagement, but the effort ended there. Citizens thus incidentally gave the platform constructive criticism on the function and purpose of the tool beyond the use of the device itself.

Whose voice is being heard?

The Norwegian-Russian borderland contains a multitude of voices, and this research aimed to explore the opportunity for everyone with access to the internet to claim a spot in the discourse surrounding potential futures in Arctic urban planning and design. Public in-person open houses extended this accessibility by being held during popular community events. The ideas that populated the map were mainly provided anonymously, both in person and online. This author recognised several participants in the public workshops, but many were interested passers-by. Likewise, people were able to identify themselves or use pseudonyms on the MyBarents website. Some ideas were nevertheless easily identifiable as coming from a "Barents elite" contributor. Political scientist Arvid Viken coined this term to refer to leading actors heavily involved in the affairs of the region and who are directly engaged in the support and promotion of international collaboration and development between Russia and Norway (Viken, Granås and Nyseth, 2008). As such, they benefit from the Barents inter-regional collaboration project. It was no accident that these were among the first voices to emerge in the media, as the cross-border platform aligns with this agenda. In addition, the Barents Institute (with which I was associated) shares office spaces with the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, which actively engenders cross-border collaboration and also sponsored MyBarents.

Some of the ideas identifiable as coming from an "elite" participant have clear implications towards the regional Barents identity. One such

proposal is for a Barents thermometer to inform citizens of regional cross-border atmospheric conditions (MyBarents, 2015). However, most ideas identifiable as coming from an "elite" are rooted in the local context, such as the development of the waterfront, added benches along ski trails, and transformation of currently unused spaces into recreational assets. The official agendas of these contributors do not negate their concurrent roles as local citizens. The application design ensures that regardless of the agency of the author, each idea starts off with the same amount of space, or pixels, in the digital sphere. The dot of an elite contribution is equivalent in its visual representation to that of other citizens, and in practice, their ideas did not receive more or fewer votes than others.

Actively engaging a heterogeneous public collective memory and future imaginary aims to counter the dominance of any singular narrative. Indeed, the Arctic region has a troubled history of foreign interpretations and narratives of Arctic indigenous people (Bravo and Sörlin, 2002). Within the claim to gather voices directly from the people in a horizontal framework, the analysis and representation presented here are a synthesis of diverse perceptions of place filtered through an academic lens. The website is freely, publically and indefinitely available as an online archive, and readers are invited to parse through and make further connections and analyses, or even contributions.

Level of engagement

Arnstein's classic Ladder of Participation is a device that gauges levels of engagement spanning from the lowest rung, representing a complete lack of participation, to a high rung of full citizen control (1969). This study reflects an engaged level of consultation fitting somewhere among the middle rungs of Arnstein's tool. Citizens may have direct input and communication with authorities, but they are not the ones enacting change. Indeed, in this pilot, there was no reciprocated action on behalf of the authorities, although they expressed interest. To reach the levels of Partnership, Delegated Power, or Citizen Control, the platform needs to engender a direct dialogue with officials, with explicit and reciprocated attention and action.

Other MyCity platforms, such as in larger centres of Tromsø or Murmansk, have had much higher participation by the wider public, and in many Russian cases, the platform was instigated by community activists seeking to influence urban development. The Tromsø example deserves a closer look, as the city adopted it as part of its multi-channel civic engagement project "Hvor går Tromsø?" (Where is Tromsø going?). Tandi Dahl (2015), the planning official who implemented the platform, said that political time constraints did not allow proper utilisation of the tool. More efforts and funding were required to engage citizens properly, and the lack of focused and thematic compartmentalisation of the ideas

did not suit every arm of the organisation - a multi-headed bureaucratic system. She said further that some in the planning department saw it as conflicting with an existing location-based inquiry and comment tool where citizens could formally report a problem. The use of MyCity was, for them, an experimental attempt at understanding public participation with expanded capabilities and from a different perspective – envisioning the future (Dahl, 2015). Although the Tromsø city centre has a greater population than Kirkenes or Nikel, the outlying areas of the municipality are similarly vast, and it was hoped that the tool would act as a public forum in place of expensive and location-specific public consultation events. Even in Tromsø, which has experience with a wider project of citizen involvement, attracting participants to 'attend' the on-going virtual consultation that the application heralded was a challenge (Dahl, 2015). Action regarding tangible results at the civic level did not occur with MyBarents. However, by the framework of Rowe and Frewer (2005), the process was indeed public participation, and not merely public consultation or communication. The public created and enacted a collection of local imaginaries; in their collaborative mapping, they revealed a dynamic cultural landscape. A snapshot of this borderland emerged capturing elements of identity and character.

Tipping the scales of the future

These challenges pertain to the act of engaging the public; yet another issue in this cross-border cultural mapping responds more directly to the aims of Future North research. People raised themes in this project that do not touch on broader, future issues, such as how the city can respond specifically or directly to climate change, and only tangentially do they concern topics like globalisation or technological and social changes. Resilience, in a word, is not discussed if not prompted. Instead, the ideas mainly involved everyday life in the here and now. This may be because long-term or slow changes are not at the fore, as people only tend to seriously consider threats that are most visible and perceptible (Stoknes, 2014). Amundsen (2012) describes this notion in her analysis of local responses to change in Senja, Northern Norway: "Climate change is difficult to comprehend as a threat, since to many it is incomprehensible what impacts a changing climate could have on their community" (p.46). The more immediate and relatable issues punctuate the landscape far more than those of long-term resilience. As such, MyBarents is not a tool that directly addresses the overall ambition of Future North towards envisioning landscape futures, but it reveals landscapes of everyday concerns that both compare and contrast across the border such as issues of pollution and blight, with particular resonance on the Russian side. Admittedly, the map is a hyper-localised abstraction that focuses on spaces immediate and local. The global does not exist on the map, and the tool itself may prove limiting in envisioning large-scale change, both chronologically and spatially. Nevertheless, many small local changes add up to building a level of competence and resilience in the face of

multivalent changes. This collective reservoir of desires and localised images of change captured in the ether allows for an accessible and more productive understanding of this cultural landscape of the possible.

Conclusion:

Collaborative mapping and cultural landscapes

Mapping is a fantastic cultural project, creating and building the world as much as measuring and describing it. Long affiliated with the planning and design of cities, landscapes and buildings, mapping is particularly instrumental in the construing and constructing of lived space. In this active sense, the function of mapping is less to mirror reality than to engender the re-shaping of the worlds in which people live (Corner, 1999, p.213).

PPGIS and social media are among the many valuable apparatuses planners and design professionals have at their disposal to reach broadly out to the public. The MyBarents platform provided an opportunity to explore local self-expression among communities that are tied together by geography but diverge by their exploited and unexploited resources, demographic makeup, and political structures. Bringing public engagement into the virtual realm enables citizens to continue contributing visions with the map as an on-going, online, idea forum beyond standard planning hearing deadlines and potentially beyond the limited period of this design experiment. The enduring presence of the virtual aggregate of ideas can evolve in concert with the changing attitudes, visions and direction of the community. As an archive following and reflecting community responses, it may thus establish and participate in longerterm discourses key to identifying strengths and adaptations ensuring community resilience. It also has potential, following Innes and Booher (2004), to function as a multi-directional forum not only between planners and citizens, but also between any number of citizens, groups, and actors amongst themselves. This potential can further be realised effectively with in-person workshops. Together, the online and offline gathering methods in this project gathered a collective borderland's imagination, full of contradiction but always one of desire and hope, which allows the human imagination to become a stronger and more vivid component of the cultural landscape.

By merging the physical and digital realms, MyBarents gathered more voices than would otherwise be collected from either single method. MyBarents fulfilled some of its anticipated potential, namely its ability to gather disparate voices to document the cultural landscape, and to create a set of location-specific types of knowledge, which can be used by groups such as planners and policymakers. It also responded and expanded, through Future North's reflexivity, a process that morphed according to community processes, life and events. As a repository of

contextually embedded ideas that emerged from living in a particular place, it revealed the location-specific character of the borderlands, as well as common and differing cross-national threads.

This landscape imaginary included overarching themes shared across the region: a strong connection to nature, greater mobility and connections to the outside world, and an increased uplifting of existing cultural and natural assets for tourism or everyday living. A possible cultural divergence across the Russian-Norwegian border occurred in imagining the provision of commercial or public services. Russian points do not explicitly reference Norway. Norwegian and Russian entries reference each other as neighbours. Both in Kirkenes and Vardø, the transportation links extend across the borders. Importantly, in Vardø there is a strong reverence to its Pomor trans-border trading past, linking again to a transnational identity. Norwegian points for civic improvement include many commercial enterprises that are often within the purview of the private sphere. In Russia, these are almost non-existent. This suggests that alternate national identities prevail in the culture of expectation. The level of political engagement was another cross-border difference, as more participants on the Russian side noted and discussed issues of political controversy. Here, improving the city is a government responsibility, whereas, on the Norwegian side, the question itself is open to both private and public intervention. This points to an aspect of a cultural border maintained in parallel with national boundaries; it is a socio-cultural edge that is harder than the geological, biological and climatic transitions over the area. The third nation idea of the Norwegian-Russian borderlands, while evidenced in everyday landscape visioning, thus maintains some differentiation within it concerning agency.

Finally, the participants in this project did not directly mention or react to long-term changes such as climate change. In assessing place values and future preferences, more immediate challenges or opportunities were raised that directly impact the everyday lived experiences of this border landscape. This contrasts with the familiar meta-narrative of the Arctic as a harbinger of what is to come regarding global climate change upheaval. According to MyBarents participants, the future of the Arctic borderlands is one where people have safer and cleaner streets, more opportunities for education, commerce, and recreation, a stronger relationship with nature, and where local culture is expressed and experienced spatially.

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