

Question responses

These are the questions asked in the Zoom call. The questioner is given the title and the question is in bold italic below that. The replies I have give are based on my personal experience of network mapping with communities and organisations in the UK.

Drew Mackie

From Jeff Miller:

“Can the relationship lines be made in different widths to show strength of connections?”

Yes, you can assign a number to indicate width in as an attribute in a connection. The sumApp data collection system can generate these values based on standard answers to survey questions around how nodes are connected. You can then instruct Kumu to set the width of connection according to that attribute.

From Olivia Bush:

‘Please could you say a bit more how this can be used for strategic conversations? Perhaps pulling out one more granular example?’

Just to make sure we’re talking about the same thing here’s a description of ‘strategic conversation taken from the Strategic Thinking Institute blog.’ at :<https://www.strategyskills.com/facilitating-strategic-conversations/>:

A strategic conversation is defined as a verbal interchange of thoughts that result in new insights on how to achieve progress toward a common goal. The goal may be quantitative, qualitative or problem-solving in nature. The interchange, or giving and receiving of ideas, represents the intersection of thoughts, opinions, and assumptions that begins to create a shared understanding of the situation. Once you and your partner have established context, and are on the proverbial “same page,” you can begin to identify issues, explore options, and chart a path forward.

Strategic conversations are valuable in internal situations such as improving collaboration between different functional areas, setting strategic direction, and innovating for competitive advantage. They are also of value in external situations such as developing strategic partnerships with customers, strengthening relationships with suppliers, and understanding market dynamics.

The barriers to internal strategic conversations include the following:

- 1. Silos: Departments and levels are not on the in alignment because they are unaware of each other’s strategies.*
- 2. Lack of buy-in: Inability to influence commitment without authority across functions.*
- 3. Fire drills: Constantly reacting to the urgent, but unimportant matters that pop up.*

Do you notice any of these barriers to strategic conversations within your organization?

The barriers to external strategic conversations include the following:

- 1. Transactional versus a partner relationship with customers, resulting in price-focused interactions.*
- 2. Inability to ladder up within a client or account, leaving you stuck working with non-decision makers.*
- 3. Selling product instead of facilitating the exchange of value, causing you to be shut out of future opportunities with key customers because you aren't bringing anything new to the table.*

In my experience, this stuff is what netmaps do best. I have been involved in several mapping exercises where the data holding capabilities of the map have come to dominate the thinking of map builders and users. We've come to call this the 'data trap'. The unique contribution of a netmap is to identify the shape and structure of the network and to pinpoint its most central nodes - those likely to influence the network or to spread information. These are high-level attributes concerned with overall strategy. The search for needs and offers could be done through a common database or through a specialist system such as Hexitime.. Concentration on the detail and the classification of data and the need to keep this up to date can often obscure the real strategic value of a network map.

From Sophia Mody:

'How many fields can you add and is there a character limit on the response'

I don't know this one.

From Kristin Johnstad:

'Who are the typical users? Evaluators? Funders? Or Network Leadership of a network or Initiative?'

In my experience, the typical user in the UK is a 'community enabler' of some sort - an activist or connector. It's at this level that strategic perspective and need for on the ground action come together and they can see uses related to their day job. Recently, there has been some interest from funders and evaluators - although I am often surprised by how new this all seems to them.

From Julie Mackie:

'Why might I choose to use sticky studio above Kumu? IS it better to start with Kumu?'

It depends a lot on who you want to involve in your map creation. If you want to collect information and get buy in, probably best to start with Sticky Studio - but show how it creates a Kumu map instantaneously and stress the analytic properties of the Kumu map. If your map turns into 'just another directory', it's failed. On the other hand, if the map is to be based on research data you might be better to dive straight into Kumu.

From Susannah McWilliam:

'Can you add individuals and then pull them into multiple maps? Can you search for elements that may appear in multiple maps and pull them into a new map?'

As long as the maps are held in the same project, you can add a node from another map by pressing 'e' on the keyboard and starting to type its name. A blue list of nodes with those start letters will appear - clicking on the appropriate node will add it to your map. While the node is still highlighted, press 'c' to connect to other nodes on the map as you type into the resulting box a blue list of nodes will appear and clicking on one will connect it to the highlighted node. I find that these keyboard moves are the quickest way to build a map during a workshop and I often project the map on a wall so that participants can see its development in real time. This is a great way to get buy in to the map

From Kristin Johnstad:

'The KEY VALUE from my perspective of using sticky studio first (and playing with that) is to get buy in from network or initiative members. Staying with your network as they mapping and you draw out as facilitation (what do you notice in network patterns? What are opportunities to strengthen? Etc) The network gives the signal "this mapping is useful and energizing. We should shift to Kumu to version to capture over time and add more metrics.'

It's possible to export Sticky Studio results as a JSON file and to import that into Kumu. This will create the Kumu map and if you have set up a Kumu view to size and colour nodes and connections, you get an instant and analysable result I have yet to use this sequence in a real online workshop but hope to do this in the near future.

Matthew Mezey (Q):

'I often wonder whether dynamic 'Timebanking' functionality might make Kumu maps even more valuable and 'sticky'. I haven't really thought it through though...'

Don't really know on this one, although it's a question that I've been asked before. It might be achieved by noting the banked exchanges on connections and updating what's owed etc.

Susannah McWilliam:

'what's the experience of keeping the information up to date, e.g. if a person that is in the map has moved on or takes on a new role with new priorities, interests and connections?'

My recent experience in two major mapping projects suggests that a large permanent map needs a management system to allow a map manager and map members

Drew Mackie:

'We have examples of needs /offers Kumu maps in Islington and pan London'

Both these projects have used the sumApp data collection system to feed a Kumu map. In Islington, we have published these on a website for public use.

Gene Bellinger:

"I unfold models as stories... <https://kumu.io/-/4619>"

In my view all network maps are composed of stories about who connects and why. And then the more analytic stories about shape and structure. But they're non-linear stories. As systems guru Donella Meadows wrote:

'Words and sentences must, by necessity, come only one at a time in a linear, logical order. Systems happen all at once. They are connected not just in one direction, but in many different directions simultaneously. To discuss these properly, it is necessary somehow to use a language that shares some of the same properties as the phenomena under discussion. Pictures work for this language better than words because you can see all the parts of the picture at once.'

In a project in Lambeth we are mapping the issues and organisations related to black unemployed people over 35 starting with a storytelling workshop to provide material for a netmap incorporating internet research on support organisations. This eventually provides the structure and content for a card game that can be used to explore support pathways and create individual stories of user journeys.

Matthew Mezey (Q):

'Do needs/offers work if they just sit on people's profiles though? Is it possible to see the new offers/needs?'

if we update the maps regularly through sumApp this can work but needs active management and promotion. sumApp can send regular reminders to update, but map members have to feel that the map is useful. You could filter according to these lists and time tag the 'latest changes' so you display only nodes that had changed their offers after a certain date. Incidentally we are generally not using 'needs' as an attribute as they change frequently and a person searching the map knows what their needs are and really just wants to see what others can offer to satisfy these.

Iori baugh littlejohns:

'What recommendations do you have for someone new to Kumu?'

Play around with it. The best way to learn what Kumu can do and to how to operate the system is to crash around and make mistakes and try things out. Using Kumu is not just about using the software. It's about learning to 'read' network maps. Think of your confusion the first time you saw a spreadsheet - but you soon learn to understand the idea. Same with netmaps. Also keep in mind that netmaps are about shape and structure and centrality. Kumu provides the analytic tools to explore these aspects.

Jeff Miller:

'for networks that span multiple geographic regions... is there a way overlay the weavr networks over a map?'

Not sure about Weavr, but Kumu can locate nodes on an OpenStreetMap base. We will often suppress the connections in a dense map as these can obscure the underlying geomap.