

60 MIN • SECONDARY/POST-SECONDARY

# Mapping as Storytelling

**Objective:** In *Mapping as storytelling*, students are asked to critically reflect on maps and mapping as a way to understand migration journeys and how they are represented.

**Preparation:** Read and reflect on [Nakonechny's \(2017\)](#) story before coming to the session and jot down ideas about the assigned questions for discussion in class. This includes watching the videos and examining the photos linked in the piece. Questions to consider as you prepare: What stands out in this news story? How is Pierre's map different from other maps you've seen or used? What is the purpose of Pierre's map?

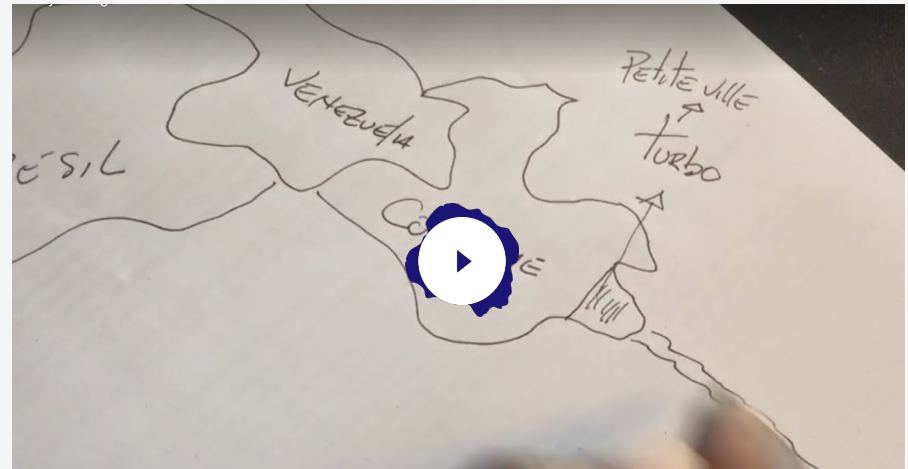
## Lesson plan

### Task 1: Introductory activity

30 MIN

#### *The power of map-making*

This workshop asks you to reflect on the power of map-making and the implications of what mapmakers choose to include and/or represent. The ubiquity of maps in our daily lives means that we often do not consider the decisions that are made in producing them and the dynamics at work in the stories they tell.



CBC – Simon Nakonechny

'Anywhere but Haiti': Asylum seeker retraces his 15,000-km odyssey to Canada

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/haiti-asylum-seeker-15000-odyssey-1.4307595>

# Mapping as Storytelling

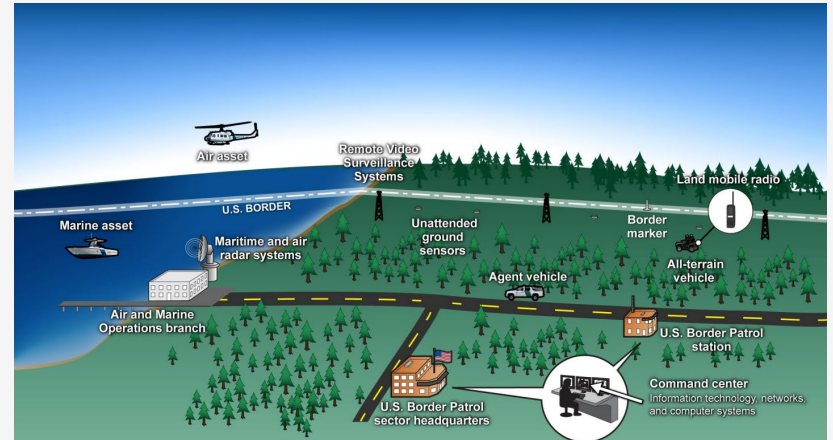
Part A: Show the video from the Nakonechny (2017) story as a refresher (3-minute clip).

Full-class debrief of preparation questions:

- What stands out in this news story?
- How is Pierre’s map different from other maps you’ve seen or used?
- What is the purpose of Pierre’s map?

Maps look different depending on the creator and the audience. This is a map drawn by someone whose migration journey ended by crossing the Canada-US border; it offers one perspective. Now let’s consider a graphic representation of this border from a US Customs and Border Protection report about the US’ northern border with Canada.

Part B: Examine the US Customs and Border Protection map. See *appendix B for larger image*.



United States Government Accountability Office

## Northern Borders Security – Figure 3: Examples of U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Use of Resources along the U.S.-Canada Border (p. 15)

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-470.pdf>

Divide students into small groups to discuss Pierre’s map and the US Customs and Border Protection map.

- What stands out in each of the maps?
- Who created these maps and for what purpose?
- What are the similarities and differences?
- What stories are told by each of these maps?
- What is missing or hidden from the maps?

Wrap up this task with a full-class debrief of the small-group discussions.

## Task 2: Story Mapping Task

30 MIN

### *Critically Reflect on Maps*

As you prepared for today's class, you looked at a map that Pierre drew as he reflected on his migration journey and we discussed what is included and what remains hidden in such representations. In the next part of this workshop, you are going to critically reflect on how maps are used to tell stories about migration.

Often maps of migration journeys simplify the times and spaces of the journey. We'd like to encourage you to think about some more nuanced elements of migration journeys that are not always captured in linear narratives about movement from "home" to "host" country:

- The decision to leave is not always clear cut and can change over time; conditions can build up gradually or shift in a moment [see our **Push & Pull Factors Education Module** for more on this topic].
- Waiting en route and/or getting "stuck" at various locations along the way. E.g. waiting for trains, connecting with a smuggler you trust, earning and saving money for the onward journey

- Return and/or thwarted journey; you don't always reach your intended destination on the first try; you may not have a clear destination in mind apart from finding somewhere safe, detention and deportation
- Shifting relationships to notions and spaces of "home," which could include family separations during the migration journey; family members left behind indefinitely; nostalgia and memory for people and places left behind; hope of possible return/reunification [see our **What does refuge look like? Provocation** for more on this topic].

“ Javier helped organize a union and had family members who were guerillas. When he began being followed, he left Guatemala. After riding La Bestia for 20 days he connected with the Sanctuary Movement and arrived in Canada in 1991.



16:32-20:19

[Listen to the excerpt from Javier's interview](#)

## Mapping as Storytelling

In this excerpt from his oral history, Javier describes his family's experience around the US-Mexico border crossing. While you listen to the excerpt, consider how you could tell this story visually. See *appendix A for transcript*.

Think about the following questions:

- Who are the actors in the story?
- What spaces does he describe?
- What actions, scenes, and/or movements take place?
- What are the relationships between these different elements and actors?
- What nuances do you anticipate would be difficult to represent visually?

Brainstorm answers to the above questions as a group (approx. 15-20 minutes).

*Instructor Note: If you're meeting in a virtual classroom, you may want to make use of [Miro](#) for your brainstorming discussion (interactive, virtual white board with sticky notes). Note that participants are required to create a free account in order to use this tool. If you're in a classroom, try to utilize a whiteboard to facilitate the brainstorming.*

### Task 3: Assignment for Submission

To be completed in groups

#### *Part A: Oral History*

In small groups, decide on which **one** of these oral histories you will “map”:

- **Santiago** - At age 14, Santiago travelled through Central America in hopes of making it to the United States. The civil war in El Salvador meant that his safety was in jeopardy. During this time, his mother was seeking resettlement for their family in Canada.
- **Javier (Spanish)** - Javier helped organize a union and had family members who were guerillas. When he began being followed, he left Guatemala. After riding La Bestia for 20 days he connected with the sanctuary movement and arrived in Canada in 1991.
- **Roberto (Spanish)** - Roberto was an activist with the Brigade of Agricultural Workers in El Salvador. Prompted by the persecution of his fellow activists, he fled El Salvador in 1984.
- **Maria** - During the civil war in El Salvador, Maria was caught in the middle of the violence. Inspired to create a safer life for her daughter, she travelled through Guatemala and the US to claim asylum in Canada in 1984.
- **Antonio** - Growing up on a family farm in El Salvador, Antonio learned the power of resiliency. Both the civil war and the presence of gangs threatened his life, forcing him to flee. Antonio now lives in Canada with his family.

# Mapping as Storytelling

## *Part B: Mapping as Storytelling*

1. Listen to the oral history and brainstorm as a group, as you did with the excerpt from Javier's story during the workshop.
2. Have a look at these examples for creative ways of visualizing people's stories, spaces, and experiences:
  - <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2020-coronavirus-lockdown-neighborhood-maps/>
  - <https://notanatlas.org/maps/making-cartographies-of-ourselves/>
3. Create a map that helps to visualize and tell the oral history you selected.

## *Part C: Written Reflection*

When you submit your map, include a written reflection (suggested: 5-6 pages, double spaced including references) to explain the choices you made in designing your map. Your write-up should also critically reflect on the following questions with reference to at least two resources:

- What are some of the challenges of representation?
- What decisions are made about exclusion/inclusion?
- What are the violences and dangers that come into that process?
- How can maps disrupt our understandings or interpretations of history and place?

Suggested resources:

- Tiffany Chung Interview: Maps of Memory  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ffp0cOCg\\_M0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ffp0cOCg_M0)
- Casas-Cortés, M., Cobarrubias, S., Heller, C., & Pezzani, L., (2017) Clashing Cartographies, Migrating Maps: Mapping and the Politics of Mobility at the External Borders of E.U. rope. ACME. <https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1094>
- Amalia Campos-Delgado (2018) Counter-mapping migration: irregular migrants' stories through cognitive mapping, *Mobilities*, 13:4, 488-504, DOI: [10.1080/17450101.2017.1421022](https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2017.1421022)
- Gillespie, M., Ampofo, L., Cheesman, M., Faith, B., Iliadou, E., Issa, A., Osseiran, S., & Skleparis, D. (2016, May 13). Mapping Refugee Media Journeys: Smartphones and Social Media Networks. Research Report. The Open University / France Médias Monde. Retrieved from [https://web.archive.org/web/20180423050900id\\_/http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/sites/www.open.ac.uk.ccig/files/Mapping%20Refugee%20Media%20Journeys%2016%20May%20FIN%20MG\\_0.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20180423050900id_/http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/sites/www.open.ac.uk.ccig/files/Mapping%20Refugee%20Media%20Journeys%2016%20May%20FIN%20MG_0.pdf)

## Resources

### Javier's story

*"They just left me a note that said, 'You are next.'"*



LISTEN TO JAVIER'S STORY



CBC – SIMON NAKONECHNY(2017)

'Anywhere but Haiti': Asylum seeker retraces his 15,000-km odyssey to Canada

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/haiti-asylum-seeker-15000-odyssey-1.4307595>



UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE(2019)

Northern Borders Security – Figure 3: Examples of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Use of Resources along the U.S.-Canada Border (p. 15)

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-470.pdf>

## Additional resources



LOUISIANA CHANNEL (2016)

Tiffany Chung Interview: Maps of Memory

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ffp0cOCg\\_M0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ffp0cOCg_M0)



CBC – LEAH COLLINS (2017)

Thousands of asylum seekers crossed into Quebec in 2017, and this artist spent 6 months capturing it

<https://www.cbc.ca/arts/thousands-of-asylum-seekers-crossed-into-quebec-in-2017-and-this-artist-spent-6-months-capturing-it-1.4290003>



NFB – MICHEL HUNEALT

An immersive experience based on 32 true stories

<https://www.nfb.ca/interactive/roxham/>

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COHDS (2021)

Reflections on cartographic languages with Severin Halder, Paul Schweizer and Pablo Mansilla Quinones

<https://vimeo.com/510880126>

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The Open University / France Médias Monde– Gillespie et al.(2016)

- Mapping Refugee Media Journeys: Smartphones and Social Media Networks

[https://web.archive.org/web/20180423050900id\\_/http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/sites/www.open.ac.uk/ccig/files/Mapping%20Refugee%20Media%20Journeys%2016%20May%20FIN%20MG\\_0.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20180423050900id_/http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/sites/www.open.ac.uk/ccig/files/Mapping%20Refugee%20Media%20Journeys%2016%20May%20FIN%20MG_0.pdf)

“ Javier helped organize a union and had family members who were guerillas. When he began being followed, he left Guatemala. After riding La Bestia for 20 days he connected with the Sanctuary Movement and arrived in Canada in 1991.



16:32-20:19

[Listen to the excerpt from Javier's interview](#)

**Javier:** [16:32] Y a los tres que llegaron de San Diego, también les tuve que contar casi todo. Entonces ahí ellos organizaron, me dijeron, a tu esposa le vamos a dar dinero para que vaya a traer sus otros tres hijos. Y tú te vas para Nogales a la Iglesia Católica, ahí está un centro, otro centro. Y yo andaba llevando a la niña, yo andaba llevando a la niña de 7 años. Y a la niña la pasaron en medio de quince niñas, iban con sombreritos de fiesta, que venían, imaginariamente de un, de celebrar un cumpleaños. Y a ella la pusieron en medio. Sí, un gorrito de fiesta. Como ya tenía 7 años, le dijeron, cuando paren el carro y miras a la persona uniformada que nos va a parar, tu no dejas de hablar, haz como que estas hablando inglés, haz como que estas hablando inglés le dijeron y habla con los niños ahí, luego todos tienen que estar echando relajo. Y la pasaron en frente de la caseta

## Javier

29 July 2019

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**Javier:** And to the three that arrived from San Diego, I also had to tell almost everything. So, they organized it all there. They said to me, we're going to give your wife money so that she can go get your other three children. And you will go to Nogales to the Catholic Church. There is another centre, another centre. And I was taking my girl, I took the 7 year-old girl. They passed my girl among fifteen girls who all had party hats on, as though they were coming from celebrating an imaginary birthday party. And they put her in the middle. Yes, a party hat. Since she was already 7 years old, they told her, when they stop the car and you see the uniformed person that is going to stop us, don't stop talking. Pretend as though you are speaking English and speak to the other kids there, as though you're all having lots of fun and clowning around. And they passed her in front of the Immigration gate.



## Appendix A – Javier's Story

**Javier:** [17:42] Y luego a mi, ya llegaron dos pastores, uno de la iglesia bautista, metodista y bautista, eran los dos pastores que llegaron. Uno estaba bien viejito y el otro estaba joven todavía. Y me dijeron, y si sale alguna gente de inmigración americano, le dices que tú, que nosotros estudiamos las especies de pájaros y tú nos estás enseñando en donde se encuentran. Ya le dio risa.

Llevaba un libro de pájaros, y una camera. Pero la camera era para controlar los agentes de inmigración americanos. Y pasamos caminando por una hondonada así, pasamos caminando, había nieve todavía. Y pasamos caminando. Si, nieve. En el barranco, en donde íbamos caminando los tres. Y entonces le dijo yo al pastor, mira, mira Pedro, allá se mira algo en algún cerro, déjame ver que es. Ah, es una vaca, no hay problema. No, una vaca. No, la nieve estaba en el piso. Y luego, el cerco que pasamos era de tres hilos de alambre de púas – pues así lo pasamos, y ya me recibieron dos personas, una jovencita, y una ancianita, pasaba de ochenta y cinco años. De tres hilos. De este altura. En Nogales antes, pero estaba a lado 28 años atrás.

**Javier:** *And then with me, two pastors came, one from the Baptist church, Methodist and Baptist, those were the two pastors that came. One of them was very old and the other one was still young. And they said to me, if someone from US Immigration stops us, you tell them that you, that we are studying bird species and that you are showing us where they are located. This made you laugh.*

*I had a guidebook about birds, and a camera. But the camera was to monitor the American immigration agents. And we walked past a hollow like that, we passed by walking, there was still snow. We passed by walking. Yes, snow, on the gully that the three of us were walking along. And so I say to the pastor, look, look Pedro, I see something there on that hill, let me see what it is. Oh, it's a cow, there's no problem. No, a cow. No, the snow was on the ground. And then, the fence that we passed was three strands of barbed wire – well, even that we passed over, and then two people received me, a young woman and an older woman, of more than eighty five years.*

*Of three strands. It was this high. [gesturing the height]. It was before Nogales, but I had been next to there 28 years prior.*

## Appendix A – Javier's Story

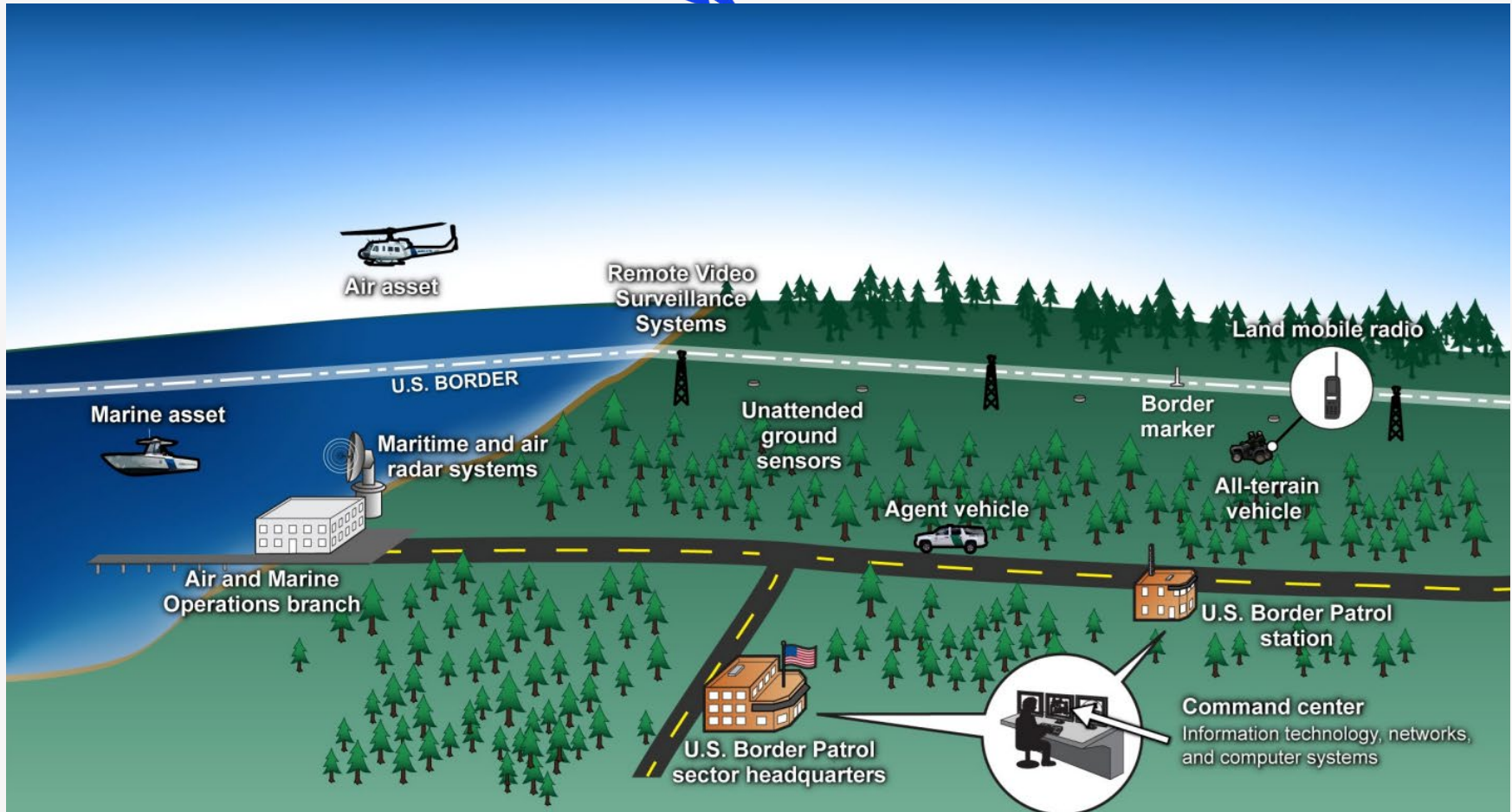
**Javier:** [19:14] Y me dijeron, si miras un carro, mayormente si dice inmigración americana, te tiras al piso. El paso estaba así de alto. Porque aquí va pasar la guayín, la camionetilla que nos va a recoger. Y ya llegó el carro que estábamos esperando, se dio vuelta alrededor de un árbol y se parqueo al lado de nosotros y rápido, metense, metense, toma el periódico y haz como que vas leyendo me dijeron.

Muchos nervios, muy emocionado. Cuando me dijeron, ya los pies los tienes en los Estados Unidos, en tierra americana. ... Ya me hicieron recordar como que fue ayer cuando pasó todo esto.

**Javier:** *And they said to me, if you see a car, especially if it says US Immigration, throw yourself to the ground. The pass was this high. Because this is where the wagon, the truck will pick us up. And the car we were waiting for arrived, it turned around the tree and it parked next to us and they said, quickly, come in, come in, take the paper and pretend that you're reading it.*

*I was very nervous, very excited. When they said, you already have your feet in the United States, on US soil. ... You've made me remember as though it was yesterday that this all happened*

# Appendix B – CBP Map



United States Government Accountability Office

Northern Borders Security – Figure 3: Examples of U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Use of Resources along the U.S.-Canada Border (p. 15)

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