

THE SUITCASE

a tool for place co-creation
and participatory mapping

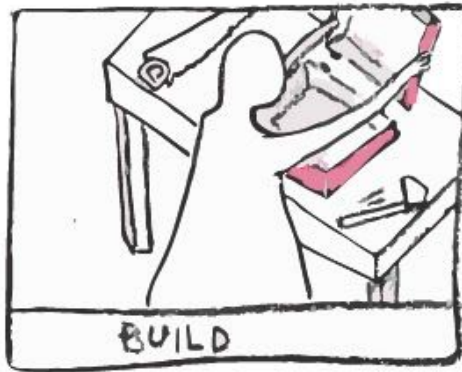


A tool powered by  and 
placemaking
europe

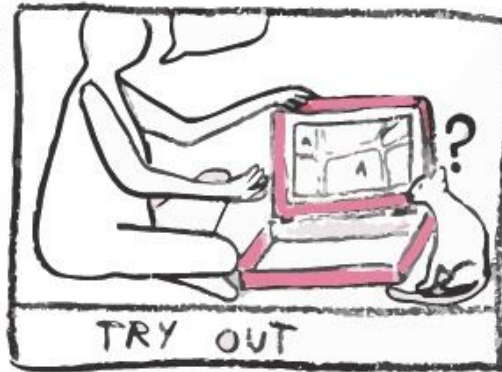
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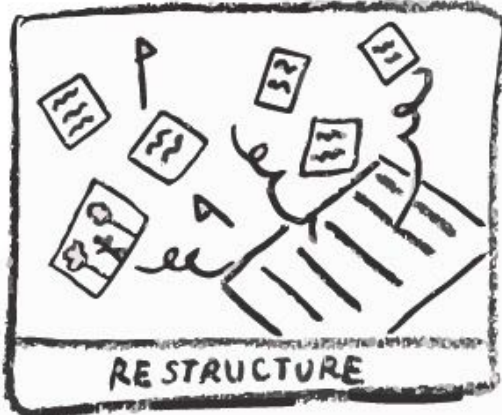
BUILD



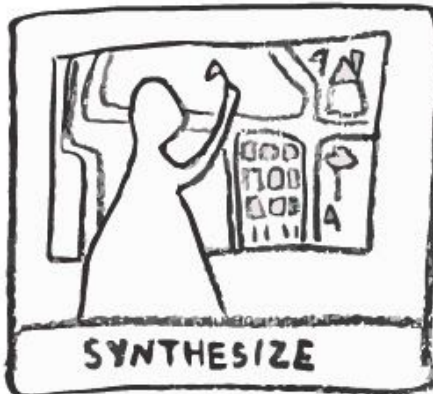
TRY OUT



PUT IT ON THE TABLE



RESTRUCTURE



SYNTHESIZE



SHARE

SUITCASE STORYBOARD

But remember : "Use it in any way you want, there is not just one way"

What is the suitcase ?

Behind the enigmatic term “the suitcase” lies a simple DIY (Do It Yourself) concept : an easily transportable, attractive and readable ensemble that enables the visualization of a project, evolves with it, and facilitates the involvement of people (co-makers, stakeholders) in the project's development. All of this, in nothing more than a box with handles.

This tool manual is based on two different cases where the suitcase has been used. First, by **Guido de Jong** in the De Nieuwe Haven area development project, in Vlaardingen, The Netherlands. Second, by **Sander van der Ham**, urban psychologist at STIPO, in an area development project in Lombardijen, The Netherlands.

To be more accurate, we should rather say the suitcase**S**. As a matter of fact, there is not one ultimate suitcase. There is a potential infinity of suitcases to be built, unique for each project. It is a concept and blueprint of a suitcase, like a box that can be filled and designed according to the needs, capacity and goals of a particular project. It is a versatile tool that can be at the same time a branding showcase for your project, or can be turned into a participatory mapping tool where communities can be involved in the design phase of the project.





How was it invented ?

The suitcase was first designed and used by **Guido de Jong**, a Dutch entrepreneur who initiated the process of area development *De Nieuwe Haven* in the old industrial neighborhood of Vlaardingen, the Netherlands. The whole process of imagining the future of the neighborhood was kick-started after the events and meetings organized at a local brewery he co-owns, located in the same neighborhood. In his words :

"The brewery is located in a beautiful building. With the events we organized, lots of people saw not only the building but also the area around it. People saw that the buildings were old, falling apart. It created a momentum to redevelop the area. It all started with meetings in the brewery, gathering architects, developers, people who know the history, enthusiastic people in general !

We started talking around the table, but nothing was visible. The brewery was a temporary location, I was missing something visual. You need to be able to point at something. Normally, there is a beamer but that's not central, it is outside of the group, it makes you look at the screen. The advantage of having something on the table is that people are focusing on the same thing in the middle of the group. That is how the idea of the suitcase emerged."

Picture credits : Guido de Jong

The suitcase mindset

The suitcase can be designed and used by **any city maker** who is looking for an original and easily adaptable tool to get to know a place, to visualize a project and its evolution, to engage people in its co-creation. It is also a tool for professionals eager to **challenge their working methods**, who are looking for ways to **be creative** and create a **ludic atmosphere** when engaging with people.

When you decide to use the suitcase, there are a few things to keep in mind :

Think the design ahead

You might need to build the suitcase yourself, or commission it from someone with design skills. Therefore it can be handy to think in advance a little bit, in terms of the size of the area you want to map, the information you want to put in, the way you want to use it (eg. : will it be carried around the whole neighborhood, or just brought it to a few meetings?). This will influence the size and the weight of the material you will use to build the suitcase.

Crafty

As we are more and more used to digital tools, where a click can paint a surface, using the suitcase is a good reminder that crafts are a lot of fun,

but can also be demanding in time and resources. Glue, stickers and pins will become close friends!

Guido's tip : Don't make it too big

As Guido says : “don't make it too big, it's a tool, and sometimes you should decide not to use it, it's not a purpose on its own”. Rather, think tactical : start small !

Sander's tip : Stay flexible

“My lesson learnt is that you just need to be flexible at any time, and you need to keep evolving. I guess the fun part about the suitcase is that it's like a blank slate of cork, which you can use in any way you want. If you realize half way that you need a bigger zoom-in for the map, just change it. It's a bit of a work in progress for yourself to understand the neighborhood.”



The suitcase : what for ?

The suitcase can be used for a wide variety of situations. So far, it was used by Guido as a tool for **area development**, while it was used by Sander to foster the **social understanding of the neighborhood** he was working in.

Depending on your project and approach, the suitcase can be used as a support for lively and interactive meetings (eg : using stickers or pins during interviews to map locations or rituals mentioned by stakeholders), or reflect participation by visualizing the steps a project is taking without a need to modify it directly during the interviews or meetings.

The suitcase, and especially the map it contains, can act as a story enabler, a medium that will make the collection of information easier, with any public. It can help to explore and get to know places, and will help to open up new networks by talking to people. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that not everyone is comfortable at reading maps. Therefore, the more qualitative the map is, the more are the chances that people will be able to talk about it.

A non exhaustive list of what the suitcase can help for :

- Collecting stories from past, presenting and identifying possible future uses of a places
- Visualizing and mapping routes, rituals, important places of an area
- Showcasing the evolution of a project, its current state
- Co-creating and co-developing a place : facilitate and anchor people's involvement, and ultimately be a tool for participatory mapping
- Creating a collective image of a neighborhood : people see each other's places, rituals, etc. They can agree or disagree, change things or approve. It can lead to the creation (or reinforcement) of common values or identity.

"We used it for a pretty large district, which consists of multiple neighborhoods. I guess if you pick a neighborhood or even a smaller scale area, then you probably get more into people's daily lives. You might start asking questions like : what walking roads do you use, where do you walk your dog, who do you meet ?" (Sander)

Dive in : participatory mapping as a tool for space (re) appropriation

The method of participatory mapping comes in contrast with traditional mapping practices embracing “top-down” approaches when collecting information. The actors of traditional mapping are often outsiders of the territory and its culture, qualified as experts. As it is acknowledged that maps can be powerful tools to anchor realities and perceptions, participatory mapping aims at diversifying the way maps are produced by involving communities as experts. In theory, participatory mapping is an inclusive and empowering method to visualize communities’ knowledge. The purposes of engaging with participatory mapping are diverse, and given that it has often been used by indigenous communities to assert their relationships with and rights over threatened resources and territories, it can also be used for a wider variety of purposes. They are categorized as follows by the researcher and activist Maeve Lydon¹ :

- **Conservation** (greenways and spaces, local farms, habitat and sensitive ecosystems, underground water sources, toxic sites, fruit trees, vacant land for community garden sites)
- **Heritage** (community history atlases, heritage trees, sites and elders stories, walking tours, lost streams and species)
- **Community Planning** (neighbourhood plans, traffic flow, trouble spots, unsafe and high crime areas, housing types, gentrification, income and services, health issues)
- **School Curriculum** (language arts, social studies, math, information technology, fine arts, physical education, science, personal health and planning)
- **Economic development** (capital flow, resource use, opportunity sites, markets, income and demographics)

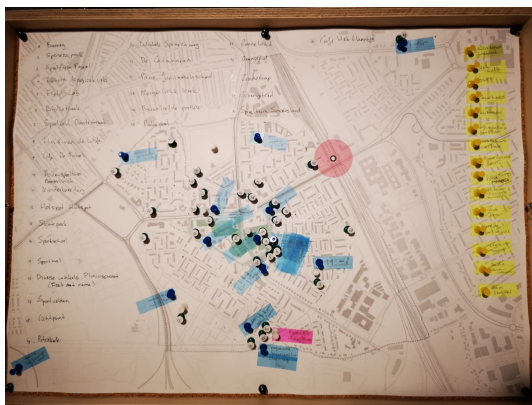
¹ Maeve Lydon is part of the Common Ground Community Mapping Project. The categorization can be found in her article “Community Mapping, The Recovery (and Discovery) of our Common Ground”, *Geomatica*, vol.57, p.7



When exactly ?

The suitcase can be best used at the initial phase of the project. It can also come halfway of a long term project. Indeed, it will renew, change your perspectives on the neighborhood and the people you collaborate with. It can help to open up to new networks, explore different parts of a neighborhood. Of course, doing some background desk research on the area before jumping in with the suitcase is always recommended, but is not mandatory. After all, it can be very interesting to have people's insight as a first source of information.

Nevertheless, it's very important to remember that using the suitcase as an interactive tool will provide you with perspectives, with a collection of individual ideas of ownership, belonging, relations to the place ; not automatically with a *representative* view of what is at stake in the neighborhood, or any kind of *truth* (if only there is any truth to be found).



Pictures credits : Sander van der Ham

	Guido's version	Sander's version	Your version
Frame of the suitcase	An emptied wallpaper suitcase	A2 wooden suitcase, light enough to carry around. Made by a professional ; 500€	
Decoration (outside)	A nice logo designed with the help of a graphic designer	None (so far)	
Material inside the suitcase	Very thin plates of steel	Plates of cork	
Tools	Strong magnets (red for real estate, green for infrastructures, yellow for Placemaking activities)	Post-its, pins, pens, little flags, colour coding	
Extra material	Pieces of newspaper	Pictures of the neighborhood, flyers, pieces of newspaper articles	
Possible improvements & ideas	A 3D print of the final version, add modular tools (cards, wires)	Process : involve stakeholders as "ambassadors" of the suitcase, conducting interviews themselves	

Resources : The Check List

These are inspirations. Create your own version !

Credits

Guido De Jong, Deltaweg/KW Haven

Sander Van der Ham, STIPO

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Links :

STIPO : <https://stipo.nl/>

More tools at : <https://placemaking-europe.eu/explore/>

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