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**ATMOSPHERIC METHODS GUIDE:**

# **DRAWING & MAPPING**

**Loretta Lipworth & Dr Chloe Steadman**

## BACKGROUND

Creative methods such as drawing and mapping are increasingly used in consumer research and other fields as a way of accessing and communicating affective, embodied, and emotional experience. When used to convey atmospheric experiences of place, drawing and mapping can be used as standalone methods or combined. As a flexible approach, drawings can either be created from scratch or overlaid onto a bird's-eye view map of the place being studied, potentially alongside text and photographs. Different types of maps can also be created to communicate a place's atmospheres, such as drawing a personal 'affective' map of a place or creating a digital map to share with diverse audiences.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

*Remember, this is a flexible method you can adapt to your particular research situation, but here are a few tips to get you started...*

- Decide whether you want to draw from scratch, or overlay a mixture of drawings and text onto a personal affective or bird's-eye view map of the place being studied. If the latter, you will need to find and print off a map of the research site in advance.
- If using the method with participants, consider their comfort and skill levels. It is useful to give participants a flexible choice of what types of drawings or maps they feel comfortable creating.
- Prepare suitable materials and equipment for the climate of the place you are researching. This might include coloured pens and pencils, markers, tracing and regular paper, clips and stickers, or a variety of relevant apps on a digital device.

*“Feeling constrained by the representational map of [the town] and that I was drawing things in the wrong places... I instead decided to draw my own ‘affective map’... It felt like much more of a flexible approach to mapping”*

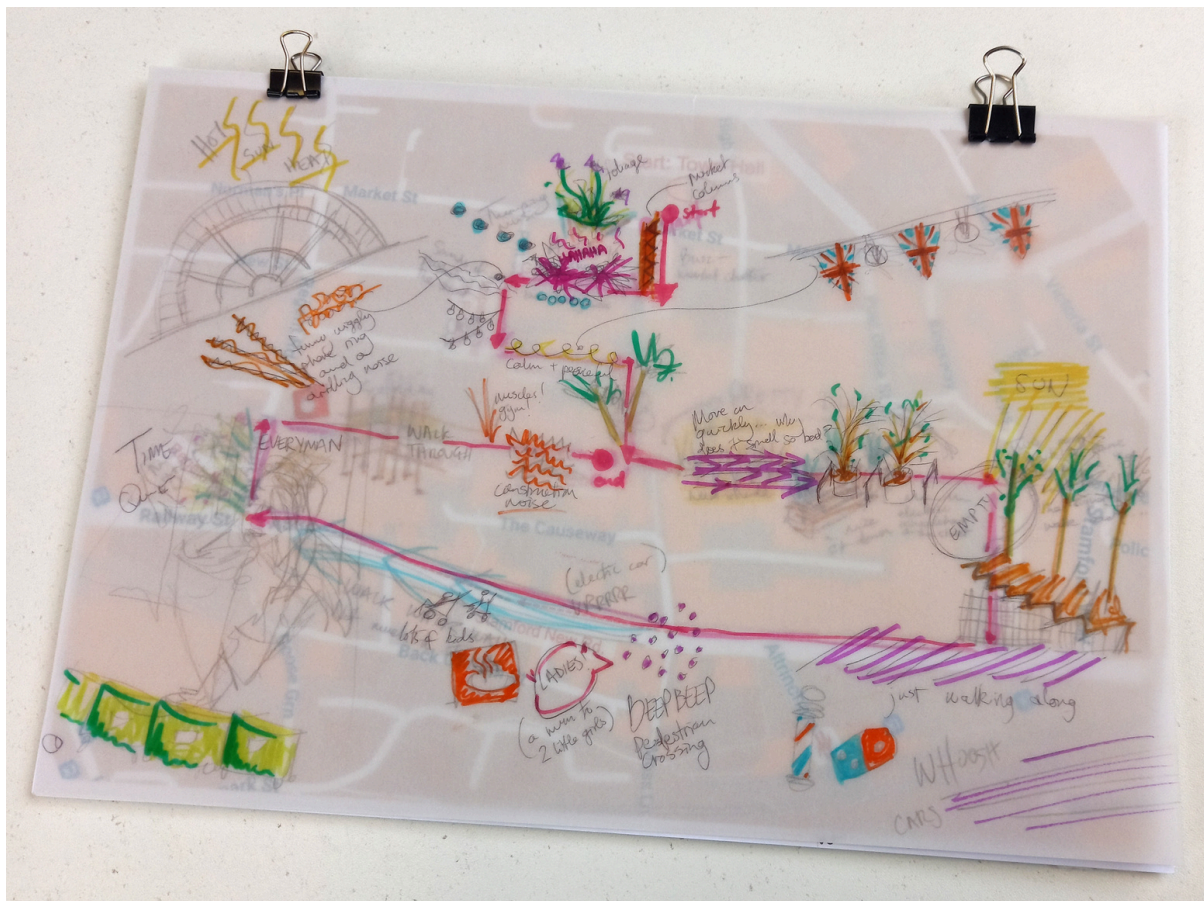
*(Chloe's research diary)*

## WHY USE DRAWING AND MAPPING?

Drawing and mapping are flexible methods that can be adapted according to people's skill levels and how they want to express their experiences of atmosphere. If drawing in situ, the person is encouraged to attune to the material and sensual features of place, which might be overlooked when using more 'traditional' methods. Drawings and maps can be used to communicate research findings to more diverse audiences, such as including a digital map on a project website.

***"I think I would benefit from giving myself some guidelines or specific exercises, such as stopping every five minutes to draw how I feel about the place... I think setting some 'fun' limits within the method would help me feel more relaxed and probably more successful in conveying atmosphere"***

**(Loretta's research diary)**



Loretta's atmospheric map

## WHAT MIGHT BE CHALLENGING?

Drawing and mapping techniques can feel daunting, even anxiety-provoking and frustrating for those who perceive they lack artistic or creative skills. It can be challenging to produce drawings which express the dynamic aspects of a place's atmosphere, rather than representational drawings of what can be seen. It may also be difficult to resist reverting to text, especially if the person using the method does not have much experience with drawing.

*"I felt a bit embarrassed if anyone came near my map to see my lack of artistic talents... especially since I felt my drawings were quite childish"*

(Chloe's research diary)

## PRACTICAL TIPS

- To help people feel more comfortable with the method and to suit varying skill levels, provide a range of different options for producing drawings and maps.
- Allow people to adapt the method according to how they feel whilst they carry it out. For example, if people feel frustrated with the first option they choose, they could change to a different technique as these methods are flexible.
- Reminders or prompts could be included to help people convey the place's multisensory and atmospheric qualities, either on notebooks/maps, when introducing or facilitating the research activity, or by introducing activities such as stopping every five minutes during a walking tour to draw how they feel within that space.

## DRAWING AND MAPPING IN ACTION

Kimberly Powell draws on a student research trip and four example student projects to showcase how mapping methods were used to capture lived experiences of the El Chorrillo neighbourhood in Panama. The student research trip aimed to develop methods to capture the dynamism and rich stories of Panama City, beyond its typically negative depictions. The students created maps in different ways, such as drawing personal maps or overlaying photographs, collages, and sketches onto maps. Powell found mapping helps communicate the complexity of multisensory experiences in creative and non-linear ways, can help to understand where people spend their time, and can also elicit other senses, such as touch, when visually looking at a map.

## TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DRAWING AND MAPPING

Degen, M and Barz, M. (2020). Mapping the urban experience digitally. In Ward, K. (ed). *Researching the City: A Guide for Students*. London: Sage.

Powell, K. (2010). Making sense of place: Mapping as a multisensory research method. *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(7): 539-555.

### To reference this guide:

Lipworth, L and Steadman, C. (2025). *Atmospheric Methods Guide: Drawing & Mapping*. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University.

To read about other atmospheric methods, search online for the full guide titled 'Atmospheric Methods Guide' by Dr Chloe Steadman and Loretta Lipworth