Context Map (with hints to stakeholder mapping)

What is it used for?

To visualize various elements that you associate with your challenge. It helps to gain an overview of the already known.

It also can be a collection of different perspectives of a group of people.

With the help of a context map you brainstorm knowledge and "educated guesses" regarding to a tricky problem, planned product or service. It is a helpful and inspiring starting point for desk research, interviews and observations.
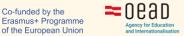
There are different ways to approach a context map, that also can be combined:

- Brainstorm knowledge, experience, assumptions to the topic. Cluster the results & name the clusters (a possible structure: Who? What? How? Why?)
- Identify political, cultural, social and environmental trends surrounding the topic (You could add results of a socialspatial approach).
    - Add technological trends and / or user-trends
- Brainstorm aspects of an internal framework (e. g. of involved organizations, companies, agencies …)

Methodical hints:

- You can use
    - paper (and sticky notes) and pen
    - photos, graphics and any kind of visualised data
    - daily items (that are (not) usual related in the context of the topic)
    - 3D-objects made of / combinations of e. g. paper, cardboard, yarn & wool, (parts of) daily items, building bricks …
    - methods of body storming (e. g. sociometric methods)

- Context mapping is not just about collecting and brainstorming. Go one step further and discuss the collected information in order to visualize / perceive details and patterns, that no one noticed (wanted to notice) before!
- Define a clear time frame for the phase of brainstorming (10 Minutes – 2 hours) and that of clustering

Hints to stakeholder mapping

Some descriptions or tools of context mapping integrate the visualisation of the stakeholders and the relations between them. However, the stakeholder mapping can also be an independent step.

Some possible elements of a stakeholder map:

- Symbols, representing the stakeholders (using different materials as named above)
  - their closeness or distance to the topic / to each other / to users
- Visualisation of communication between different stakeholders
  - intensity, regularity of communication
  - examples for typical used phrases / (miss)conceptions
  - mutual prejudices (and reactions to them)
  - examples of used channels of communication
- Brainstorming on aspects like:
  - self-perception
  - (unwritten) rules a stakeholder has to follow
  - interests, a stakeholder pursues
  - (hidden) mutual animosities <> emotional connections
  - common goals <> conflicts
  - what stakeholder don't tell each other