INPLASY

Community Asset Mapping: A 20-year systematic review of its development

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective How has Community Asset Mapping evolved in terms of methodologies, applications, and outcomes over the past 20 years?

Rationale Community asset mapping has emerged as a valuable participatory tool that empowers communities by identifying and mobilizing local resources, strengths, and capacities. Despite its growing use across diverse contexts—including public health, social work, community planning, disaster resilience, and education—there remains limited understanding of how the methodology and application of community asset mapping have evolved over time. This systematic literature review aims to address this gap by critically examining developments in community asset mapping practices over the past 20 years. Exploring shifts in methodological approaches, technological integration, and diverse applications will provide insight into best practices, highlight innovative trends, and identify potential limitations or challenges. Ultimately, this study will contribute to strengthening the theoretical foundations of community asset mapping and inform future research, policy-making, and community-based interventions.

Condition being studied Community asset mapping is a participatory, strengths-based research methodology that systematically identifies, documents, and analyzes resources, capacities, and strengths within communities. Rooted in community empowerment and collaborative approaches, asset mapping emphasizes what communities possess, rather than what they lack, to foster sustainable development, social cohesion, and resilience. As a research phenomenon, it encompasses methods for data collection and visualization, including geographic information systems (GIS), participatory mapping workshops, stakeholder

interviews, and surveys. Over the past two decades, asset mapping has expanded beyond traditional community development contexts into diverse sectors such as public health, disaster management, education, social services, and urban planning. Consequently, scholars have increasingly studied community asset mapping to understand its evolving methodologies, effectiveness, outcomes, and how it shapes community dynamics, capacity-building processes, and policy-making decisions.

METHODS

Search strategy (Asset Mapping) AND (community* OR participatory OR collaborat*).

Participant or population The reviewed studies include diverse communities and stakeholders, such as community members, local leaders, practitioners (e.g., social workers, public health professionals, urban planners), policymakers, and researchers involved in asset mapping activities. Special attention is given to literature representing varied demographic characteristics, including rural and urban populations, diverse socio-economic contexts, marginalized or vulnerable groups, and cross-cultural or international settings, thereby ensuring comprehensive coverage and understanding of how community asset mapping practices have evolved across different contexts and populations.

Intervention N/A.

Comparator N/A.

Study designs to be included Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA).

Eligibility criteria The initial eligibility criteria for study selection included that the study must be peer-reviewed, written in English, and published between February 2005 through February 2025. This timeframe was selected to gather the most recently published empirical research. Books and edited chapters were excluded.

Information sources Web of Science, Embase, Scopus, EBSCOhost, ProQuest.

Main outcome(s) The systematic review aims to identify and synthesize several key outcomes related to the evolution of community asset mapping over the past two decades. First, it will highlight changes and advancements in methodologies and practices of community asset mapping, including the integration of technological tools such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and digital participatory platforms. Second, the review will identify the range of contexts and domains where asset mapping has been effectively applied, noting the specific sectors or issues that have benefited most from its use. Third, it will summarize reported impacts and effectiveness of asset mapping initiatives, including their influence on community empowerment, resilience-building, and policy-making processes. Fourth, the review will discuss emerging trends and innovations in community asset mapping, along with potential gaps and methodological challenges that still persist. Finally, based on synthesized evidence, it will provide recommendations and practical implications for future researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and community stakeholders aiming to utilize or further develop asset mapping as a tool for sustainable community development.

Additional outcome(s) In addition to the primary outcomes, the systematic review will also achieve several supplementary results. First, it will reveal key barriers and facilitators influencing the implementation and sustainability of community asset mapping initiatives, highlighting lessons learned from diverse geographic and socio-economic contexts. Second, the review will provide insight into participatory dynamics, clarifying which community stakeholders are commonly included or excluded, and the implications this holds for equity and community representation. Third, the analysis will identify theoretical frameworks and conceptual approaches frequently used to guide asset mapping research, thus informing future theoretical advancements. Fourth, the review will shed light on ethical considerations and best practices around engaging communities in asset mapping processes, particularly regarding sensitive or marginalized populations. Finally, the review will explore the dissemination and knowledge translation strategies commonly employed to communicate asset mapping findings effectively to stakeholders, policymakers, and community members. These additional outcomes will enrich understanding and inform best practices for both academic researchers and practitioners engaging with community asset mapping.

Data management Covidence, an established systematic review management tool, will serve as the primary mechanism to manage records and data throughout this systematic literature review. Utilizing Covidence ensures rigorous, transparent, and efficient handling of references, screening processes, data extraction, and quality appraisal.

Specifically, Covidence will facilitate the importation and organization of citations retrieved from various databases, enabling seamless removal of duplicate records. The tool will support collaborative screening of titles and abstracts, as well as full-text reviews, by providing standardized inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring consistency among multiple reviewers.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis The data will undergo a critical assessment for quality and relevance using established quality evaluation criteria (Kmet, L.M., Lee, R.C., Cook, L.S., (2004). "Standard quality assessment criteria for evaluating primary research papers from a variety of fields". Each study will be scored based on the following scale: "yes" = 2, "partial" = 1, and "no" = 0. For quantitative studies, items deemed irrelevant to the study design will be marked as "not applicable (N/A)." The overall quality score for each quantitative and qualitative study will be calculated by summing the scores of applicable items, dividing the obtained score by the total possible score, and multiplying by 100 ([obtained score/ total possible score] × 100). To be included in the systematic review, studies must receive a score of 55-75% or higher, as determined by two independent reviewers in comparison to the overall scores.

Strategy of data synthesis The data synthesis for this systematic literature review will be conducted using thematic analysis, a qualitative analytical method that systematically identifies, analyzes, and interprets recurring themes within textual data. Initially, all selected literature will be thoroughly reviewed to achieve familiarity with the content, methodologies, and key findings related to community asset mapping. Following this immersion, initial codes will be generated to highlight significant data segments, capturing essential concepts, methods, contexts, applications, reported outcomes, and emerging trends within the field. These codes will then be organized into meaningful themes that reflect patterns and connections across the reviewed studies. Themes will be iteratively refined to ensure accuracy, consistency, and relevance to the research question. Finally, the identified themes will be synthesized and critically interpreted to provide a comprehensive understanding of how community asset mapping methodologies, practices, and outcomes have evolved over the past two decades, contributing to a deeper theoretical and practical understanding of the phenomenon.

Subgroup analysis N/A.

Sensitivity analysis N/A.

Language restriction English.

Country(ies) involved Canada.

Keywords community asset mapping; community based organizations.

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