



Think Global, Map Local!

Green Map System

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Lessons from Latin America: the Green Mapmaking Movement

Communities around the world are creating Green Maps charting local sustainability, natural and cultural sites. These unique representations of local environments can be utilized to make positive changes under the philosophy of local knowledge, action and responsibility. Each of these Green Maps shares a common language of Green Map Icons and adaptable green mapmaking processes – they also share an ultimate goal – an environmentally sound common future.

Over the past year, Green Map System's global center in New York has noticed an important new trend - Green Mapmaking in Latin America and Caribbean communities has increased exponentially. This gives an opportunity for local residents to learn about existing sustainability initiatives in this geographical region, and may result in increased participation and improvement of the local environment. Green Maps also inform visitors and others around the world, extending model best practices to new communities.

As further described below, Caribbean and Latin American countries which have active or completed Green Map projects include: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Peru and Venezuela.

These Green Map projects have developed into environmental education tools for schools and universities; been integrated into community-based planning and environmental conservation processes; strengthened intergenerational community programs; and promoted ecotourism and sustainable transportation in urban, rural, academic, institutional and community settings.

Whether undertaken by low income or well-equipped Mapmakers, the common objective is to help users discover new pathways toward sustainable development. Globally speaking, in 2006, Green Map System continued to expand at a record pace and 11 of the 64 newly initiated projects are based in Latin America (this includes 14

youth projects). 54 new Green Maps were published in a wide range of formats and designs in 16 diverse countries, scores more completed in community workshops. The growth and reach of Green Map projects based in Latin America is especially significant, amplifying the voice of community leaders and green living advocates from the global south.

2006 - A year of Thinking Globally, Mapping Locally in Latin America!

In 2006, a Latin American groundswell of Green Map accomplishments involved local project leaders from NGOs, grassroots, and university groups as they started several exciting new projects, four of which are youth initiatives. Some published engaging, fresh environmental 'portraits' of their own communities' assets and liabilities, and these Green Maps were freely distributed to residents and visitors, as well as to sustainability movement participants around the world.

Latin American Green Maps reflect great diversity – as demonstrated by some of the newest in San Juan, Puerto Rico where *Fundacion Sendero Verde* is focusing on environmental awareness, rare and endangered species, habitat protection and cultural resources. Another fresh project is being developed in Antigua Guatemala where *Punto de Apoyo Ciudadano* will be promoting ecotourism for both national and international visitors in this historical city. This is a collaborative project between community and businesses organizations along neighbors and students from low-income households. Guatemala is the 49th country involved in this global network.

Brazil

In the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo, Brazil, two youth Green Maps of Jahu and Valinhos were published in 2006. More than 1,000 students were involved in the process of Green Mapping their school's neighborhoods. The final products include new local icons, colorful drawings, pictures of people engaged in the project and distinctive design. Brazilian Green Mapmakers use Green Map's multilingual resources to discover, interpret and promote the cultural and natural resources of their campuses and surrounding regions, made possible with the assistance of *Mapa Verde Brazil*, one of the Green Map System's regional hubs, led by educator Leonardo de Mello.

Colombia

Seeds were planted in the traditional coffee-growing region of Colombia where the public schools of Pereira have adapted Green Map methodologies into the environmental curriculums for one rural and two urban K12 schools. The focus was on both improving student understanding of sustainable development and raising community awareness through mural maps. Led by *Fundación GeoVida* and supported by Captain Planet Foundation, this project is utilizing new resources for youth Green Mapmakers, recently translated and especially adapted for Colombian communities in rural and urban areas. With the goal of reaching large audiences without spending much money, each unique Green Map mural will be completed and shared with the surrounding community by 2007.

Bikerranqueros, another program led by *Fundacion GeoVida*, is promoting rural and urban bike-ecotourism in the city of Pereira and nearby small towns. They are developing digital maps, geocoding green sites with the Green Map Icons and inviting people of all ages to use their bicycles to discover experiential environmental education as they explore the hidden jewels of the region.

At the *Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira (UTP)*, Green Mapmakers are working in digital formats, with plans to distribute their first printed copies of campus Green Maps in 2007. "The Place Where You Want To Be" is intended as a promotion of UTP's campus as an ecotourist, archaeological, historical and academic spot. A unique feature of this first map is inclusion of the toponymy (place names, origins and meanings) of some of its sites, next editions and updates are already being considered.

GMS' environmental education tools have been useful to educators, research groups, and others, such as the community-based planning initiatives made by the Planning Office with the assistance of the Environmental Sciences Faculty of UTP.

From the same university, Jose J. Trejos, an environmental administrator student, is leading the Green Map project of *Quebrada Negra*, in the municipality of *Calarcá, Quindío*. The priority is to showcase their bamboo forests and the related sustainable production system. Working with the farmers in this community, plans include publishing both printed and mural Green Maps.

An interdisciplinary team (anthropologists, architects, environmental administrators, community leaders, social communicators) and technicians from the Colombian National Federation of Coffee Growers will be charting the Cultural Landscape of the Coffee Growing Area of rural *Risaralda*. This project is part of a larger campaign to promote the ecoregion's unique attributes for consideration of inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Chile

Chile's *Ciudad Viva* (Living City) is a community grassroots organization that has been promoting a more livable city environment in Santiago since 1999. They focus on sustainable transportation and safety along with the heritage districts and ecological resources of this world capital city. Green Maps are featured as inserts in their two most recently published newsletters, *La Voz de la Chimba*, designed to raise awareness of environmentally consciousness mobility in the districts of *La Chimba, Ñuñoa* and *Santiago Centro*. Their most recent 'Cities for Life' (*Ciudades para la Vida*) publication was launched for World Car-Free Day in September 2006 – 5,000 copies of three colorful Green Maps were distributed. In 2007 they will be printing the book '*Guía de Cultura y Patrimonio de La Chimba*' (Culture and Heritage Guide of La Chimba), a collaborative project which will include updated versions of their earlier Green Maps along with two new Santiago districts, *General Cemetery* and *Cerro San Cristobal*.

Venezuela

Green Map tools help give an expressive, powerful voice to the community in Valdez, Venezuela, where the Central University of Venezuela's Regional Urban Department of the Center of Studies on Development is conducting a citizen-led planning process around the construction of a natural gas refinery in the region. With the help of the globally shared Green Map Icons and mapping resources, community perspectives can become part of the decision-making process.

Cuba

Based at the *Centro Felix Varela* since 2000, the *Mapa Verde Cuba* national network, gives structure to the island's diverse participating mapmaking teams in all of its provinces. A national Green Map Hub, *Red Mapa Verde* has created international exchanges and provided videos and manuals documenting different experiences. In 2006 they extended their training sessions to reach potential mapmakers all over the island. As a partner in the recently published "Mapping our Common Ground" intergenerational Green Mapping manual (2005, in both Spanish and English), their method of developing environmental participation projects is extended to communities worldwide.

Conclusion

In Latin America, a total of 11 new projects joined the Green Map movement in 2006 – the total is now approaching 40 unique efforts. Latin-American countries projects have found good ways to facilitate the exchange of information in addition to the direct assistance of Green Map's global office and Carlos Martinez, its on-staff Latin American Liaison. A bilingual (Portuguese and Spanish) listserve and website at MapaVerde.org links the Mapmakers. There have been small regional/national gatherings in Brazil and Cuba, and more of these important capacity-building exchanges are being planned for the near future.

Moreover, Latin American Green Mapmakers share methodologies and promote environmental education approaches through presentations at related professional/academic conferences and public events, and through the publishing of other printed manuals and books. A 76-page manual entitled *Mapa Verde, una Mirada al Desarrollo Local* (Green Map, Local Development at a Glance) was produced by Cuban Green Mapmakers at *Centro Felix Varela*. A second updated and improved edition will be published in 2007. And as mentioned above, *Mapeando Nuestra Tierra Común* (Mapping Our Common Ground) was published in English and Spanish by the Mapa Verde Americas Network (Cuban, Brazilian, Canadian and American Green Mapmakers), will also be translated into Portuguese in 2007. The global Green Map office believes the growth of Mapa Verde will continue to accelerate in the coming months, and has committed resources and outreach to this objective.

Green Map projects also provide multilingual resources to gather the attention of new immigrants to North America, involving them in our common journey to a greener

tomorrow. For example, New York's Green Apple Map project offers exciting Green Maps and useful environmental information in Spanish and Chinese at GreenAppleMap.org. Several other North American Green Maps include Spanish legends and resources for the community, too.

Since 1995, Green Map System, the non-profit organization based in New York City, has energized a vibrant locally-led global movement focused on inclusive participation in sustainable community development. The global office of this movement has assisted over 375 projects in 49 countries, as seen at GreenMap.org.

English and Spanish versions and High Resolution Images are available.

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