



MANNHEIMER MAPATHONS



Promoting Integration-- Providing Humanitarian Aid

The project (acronym **MAMAPA**) provides for the organization of a series of **Mapathons** (see retro: **Mapathon: Brief Description**) -- with the participation of newly-arrived immigrants/refugees -- in the Rhine-Neckar area. The Project Director is Dr. Robert Danziger (see retro: **About the Project**).

Mapathon Organization

The Mapathons take place at different times of day (generally late afternoons, Mondays to Thursdays). The number of participants may vary (ca. 15-30) depending on the capacity of the available computer room. A mapathon lasts approximately 2,5 to 3 hours. Since January 2018 we have organized 22 Mapathons in Mannheim, Ludwigshafen, and Heidelberg.

A contact list created during participant **recruitment** efforts allows individuals to be notified **in advance** of planned mapathons (location, date, if known in advance, area to be mapped, etc.). Available **workplaces are reserved** for each participant.

Necessary IT infrastructure (PC/laptop, network access, multimedia equipment) and **software** (enabling mapping based on aerial imagery) will be provided. **Training for Mapathon beginners** and "experienced" is provided. Generally, beginners can work effectively after an introduction of about 30 minutes.

Participant teams are formed; new **immigrants are encouraged to work with "locals" in tandem**. Tandem work as a component of the Mapathon has made our project unique.

A further element of the project idea is that, when possible, participants should have a personal connection to the areas that are mapped during the Mapathon. This is done by mapping to resolve a specific type of emergency (e.g. mapping refugee camps) or by focusing on an area which may be familiar to (some) participants. This directly demonstrates the humanitarian contribution of the Mapathon.

The participation is voluntary. Drinks and snacks will be provided. Travel reimbursement will be offered to recent immigrants.

Participation requirements: "some" experience with a PC and mouse and sufficient German language comprehension (B1/B2).

Benefits of participation

Voluntary participation in a Mapathon carries several benefits.

- For new immigrants, Mapathon participation provides an opportunity for both **increased social integration** and **improvement of language skills**.
- The **tandem-based collaboration** between recent immigrants and local residents **breaks down prejudices and stereotypical thinking** and help **build mutual trust**.
- Participation is also a **direct encounter with geography**, leading to increased awareness of the earth we live on, its organization and its condition.
- Participants gain **insight into modern cartographic practice**. This is done through "hands-on" **use of specialized software**. Participants have an opportunity to deepen their knowledge by through repeated participation.
- The concrete work done represents a **meaningful humanitarian contribution**. It leads to the improvement of the conditions of those living in the mapped areas and can, in certain situations, actually be **life-saving**.

Communication

The project requires the active support of people and organizations with contact to, and experience in, immigrant environments. This means municipal/regional authorities, charitable institutions, language school directors, integration organizations, and leading figures from (formal and informal) groups that new immigrants themselves have established.

In addition, it is **essential to recruit resident participants as tandem partners**. Mapathons generally take place during the workday. This means that mobilization both in pensioner and student circles and among other integration-oriented associations is particularly important.

In order to stimulate broader awareness of, and interest in, the project:

- **Publicity materials** (infosheets, flyers, posters) are strategically distributed.
- A series of brief **project presentations** are scheduled as often as possible, at varied venues
- A project **website** provides extensive, up-to-date information and documentation
- The **local press** should be informed about important project events and developments

Contact

Further information about the project: <https://mamapa.org> (DE and EN)

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Become a tandem-Partner: <https://mamapa.org/mitmachen/tandem-partner>

Join the association - Mannheimer Mapathons e.V.: <https://mamapa.org/mitmachen/vereinsmitglied-werden>

Mapathon: a brief explanation

Developments in the field of digital cartography in the past decades have made themselves felt in the humanitarian sphere. Humanitarian cartographers have developed tools and methods to manage geographic data and produce maps which can be used by aid organizations. Currently, only a relatively small percentage of the earth's population is accurately "on the map". Where there are extensive, up-to-date maps (i.e., Google, Bing, etc.) these tend to cover areas where commercial potential is greatest. Inversely, lack of cartographic information is particularly acute where the poorest and most vulnerable people of our planet make their homes. This means that when natural disasters strike (storms, earthquakes, drought and crop failures) or where war and insecurity create emergencies and mass migrations, good maps are usually inexistant (or hopelessly inaccurate). As a result, delivering aid quickly and effectively becomes very difficult.

Over the years, mapathons have played a critical role in humanitarian cartography. Whenever there is a need to act quickly to deliver aid where good maps do not exist, volunteers dedicate their time and energy to generate the basic data from which these maps can be produced (Fig.1, below). A mapathon then is a event, where people come together for a few hours to capture as much geographic information as they can. Their outputs are stored on-line in real-time in OpenStreetMap (osm.org) and thus immediately available for use by organizations in the field.

What is a Mapathon? (video 120 Sek.): youtu.be/pAcsCmvG2hs



About the project

Director: Robert Danziger - Mannheim, Germany

After first arriving in Mannheim in 1976, he worked as an assistant professor in the Social Sciences at Mannheim University from 1978-1982. He accepted a position in the IT Service at the European University Institute in Florence (an entity of the EU and Member States) in 1982. In retirement in Mannheim since 2013, for several years he followed courses in cartography and geoinformatics at Heidelberg University.

In 2016 he began voluntary collaboration with the French NGO, CartONG, (in Chambéry) and currently occupies a post on its Board.

Other active engagements: in 2006, after a trip to West Africa, he initiated an educational project in Larabanga, Ghana (www.liei-ghana.org). The project has evolved and since 2016 he has been working to train a community group in mapping skills essential for developing local tourism.

Project support: a number of organizations, local groups and regional authorities have been actively supporting the project.

- **CartONG¹:** an NGO (16 employees and ca. 60 volunteers) founded in 2006, provides cartographic and related technical support and offers training to humanitarian and development organizations (e.g. Doctors without Borders, UNHCR, IRC) and local initiatives worldwide. CartONG provided financial aid to the project during its initial phases.
- **Disastermappers Heidelberg²:** this collective organizes mapathons and training at Heidelberg University. The experience their members have brought to the project has been key to its success.
- **Abendakademie Mannheim³** has been an enthusiastic supporter of the project, generously offering its infrastructure for mapathons.
- **City Library of Ludwigshafen⁴** has offered its infrastructure for mapathons and organizes public talks on related topics.
- **The Goethe Institute⁵, Internationaler Bund⁶** and the Abendakademie in Mannheim as well as the **Volkshochschule Ludwigshafen⁷** actively encourage their immigrant students to participate at the mapathons.
- **The Mannheim Technical College⁸** (Fac. of Social Work) has recognized the project's potential for student training.
- **The Integration Offices of the cities of Mannheim⁹ and Ludwigshafen¹⁰** have greatly helped to publicize the project in the region.
- **BASF (Ludwigshafen):** a generous donor in the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region

¹cartong.org; ²disastermappers.wordpress.com; ³abendakademie-mannheim.de; ⁴ludwigshafen.de/lebenswert/stadtbibliothek/; ⁵goethe-mannheim.de; ⁶internationaler-bund.de/standort/209994/; ⁷vhs-lu.de; ⁸hs-mannheim.de; ⁹mannheim.de/de/service-bieten/integration-migration; ¹⁰ludwigshafen.de/buerger nah/integration/integrationsbeauftragte/

Mannheimer Mapathons e.V. is a registered non-profit organization.

If you support our goals, please become a member (<https://mamapa.org/mitmachen/vereinsmitglied-werden>) or make a tax-deductible donation (<https://mamapa.org/mitmachen/spenden>).

Mapathon images



Contact

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New project directions (2022 to ?)

The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions forced an abrupt end to our Mapathons activities as they had previously been carried out.

From “Live” to “On-line” :

Like many other organizations, we began looking for on-line solutions which would allow us to maintain the network of participants that had been built up over the previous years.

As well, beginning in the Winter/Spring 2020 until the end of 2022, the existing contacts with other Mapathon organizations were extended. Mapathons.

Working together with:

- DisasterMappers Collective - Heidelberg University (Geographic Institute)
- Humap - Trier University
- OpenStreetMap Ghana
- LECLARA - Larabanga, Ghana
- CartONG - France
- the University of Applied Sciences Mannheim (Faculty for. Social Work)
- the Intercultural Center Heidelberg

we organized or participated in Mapathons organized by others.

Clearly, the integration-oriented goals of the project could not be as strongly expressed during this period. At the same time, however, our participants became more aware that they in doing this mapping, they had become part of a large, worldwide humanitarian community.

(...and back again?) With the relaxation of COVID rules (end of 2022) we were able to once again organize a live Mapathon. On 06.10.2022 ,18 participants -- members of the local islamic community and tandem partners from our project -- met in the Mosque of the Islamic Workers Association Al-Faruq in Neckarstadt-West. This very successful event may well serve as a model (“targeted mapathons”) for a future round of live events.

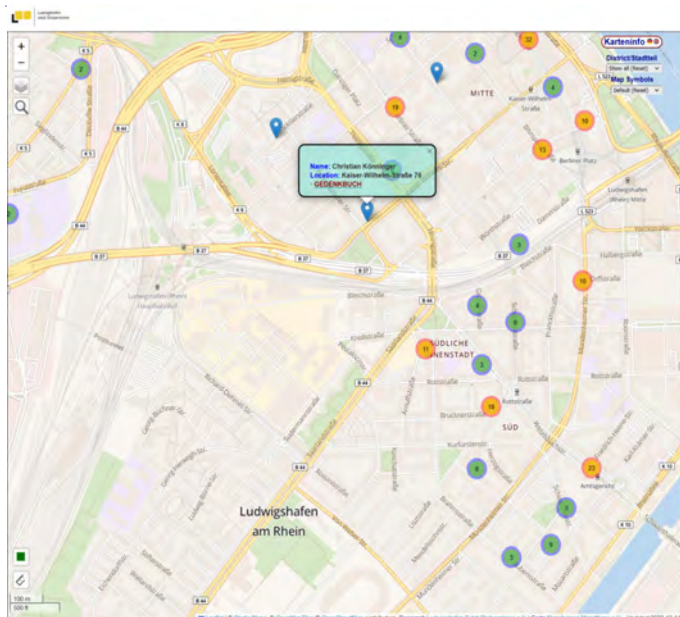
Cartographic Support:

We have often noticed that associations or working groups sharing our goals often do research or organize activities in which geographical references play a significant role. Much of the time, however, there is no visual, i.e., cartographic representation of such references.

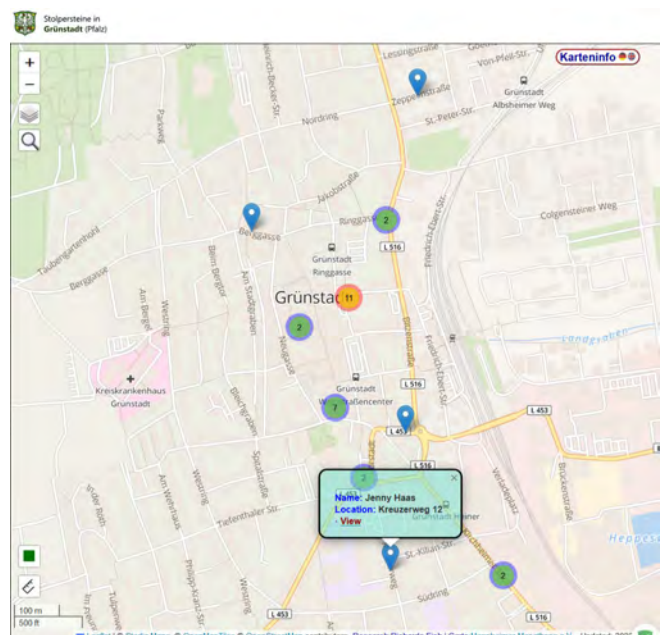
Why this is so, is not hard to guess: they simply do not have the skills to produce good interactive maps. Maps that depict cultural and historical events and places are particularly interesting and enlightening. There is no lack of historical events and actors whose traces can be precisely located at a specific location in geographical space. Very often these are also part of a broader history and can be presented, for example, as a “route” or in the form of a “self-guided tour map”. Moreover, there are a number of techniques to integrate a time dimension into a map.

As our time permits, we offer our cartographic expertise for these kinds of representations. Inquiries to: director@mamapa.org

Below are two interactive maps we recently put online for colleagues. Other cooperation (e.g. with the MArchivum Mannheim) are currently underway.



[Ludwigshafen Setzt Stolpersteine e.V.](#)



[Stolpersteine in Grünstadt \(Pfalz\) - R. Eick](#)