Designing a participatory narrative map to document and communicate the cultural identity of the Mahanak community, Bangkok

Extended Project Qualification (Artefact)

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Abstract

This project focuses on designing and creating a participatory narrative map of Mahanak in the form of a leaflet. The map combines illustration and information obtained through interviews with elders and classes with students in Mahanak. The artefact was developed through a multi-step process including research, hand painting, interviews, designing, and printing. Programs such as Canva and Procreate were integrated to make the design process more efficient. Challenges related to the design and software were addressed, with future developments planned to make the model available online and expand it to other parts of Bangkok. This project deepened my design and artistic skills and demonstrated the potential for combining art and economics through cartography.

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1 Introduction

Mahanak is one of the poorest sub-districts in Bangkok, Thailand. Once a thriving hub centred on the Bobae market, where goods were traded along the canal, the area declined sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some residents even moved away. Over time, the area has largely faded from public attention. This area is made up of Thai-Chinese and Muslim communities. Because of the economic decline, they have become more cautious toward others, creating a quiet sense of division within the area. Having moved to the Mahanak sub-district over three years ago, I experienced what it is like to be a local living here: an ailing economy with no tourists and no livelihood. I kept wondering what I could do to revitalise the local economy while also building a sense of unity and belonging from within the community, which led me to undertake this Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).

Currently, there is a lack of information about the area, including maps, the area's history, and local recommendations for things to do. My solution is to address all the missing elements to boost Mahanak's economic vitality. By working with 100 children in local Muslim primary schools, teaching them Islamic art and cartography skills such as interviewing, drawing icons, and assembling timelines, I aim to create a map that attracts tourists and boosts economic activity in the area.

This paper presents my journey in completing the EPQ on building a community-engaged map of Mahanak. The Design Brief outlines the requirements I developed to ensure my artefact best achieves my goals. The Literature Review presents the research process needed to bring this idea to life. It addresses the importance of culture and community, cultural loss in Bangkok, and a case study of successful community-led revitalisation in Talat Noi, while also exploring map types and aesthetics to help me decide which would best fit my aims. The Methodology then walks through the technical aspects needed to create the artefact. Finally, the Evaluation offers judgement and reflection on my journey of completing the artefact.

Despite the challenges encountered while completing this project, I believe it has helped me develop skills such as time management, research, creativity, and presentation, which are essential for pursuing my career in Urban Studies. In addition, I gained a deep sense of empathy while collaborating with local students, teaching them the skills they need for their future.

2 Design Brief

2.1 Project Design Brief

The purpose of this artefact is to create a functional, community-engaged tourist map that includes historical information and local recommendations. The target group is individuals who want to explore a new place and learn more about the Mahanak area. The map should include key aspects of the area, such as historic heritage and religious spaces, as well as icons drawn by local students, and interviews with older people. To ensure the spatial accuracy of the map, I will use Google Maps as a reference to trace the street layout so that roads and distances are represented in the correct proportions.

2.2 Success Criteria

To consider the artefact successful, the following criteria would need to be met:

1. A **physical map** of the area should be produced in the form of a **leaflet**
2. The map should be **accurate**, showing landmarks and points of interest
3. Information should reflect **input from locals** on what they value through interviews, and be reflected in the landmark choices
4. Design and aesthetic choices should be **cohesive** with the purpose of the artefact

2.3 Planning the Methodology

Below, I will describe the steps I will take to begin my research, structure my community-collaborative map, and complete my project successfully.

Primary Research
Teaching 100 Muslim students from local primary schools interviewing skills to conduct informal interviews with Thai-Chinese individuals and Muslims, to gain insight into personal anecdotes, the history of the place, and spots they value or recommend tourists visit, to inspire the cartography-making process.

Secondary Research
Read articles and websites about the importance of community and of working with youth, as well as case studies where they successfully revitalise an area of Bangkok's economy through a community collaborative map. Additionally, research the design and style of tourist maps to choose the best option for this purpose.

Development and Production
Research which material choice would be most suitable for a community-collaborative map, while also considering the benefits and costs of each method.

Creation of the Artefact
Putting together an accurate, community-engaged map by drawing on personal experiences, research, and conversations with the Thai-Chinese and Muslim communities.

Designing the map's outcome by exploring styles, graphic design, photography, and editing to create the most suitable map for Mahanak.

Creating a physical copy of the map by printing it as a leaflet. I plan to share my community-collaborative map of Mahanak with anyone interested in exploring a new place as a potential resource to increase tourism and interest in the area.

3 Literature Review

Understanding the cultural significance, specifically in Mahanak and case studies like Talat Noi, as well as the aesthetics and design choices, will provide further insight into which kinds of maps would be most effective to make and which functions, forms, and materials should be used to shape user experience.

The review has been divided into four sections: cultural identity and community, cultural loss in Bangkok, participatory mapping, and narrative cartography. Overall, this research will provide a structure that informs each step of the artefact's design, from collecting primary sources through interviews and art lessons to final construction. These steps aim to ensure the artefact meets the design brief and supports local economic activity.

3.1 Cultural Identity, Heritage, and Community

Cultural identity is defined as a sense of belonging shaped by shared traditions, values, and heritage (Jensen et al., 2011). As globalisation threatens to erode local identities, traditions and cultures, cultural exchange is essential to keep traditions alive and pass them on from generation to generation. Heritage refers to inherited traditions and cultural practices passed down across generations, while community refers to a social group sharing socially significant characteristics, such as culture and religion.

A cultural or narrative map can generate new forms of knowledge about both tangible and intangible heritage (Avrami, 2019). In the context of mapping, tangible heritage refers to physical artefacts and structures of cultural significance, such as temples, mosques, and historic architecture, including markets. Intangible heritage, by contrast, refers to knowledge, traditions, and skills passed down through generations.

Through interviews and conversations with locals, an undiscovered narrative emerges that is crucial to understanding the place's history. When its heritage is not documented or communicated, its history erodes over time, and the community's importance will soon be forgotten. Without historical knowledge, we will not know the area's core values, and we cannot be sensibly informed about political, social, or moral issues in society (UCLA History, 2024). Understanding the place's history and cultural identity binds the population to the area through a sense of pride and responsibility, and erasing that would isolate individuals from their surroundings (Nevejan and Gantois, 2024).

A solution to these problems would be cultural mapping or a community-collaborative map. Cultural mapping is a type of cartography that incorporates information and processes from local people, settings, and communities (Cook and Taylor, n.d.). It may involve a narrative written by locals that expresses their experiences and history in the area, the place’s identity, and significant intangible cultural information, and conveys an important part of how a place is felt (Moreira Cabeça, 2018). This makes a community-engaged map a suitable solution to help communities preserve and express their identity.

3.1.1 The Mahanak Community and its Cultural Significance

Dug in 1783 by order of King Rama I, Khlong Mahanak is one of Bangkok’s oldest waterways. According to Siam Rat Blog (2021), a hobbyist source I cross-checked against the Bangkok Post (2015), its original purpose was so that ‘the city people could assemble, in boats, to perform music and to recite poetry,’ while also serving as a trade route for goods and services.

Muslim communities settled primarily along Bangkok's canals, including Khlong Mahanak, during the Rattanakosin period, working as labourers on public works and as agricultural producers for the city (Siam Rat Blog, 2021). Over time, Mahanak developed into one of Bangkok's oldest Muslim communities. The establishment of religious institutions in the area further strengthened a shared sense of community and cultural identity.

Later, during the reign of King Rama V, Mahanak developed into an important commercial area. It became known for its floating market, alongside Bobae Market, a wholesale clothing market occupied mainly by the Thai-Chinese community, and Mahanak Market, which became one of Bangkok's major fruit markets. Muslim and Thai-Chinese communities therefore came to share the area, contributing to Mahanak's distinctive social character.

However, Mahanak's commercial activity has declined over time, and today it is one of Bangkok's poorest sub-districts. With the rise of e-commerce and the effects of COVID-19, many buyers and retailers began sourcing goods through online marketplaces, reducing visitors to Bobae Market. The trading environment changed further in 2023, when the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) introduced a policy to improve the surrounding landscape, affecting Bobae Market and resulting in the removal of stalls used by more than 600 vendors (Thianngern, 2023).

This history makes Mahanak significant not only as a physical site but also as a place of cultural heritage. As one of Bangkok's oldest canal and trading areas, and as a space shaped by interactions between Muslim and Thai-Chinese communities, preserving the district helps future generations understand how the area functioned and evolved (Bangkok Design Week, n.d.). Protecting Mahanak also supports local livelihoods, reduces the risk of displacement, and helps sustain its cultural identity.

3.2 Urbanisation and Cultural Loss in Bangkok

In recent years, Bangkok has experienced rapid urbanisation, causing traditional canal-side communities to transform and relocate (Denpaiboon and Tohiguchi, 2004). Some urbanisation involves a shift from water-based transportation to roads, leading to many waterways being paved over or neglected (CODI, 2016). However, the main threats to communities like Mahanak are forced evictions, gentrification, redevelopment, and cultural erasure. As officials were eager to tear down houses to build a park to draw more tourists, they removed locals from their communities, destroying traditions (Chandran, 2018). In addition, recent developments in Bangkok have displaced informal settlements, removing original residents and often homogenising the area as cultural loss begins (Endo, 2026).

For over two decades, Pom Mahakan, a 300-year-old community in Bangkok, battled the BMA and was eventually issued an eviction notice (Chandran, 2018). The authorities wanted to tear down housing belonging to more than 300 people to build a public park for tourism. Despite pressure from the authorities, the locals, with the support of historians, architects, and activists, managed to stay put, arguing that their community was like a ‘living museum’ (Areerat, 2016). However, in 2018, the authorities evicted the residents and, shortly after, admitted their mistakes as the park saw no visitors. They began to realise the importance of cultural heritage and considered building a miniature Pom Mahakan museum for educational purposes (Bangkok Post, 2020).

On the other hand, some may argue that heritage preservation can sometimes harm the communities it claims to protect. Gentrification is when impoverished families get displaced as wealthier people move in. Even though gentrification may benefit some, it harms low-income families through physical and cultural displacement, the removal of local cultural heritage, and segregation (De Cesari and Dimova, 2019). As Herzfeld (2010) notes, gentrification weaponises historic conservation to displace working-class communities. City authorities often commodify their own history, local artists, and native businesses to make way for modern architecture. This often leads to mass evictions and erodes the culture that holds a community together. Thus, it is important to document Mahanak’s cultural identity now before it is lost.

3.2.1 Case Study: Community-Led Revitalisation in Talat Noi, Bangkok

Talat Noi, once a close-knit, working-class Chinese community, is now a popular tourist attraction that is increasingly boosting the local economy. Over the last decade, it has been transformed into a street-art district while preserving its Chinese heritage (see Figures 1 and 2). Through art museums, murals, Chinatown, and Chinese-themed cafes, Talat Noi attracts many tourists, making it one of Bangkok's most famous places to visit. Furthermore, Talat Noi successfully adopted community-engaged cartography, reinventing itself from a quiet

neighbourhood into a tourist destination and breaking away from economic stagnation (Rugkhapan, 2020).

Specifically, through activities such as walking paths, tourist signage, and art decor everywhere, including on sewer covers, and through collaborations with major Bangkok media outlets such as Bangkok Design Week, Talat Noi attracts tourists and Thai people to explore its Chinese culture and learn more about the area's history. This successfully revitalised the area, from almost forgotten to an internationally popular tourist destination (Wancharoen, 2015).

A limitation with using this case study is the differences between Talat Noi and Mahanak. Talat Noi already benefits from its location near Chinatown, as well as events like Bangkok Design week, so its success and increase in tourism may not be ruled only by community-engaged cartography.

This case study also highlights a potential limitation of my own map. While Talat Noi shows that mapping and heritage tourism can revitalise an area, increased popularity may also lead to commercialisation and gentrification. Similarly, if my map attracts more visitors to Mahanak, it could unintentionally contribute to the displacement and cultural loss that the project aims to prevent.



Figure 1: Decorated sewer cover, Talat Noi (Bangkok Driver, 2026)



Figure 2: Art wall, Talat Noi (Cinacio, 2024)

3.3 Participatory Mapping

Participatory mapping is a map-making process that brings together local communities and their land, drawing on their knowledge and shared history (IFAD, n.d.). This knowledge can be gathered through various means, from interviews and conversations with locals to archival research. Expert-led mapping often focuses on accuracy and formatting, such as place borders, whereas participatory mapping engages the community and offers insights into their culture and traditions (Setayesh, 2025). Involving the community rather than working as an outsider yields deeper insight into the community itself, its cultural heritage, and the experiences that have shaped it into what it is today. Communities can also map places and events based on their own priorities, not the government's, such as placements of informal economies, cultural sites, and more (Setayesh, 2025).

Through participatory mapping, communities often collaborate and engage with one another, fostering community building and social bonds. It also requires locals to work together, share stories and experiences, and create a stronger, more united network (University of Kansas, n.d.). The finished map is useful for visualising the intangible heritage mentioned in section 3.1 and can help visitors understand the area's cultural, historical, and emotional significance (Carvalho, 2026).

According to IFAD (n.d.) and Patras and Koutis (n.d.), participatory mapping typically moves from preparing the community and defining purpose, through interview-based data collection, to map creation and communication of findings, with community ownership and inclusivity treated as best practice throughout.

Numerous barriers to participation in community-engaged projects exist in Thailand. Despite Thailand's gradual shift towards progressiveness, younger generations are taught to respect elders and not to question their knowledge or understanding, which limits public engagement (Lertdamrong, 2026). In addition, Thai culture often emphasises avoiding confrontation and values modesty, which may leave residents unable to express themselves freely and lead them to avoid participation altogether. To overcome this barrier, my project incorporates anonymous methods for contributing ideas (Sukkamol et al., 2022).

3.3.1 Working with Children and Youth

As De Simone (2024) notes, having children as the primary documenters and co-researchers in the mapping process, rather than adults, has many benefits. Children often identify more unconventional yet relevant landmarks, show greater interest in the area, and produce more varied final maps. However, they have more difficulty with accuracy and spatial precision than adults, suggesting that combining the two groups—children generating landmark content and

adults assisting with accurate placement—is most effective. Furthermore, incorporating younger generations in urban planning underscores the importance of participation in matters that affect them, as raised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Rodela et al., 2025).

At the same time, including older generations in the mapping process enables the documentation of stories, traditions, memories, conversations, and the area's history that have been passed down through generations and remain unrecorded (Soliman et al., 2022). The interviewing process between youth and elders also allows children to learn their history and culture directly from primary sources, helping them better understand where their heritage comes from. Elders feel heard and more validated, while students learn that their life experiences are part of history, benefiting both sides (Zusman, 2010). Besides that, intergenerational mapping accounts for generational differences in perception: older generations often focus on historical sites, whereas younger generations focus on what is tangible to them, such as schools, houses, and parks (Wang et al., 2025).

Practical methods include drawing, photography, interviews, surveys, discussion groups, model making, and city tours; the children's participation can be recorded on the community-engaged map (Derr et al., 2018). By introducing youth and elders to a common interest—in this case, community-engaged mapping— the project promotes a more united front in the area and fosters understanding and empathy among youth (Suwanpakdee and Jitduangprem, 2025).

Despite strong encouragement to involve youth in activities, many ethical considerations arise when working with children in research, in line with child-rights-based guidelines for meaningful and ethical participation (Angelöw and Psouni, 2025). Parental consent should be obtained, with a description of the work, so parents can provide legal permission, along with a child assent form to ensure children agree to participate (Derr, 2018). According to Suwanpakdee (2025), especially in activities that may clash with religious practices, researchers should be sensitive to religious norms, for example, by providing Halal food and accommodating prayer times. Maintaining contact with local leaders helps ensure religious practices are respected during workshop activities.

3.4 Narrative Cartography, Map Types, and Design Principles

Although a functional map requires only a handful of elements—icons, scale, typography, and a legend (Maps Everywhere, 2017; Bell, 2020)—the process is far more complex, especially for a community-engaged map. This section aims to shed light on the map-making process and on choosing map types and designs for their intended purpose.

3.4.1 Map Types

Maps can be created through three media: tangible, virtual, and mental maps (Schlosser, 2024). For this study, I will create a tangible and a virtual map, publish them online, and print them out.

Many types of tangible and virtual maps exist, depending on the intended purpose of map-making. Examples include general reference maps, thematic maps, and community maps. General reference maps primarily focus on natural and artificial features, including rivers, borders, and roads, while thematic maps highlight a specific theme, such as population density, climate, or health. Themes are typically represented through colour (Dillinger, 2026). Narrative maps combine traditional cartographic elements with local storytelling, providing insights into history and memories (Caquard and Cartwright, 2014; Aman, 2024). Layering personal narratives helps tourists better understand the area, including its food, culture, and history. Community maps focus on a local area and highlight different resources. Specific types include community asset maps, demographic maps, participatory maps, and more. Some highlight local resources, such as libraries, parks, and cultural heritage, while others involve the local community in drawing and telling stories about the area, providing an alternative perspective (Aman, 2024; Care-full Courses, n.d.). General reference and thematic maps were therefore rejected, as neither captures local knowledge; a participatory community map combined with narrative cartography best fits the design brief.

3.4.2 Design Principles/Aesthetics

Each design suits different purposes. For example, if the map is intended for an older audience, the font size should be larger than average (Campbell and Shin, 2012). Labels on the map should all be in the same orientation and avoid overlapping with graphics (Salt Lake Community College, 2023).

As Ambrose and Harris (2015) stress, a poor hierarchy can overwhelm readers, while a thoughtful layout ensures accessibility and engagement. This justifies my map's layout, establishing a clear order of emphasis: the map itself first, then the headings and legend, then the resident narratives on the side panels. They also note that planning the layout around the leaflet's folds, rather than treating it as a flat page, creates flow and optimises the viewer experience. A

grid and white space prevent a chaotic arrangement while creating balance and emphasis. Furthermore, a map is usually read like a page (top-left to bottom-right); therefore, the visual centre lies slightly above the true centre, and the most important information should be placed there (Krygier and Wood, 2016).

According to Molina and Esteban (2006), printed travel brochures used as marketing tools in both public and private tourism contain cognitive and affective components that work together to increase interest in an area. Since the rise of digital technology and the COVID-19 pandemic, much of this material has been digitised. However, brochures are still widely used in tourist offices to engage visitors, especially older generations less familiar with technology, which justifies producing both a printed leaflet and an online version of the Mahanak community-collaborative map.

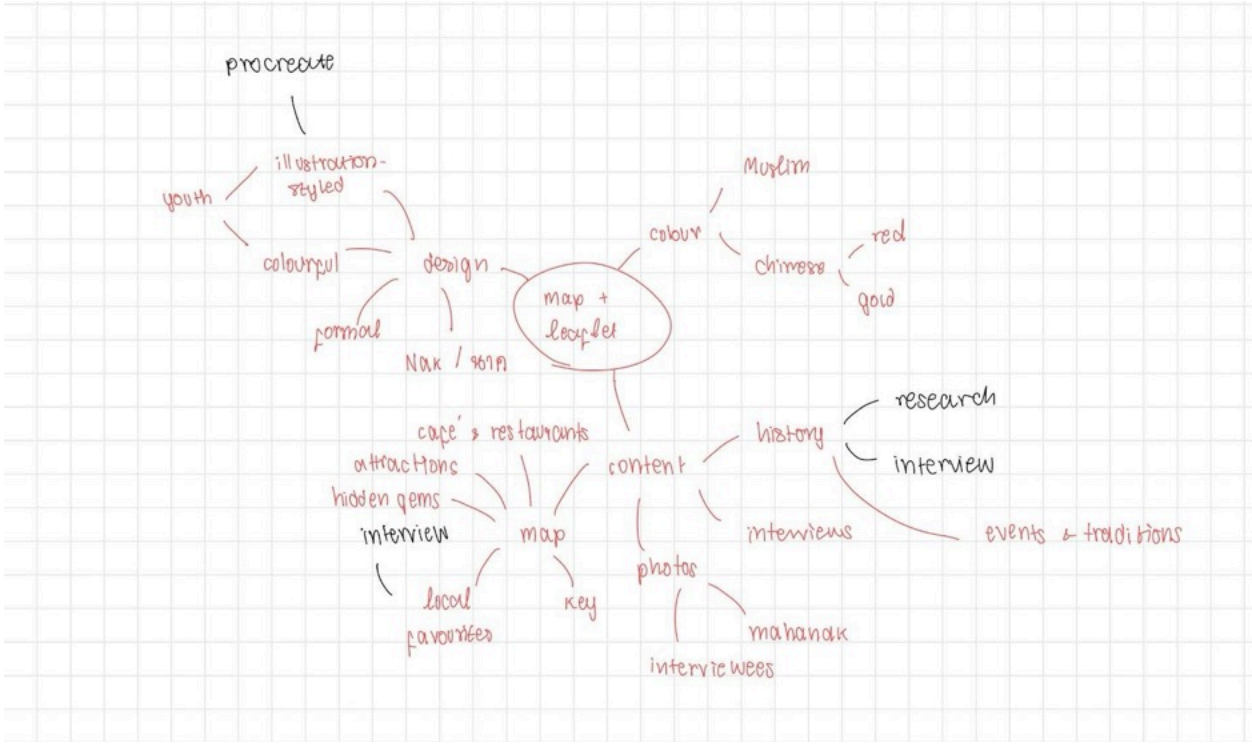
When choosing a colour palette for the map and brochure, several factors must be considered: colour-blind-safe palettes for greater accessibility, the perceptual dimensions of colour (hue, lightness, and saturation), and contrast (Brewer, 2015). There are three types of schemes: qualitative, sequential, and diverging (Brewer, 2015). Since a community leaflet assigns distinct colours to different place categories, a qualitative scheme is most appropriate. The palette should also reflect the audience and the area. For Mahanak, the community comprises Muslims and Thai-Chinese people, so using colour symbolism related to them would better reflect the sub-district. Green is the colour most closely associated with Islam, linked to the Prophet Muhammad and to Qur'anic descriptions of paradise. The colour symbolises life, nature and renewal, appearing throughout mosque architecture and calligraphy (Abaza, 2017). Other colours that may be used are blue, gold, and white, all of which appear in mosque designs (ArchDaily, 2024).

On the other hand, in Thai-Chinese culture, red signifies luck, joy, prosperity, and protection (associated with the fire element, used in weddings, and the Lunar New Year), while gold represents success, wealth, and prestige (Zhang et al., 2025; Kong et al., 2025). Although colour meanings vary across regions and contexts, these associations remain strong in religious and festive settings. My leaflet will therefore use a qualitative, colour-blind-checked palette anchored in green, with red and gold accents, reflecting both of Mahanak's communities.

3.5 Discussion

3.5.1 Brainstorming the Content of the Map

A crucial part of making the community-engaged map is brainstorming potential elements to incorporate. At first, I often thought about traditional mapping elements; however, after brainstorming and writing down the ideas in this ‘mind map’, I began exploring more unique content. I wrote down every idea I had, including colour schemes, images, and what to include in the map, which may be worth exploring. The red lines connect the main ideas in the mind map, whereas the black lines show how to obtain them.



3.5.2 Overview of Design and Aesthetics of Map

After considering the map's audience (teenagers, working-class, tourists), I have decided that the map should be compiled into a leaflet containing information and the history of Mahanak. It should incorporate illustrations and icons created by the local children and me. Additionally, it should include tourist spots and recommendations for what to do in the area, as well as local recommendations, to curate the best Mahanak exploration trip. After researching the community's colours in the area, I decided the main colours I will use are red, gold/yellow, blue, and green.

Furthermore, I realised that accuracy and detail are most important when creating navigational cartography, as they enhance geographic precision; however, narrative and community maps deliberately trade some precision for meaning, engagement, and identity. This has raised an important factor I need to consider in the map-making process; therefore, I will submit the map for review by a professional cartographer to ensure its accuracy.

3.5.3 Overview of the Chosen Software for Map Design

The table below compares Adobe Illustrator, Affinity, and GGIS as software I may use for map design.

Software name	Cost	Ease of use	Accessibility	Variety	total
Adobe Illustrator	3/10 Professionals usually use Adobe; therefore, it is more on the costly side, at around $16/month	5/10 Adobe Illustrator is mainly for professionals and those working in the illustration industry. This means that the software is complex to use and requires training and/or experience.	7/10 Adobe Illustrator is compatible with laptops; however, for long-term use, it is preferable to use it on a high-performance computer	6/10 Adobe Illustrator has many built-in functions, allowing users to design elements themselves and create a leaflet and a map. However, they provide few templates, so most elements must be created from scratch.	21/40
Canva	10/10 Canva offers a free plan for all users	9/10 Canva, a beginner-friendly graphic design tool, is easier to use than professional platforms because it is less complex.	10/10 Canva is compatible with all laptops and iPads, so designing icons and elements is easy.	6/10 Canva includes many templates while still allowing original designs. It lets you curate any design, but if you need something hand-drawn, you need access to external applications.	35/40
QGIS	10/10 QGIS offers a free plan for all users	2/10 QGIS requires coding skills for interactive maps. QGIS is suitable for professional cartography, not community-engaged mapping.	7/10 QGIS is compatible with all laptops and computers. However, it is best used on a high-performance computer.	3/10 QGIS only supports the map-making process, not leaflet design, so other software is needed for leaflet design.	22/40

According to my table, I have chosen Canva as my preferred software for mapping and curating my leaflet. Because Canva is a popular application used by many students, its accessibility and ease of use rank higher than other platforms, making it most beneficial for designing the

community-engaged map. It is also free to install and is compatible with my laptop; therefore, I have selected Canva.

4 Methodology

4.1 Project Proposal

The first step in creating my community-collaborative map was to outline project objectives and complete my project proposal form clearly. After completing my literature review, I applied these insights and observations to a structured methodology that combines historical information and local personal anecdotes with experimental approaches to map design. In order to decide what the primary focus of my project would be, I looked into past student EPQs that have completed a similar project to what I plan to do, taking inspiration from their formatting techniques, especially the content of the map. I drew further inspiration from the cultures of the Muslim and Thai-Chinese communities in Mahanak to inform my personal cartographic style. With this in mind, my research identified valuable insights into how cartography has been executed both successfully and unsuccessfully, helping me avoid similar risks when creating my EPQ. After that, I recorded my project objectives, required resources, reasons for choosing this project, and my working title for the project proposal form on Project Q.

I decided on my project title to be:

'Designing a participatory narrative map to document and communicate the cultural identity of the Mahanak community, Bangkok'.

Furthermore, I created documents essential to executing my project. I developed a source validation document, using CAPTURED (Credentials, Accuracy, Purpose, Time, Usefulness, Reliability, Evidence of Bias, Depth) to assess the sources, a Gantt Chart, and an EPQ session checklist. These tools helped me stay on track, organise my time effectively, and monitor my progress. They provided structure to my EPQ and enhanced the overall professionalism of my project management.

4.2 Research and Fieldwork

As part of my research on community-engaged cartography, I collected primary sources. I taught at two Muslim primary schools in the area, working with approximately 100 students through a series of participatory workshops in art, mapping, interviewing, and photography. Furthermore, I visited the Thai-Chinese community in Mahanak with the students, and, using their interviewing skills, they asked around 15 elders questions about the area's history and their own stories about living there.

4.2.1 Teaching Students Art and Cartography Skills

Over 12 weeks, I taught at 2 local schools in Mahanak, helping students develop the skills needed to complete a functioning cartography project. These lessons gave me deeper insight into map design and working with youth. This is the syllabus that I followed during the 12 weeks:

Week	Topic	Output
1	Intro to Project & Storytelling	Personal Portfolio
2	Oral History Session I	DIY Timeline Chart
3	Oral History Session II	Story Map & Group Core Themes
4	Walkabout & Field Notes	Fieldwork Collage Journal
5	Symbol Design	Group Icon/Symbol Sets
6	Map Layout	Large-scale map
7	Children's Day	Pop-up Showcase Exhibition
8	Photo Techniques	Initial photo sets per group
9	Photo Storytelling	Completed Photo Essay sets
10	Final Project Planning	Mind map & Draft Work
11	Final Production	Final Completed Work
12	Exhibition Prep	"Art Tells the Story of Mahanak" Exhibition

4.2.2 Conducting Interviews

I approached my conversations with the locals and the students as semi-structured interviews to develop my initial ideas. I devised a list of questions:

1. Can you tell me about a favourite childhood memory from Mahanak?
2. If someone were visiting Mahanak for the first time, where would you take them and why?
3. How has Mahanak changed since you were young? Are there places that no longer exist that you still remember?
4. What makes Mahanak different from other neighbourhoods in Bangkok?
5. Are there any traditions, festivals, or foods that are special to this community?
6. How do the Muslim and Thai-Chinese communities here share the neighbourhood?
7. What would you want a visitor to understand about Mahanak that they couldn't learn from a normal map?
8. Are there any shops or restaurants you'd recommend to visitors? What should they try there, and why is it special?

Using semi-structured interviews, I gathered the information I needed. I guided the interviewees with prompts, building on their ideas to gain more insight into their experiences in Mahanak as kids and their recommendations/favourite places to visit. However, because it was semi-structured, I did not ask every question to every participant. Instead, I selected and adapted questions based on each interviewee's background and the direction of the conversation, allowing participants to elaborate on the experiences most meaningful to them. During the interview, I also obtained permission from the school and the interviewees to use their stories on the community map. I also recorded the interviews and translated them from Thai into English for the map.

From these conversations, I learned perspectives and real-life experiences not found online, which I incorporated into my cartography in hopes of attracting more tourists to learn more about Mahanak. Specifically, while speaking with one interviewee, I learned that the famous clothing market (Bobae Market) didn’t initially sell clothes but cosmetic items. This inspired a story I added to the map to give people a sense of what it was like to live here as a local. Moreover, my conversation with a local revealed that there used to be an ancient Bodhi tree where locals would come every morning to Wai and pay respect. Unfortunately, the old governor had a mission to build new apartments, so they uprooted it, devastating the community. I was deeply moved by this interaction and inspired by their story to create a map design based on the narrative. This process has helped me become more aware of Mahanak's history and more appreciative of the locals and the area, contributing to my personal growth.

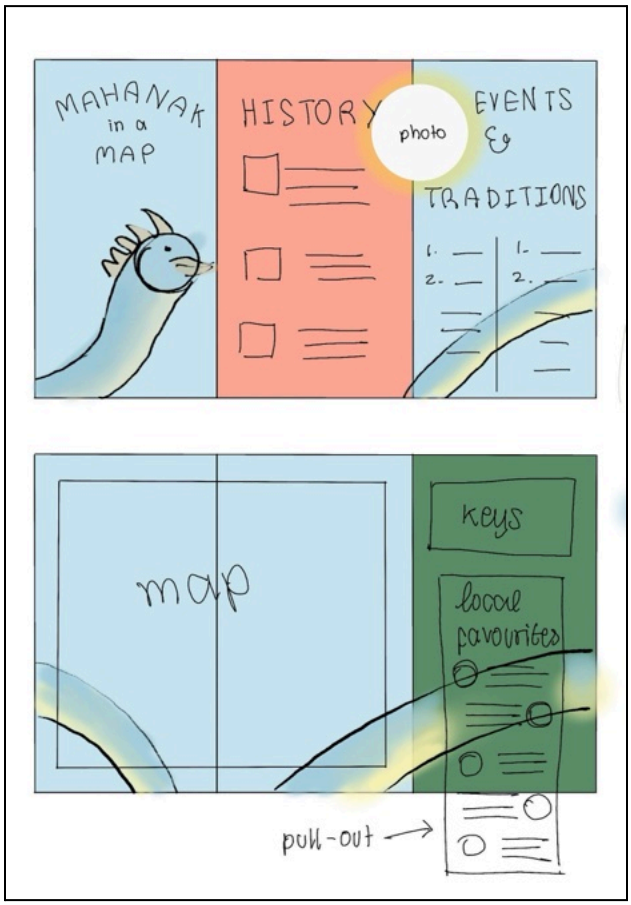
4.3 Designing Artefact

4.3.1 Sketch Process - Leaflet

Leaflet Version 1

During the sketching process for V1, I explored potential elements to incorporate into my leaflet: a map, history, attractions, information, and aesthetic choices such as pull-out information and drawings throughout. The design was inspired by the Phraya Nak, a mythical creature in Thailand, as a wordplay on Mahanak. Although the concept seemed good in theory, it is difficult to put all the information and photos on the leaflet without covering the drawing. I would need to use another software for the drawing, which makes it difficult to arrange the layout and text on top of it. Moreover, the pull-out information can hold more information, but it can be difficult to replicate on each leaflet at a larger scale.

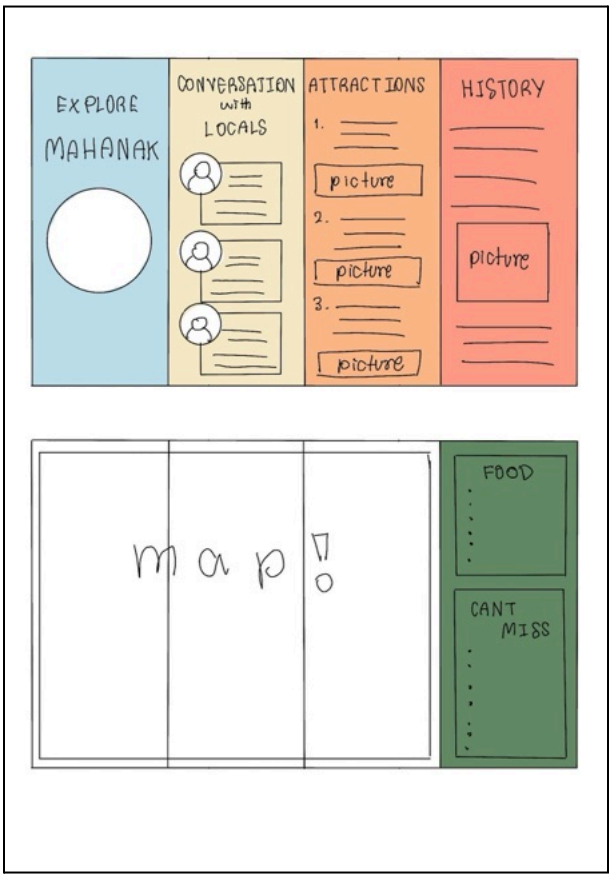
V2 will explore other factors that still make the leaflet engaging, but will leave out these two ideas. One benefit I learned from this version is that colours make the brochure more playful and can connect more with the intended audience.



Leaflet Version 2

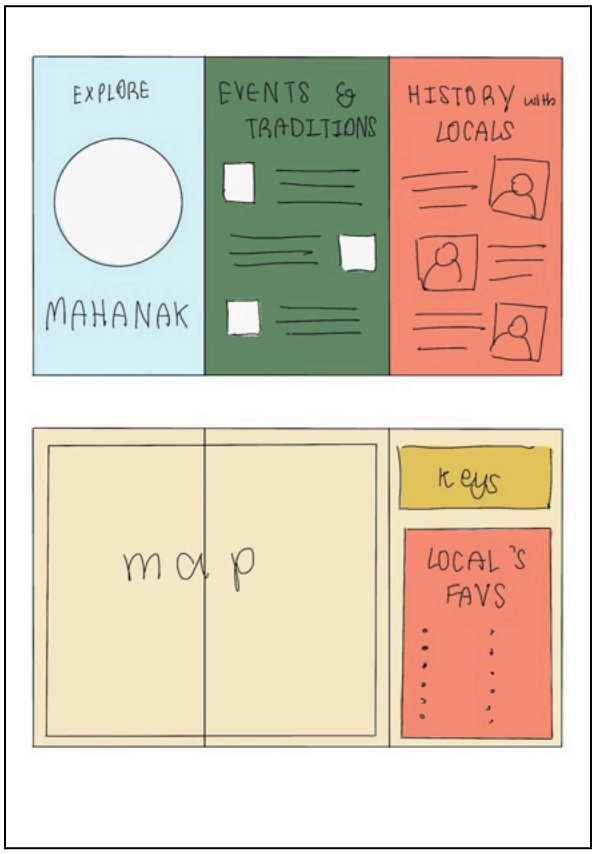
V2 is designed as a 4-page brochure and is meant to hold more information. When printed, however, the layout makes the text shrink, and the pages feel more compressed. This can make it harder to read the information and look at the map.

Although this idea has promise, I will return to the V1 3-page layout and start redesigning the leaflet in the next version.



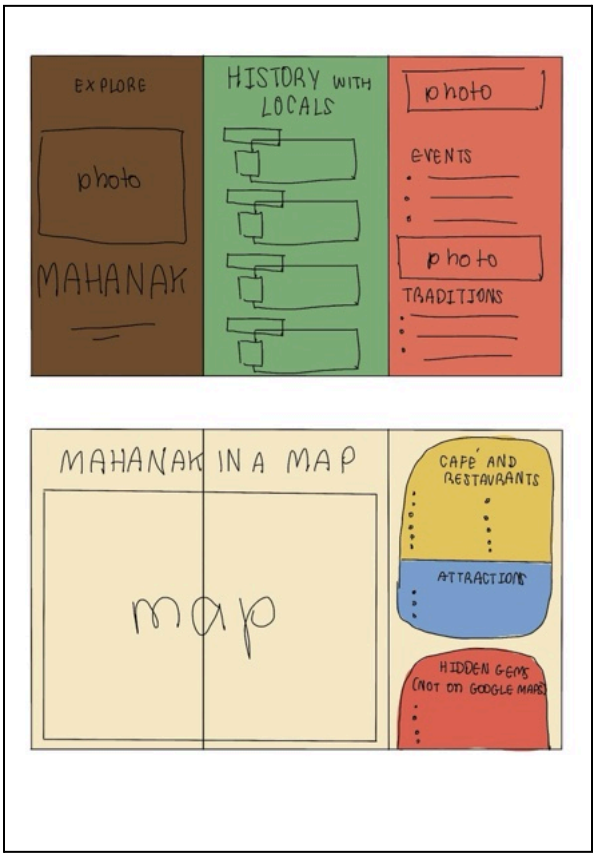
Leaflet Version 3

V3 returned to the 3-page layout shown in V1. Instead of drawings and pull-out information, I chose photographs and a plain brochure. This version let me produce a professional-looking leaflet that appeals to people of all ages and genders. It also does not take attention away from the community-engaged map itself, which is the subject.



Leaflet Version 4

V4 uses the design from V3, but is more modern and visually appealing. Through exploration of shapes and designs, I rounded the corners of the keys and colour-coordinated them to the attractions on the map. Additionally, I added more photographs of Mahanak that I took myself and refined the other sections to feel more formal. To contrast with the professional look, I incorporated different colours, intended for a younger audience. This mix makes it appealing to both adults and young people.



4.3.2 Design Process - Map

I started the community mapping process through the art lessons I mentioned in section 5.2.1, where I taught children how to draw map icons. Below are photos of me in one of those lessons teaching children how to draw icons.





After the course, I gathered all their icon designs and other map elements and copied their icons onto a new sheet of paper. I also took inspiration from many maps I found online, e.g., how they laid out their icons and their artistic choices in watercolour painting. Below is my process of painting the community-engaged map.





I then digitised the map using my printer's scanner and added numbers corresponding to the leaflet, colour-coordinating with the category (e.g., cafés and restaurants, hidden gems, and attractions).

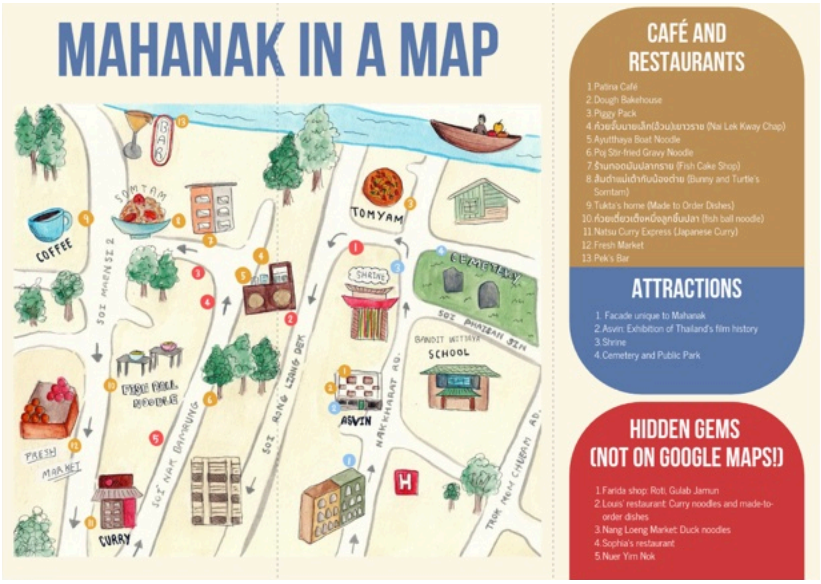

BAR
SOMTAM
COFFEE
SOI MAENSI 2
TOMYAM
SHRINE
CEMETERY
SOI PHAIBAN SIN
BANDIT WITHAYA
SCHOOL
FISH BALL NOODLE
SOI NAK DAMRUNG
SOI RONG LIANG DEK
NAKHARAT RD.
ASVIN
FRESH MARKET
CURRY
TRAK MEM CHUEAM RD.
H

4.4 Leaflet Creation

4.4.1 Leaflet Design

I used Canva to create the leaflet design (V4) presented below.



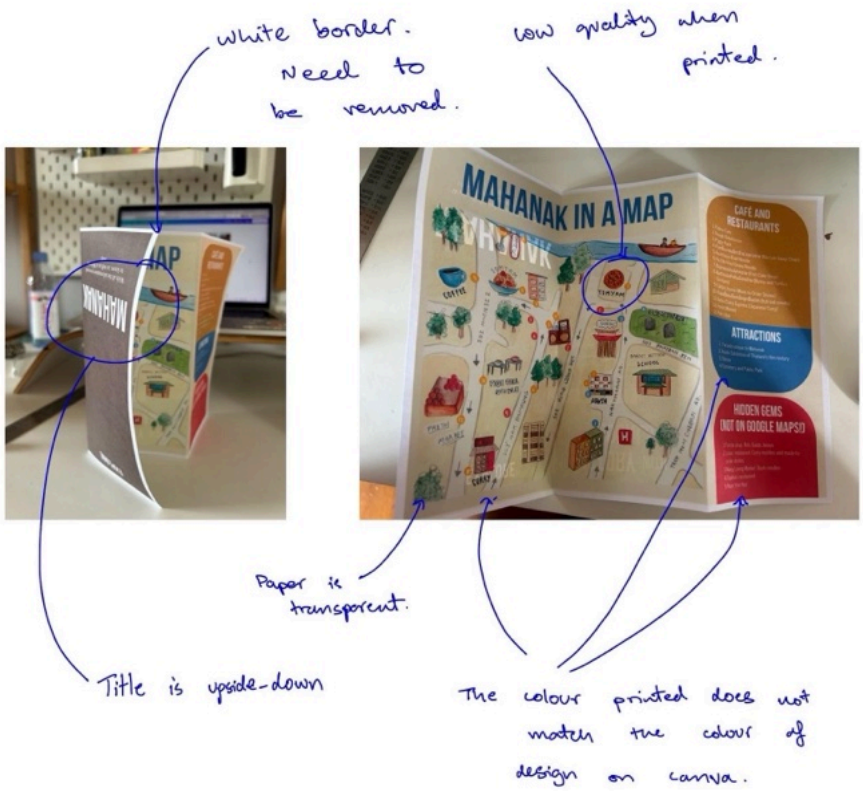


I chose to use images of Mahanak that I took during my visit for my leaflet design, as they show the nooks and crannies and hidden spots that Google Maps cannot capture. Moreover, when I spoke with locals, I took their photos with their consent and incorporated them into the design to show the audience the people behind this process.

4.4.2 Annotated Prototype

Below is the annotated print-out leaflet prototype that I printed out on regular A4 paper, detailing the improvements I've made across the trajectory of my designs. The most significant changes are the layout change from upside down to upright, and the tone change in colour (from being too bright to what it looks like on Canva) (see 5.4.3).

The blue annotations on the first draft show potential improvements, while the red shows what has improved.



no borders

high quality + sharp photo





cover is the right way up

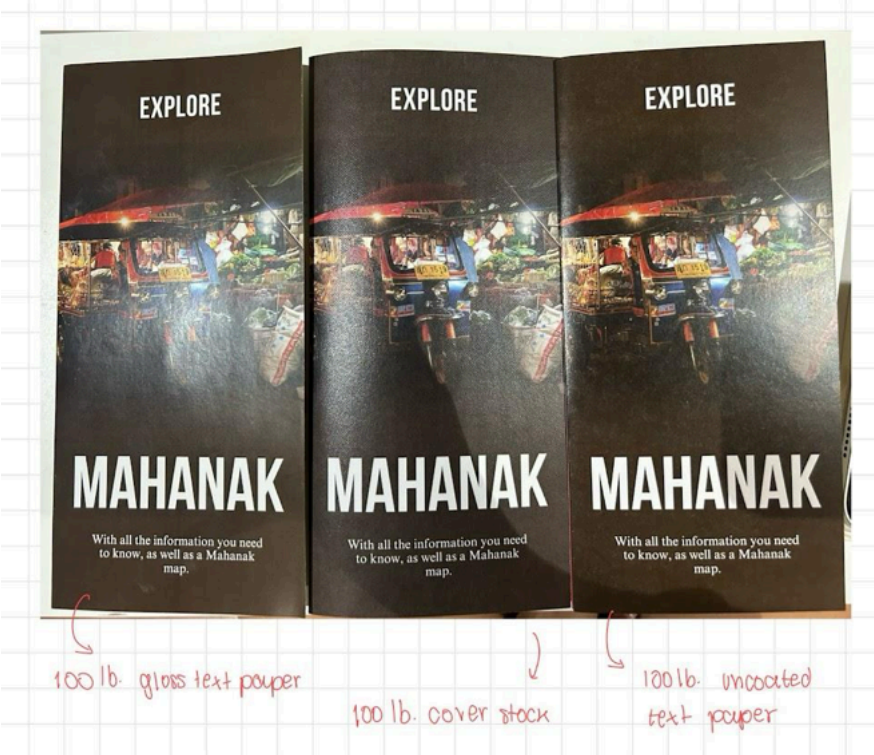
paper is thicker

colour matches on canvas

4.4.3 Printing Process

After fixing the colour, I finalised my leaflet design. Then, I tested different paper types by printing on them to see which worked best as a tourism map. I tested several factors, from water repellency to durability, foldability, and aesthetics.

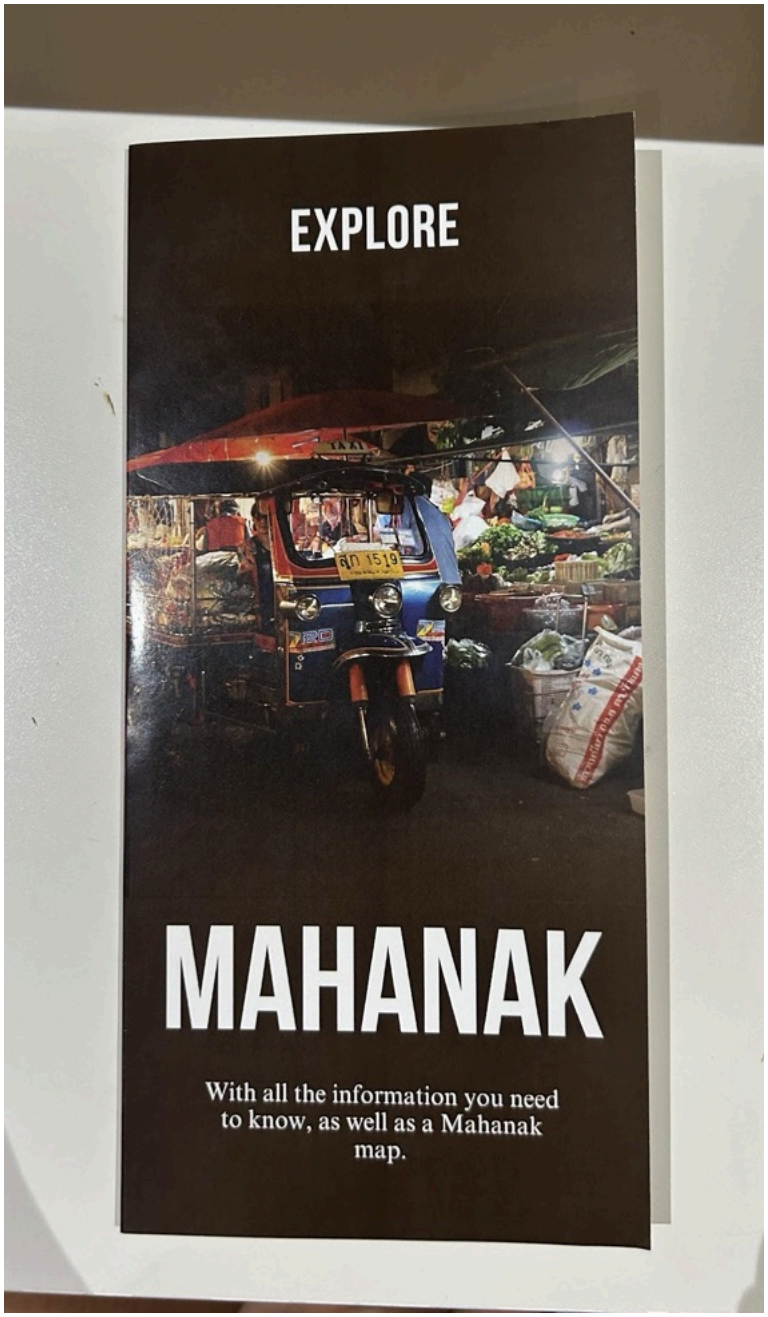
The procedure involved wetting the surface, tearing it, folding it (to see whether the edges rip), and evaluating the paper's overall finish. Below is the table comparing different kinds of paper.



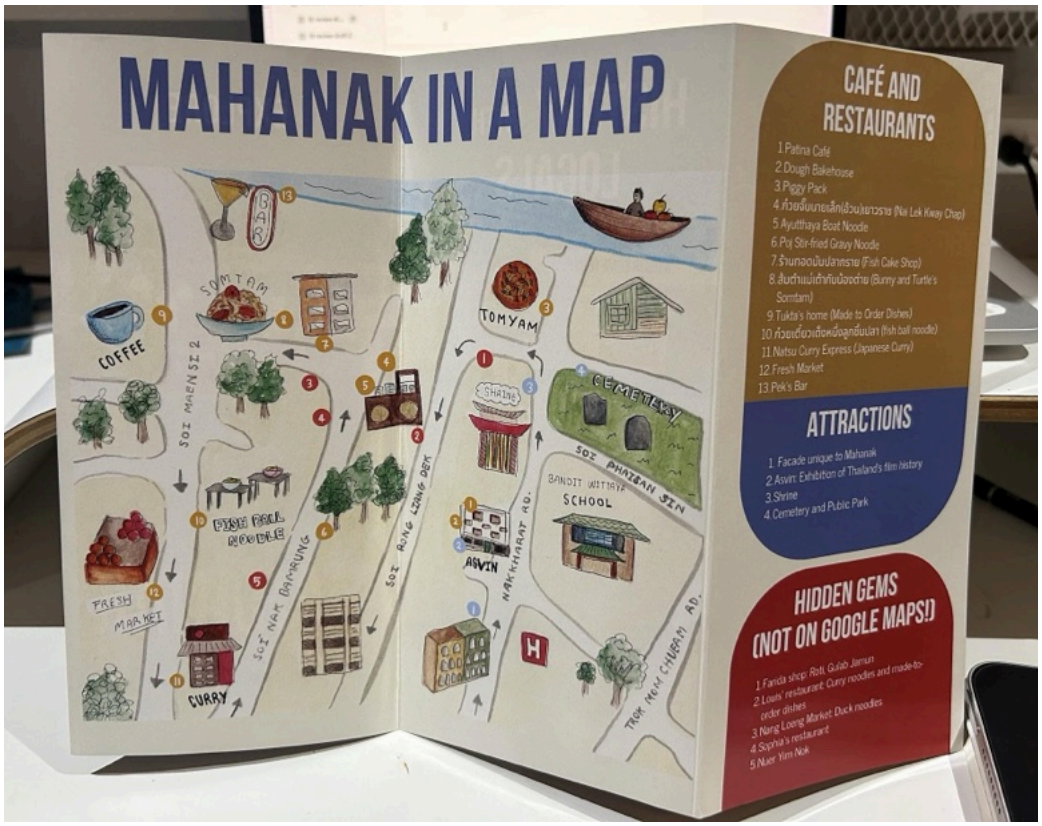
Type	Water Repellent	Durability	Foldability	Aesthetics	Total
80lb. Gloss text paper	4/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	17/20
100lb. Cover stock	3/5	5/5	2/5	3/5	13/20
100lb. Uncoated text paper	4/5	4/5	3.5/5	4/5	15.5/20

Overall, 80lb. Gloss text paper has the highest total score, making it the most suitable for a community-engaged leaflet. Therefore, I chose to use this material for the final product.

4.4.4 Final Artefact




EVENTS
Annual festival held in October featuring Chinese opera and outdoor movie screenings.
Regular community exercise sessions bringing together local Muslim and Thai-Chinese adults.
Daily evening street markets: food stalls and textiles along alleys and the canal.
TRADITIONS
Every Friday, all Muslims must attend prayers at the mosque. Missing Friday prayers 3 times is considered a grave sin.
A Chinese tradition involving the auctioning of auspicious items (such as lucky oranges) to raise funds for maintaining the Pun Tao Gong Shrine.
A revived tradition of offering alms to monks travelling by boat along the canal.
HISTORY WITH LOCALS
KUBOR CEMETERY
"In the past, children had no playgrounds, so they would often gather to play at the Kabur (cemetery) and the open area in front of the mosque."
WATER MARKET
"In the past, since the community was adjacent to the river, people used to trade fruits and spices by water. However, nowadays these shops are no longer seen."
BOBAE MARKET
"In the past, [Bobae Market] didn't sell clothes; instead, they sold miscellaneous items and vintage cosmetics."
ANCIENT TREE
"Locals revered an ancient Bodhi tree (130+ years old) until a former governor had a crane uproot it permanently, a devastating loss for the community."
EXPLORE
MAHANAK
With all the information you need to know, as well as a Mahanak map.


MAHANAK IN A MAP
CAFÉ AND RESTAURANTS
1. Patina Café
2. Dough Bakehouse
3. Piggy Pack
4. ก๋วยจั๊บนายเล็ก(ช่วงน่ายาวราย (Nai Lek Kway Chap)
5. Ayutthaya Boat Noodle
6. Poj Stir-fried Gravy Noodle
7. ร้านทองม้วนปลากราย (Fish Cake Shop)
8. ส้มตำแม่เต่าทับน้องต่าย (Bunny and Turtle's Somtam)
9. Tukta's home (Made to Order Dishes)
10. ก๋วยเตี๋ยวเต๋ยหมึ่งลูกชิ้นปลา (fish ball noodle)
11. Natsu Curry Express (Japanese Curry)
12. Fresh Market
13. Pek's Bar
ATTRACTIONS
1. Facade unique to Mahanak
2. Asvin: Exhibition of Thailand's film history
3. Shrine
4. Cemetery and Public Park
HIDDEN GEMS (NOT ON GOOGLE MAPS!)
1. Fanda shop: Roti, Gulab Jamun
2. Louis' restaurant: Curry noodles and made-to-order dishes
3. Nang Loeng Market: Duck noodles
4. Sophia's restaurant
5. Nuer Yim Nok
BAR
SOMTAM
COFFEE
TOMYAM
SHRINE
CEMETERY
SOI PHAIBAN 3IN
BANDIT WITTAYE SCHOOL
SOI MAEN SI 2
SOI RONG LUENG DEM
NAK KHARAT RD.
ASVIN
FISH BALL NOODLE
FRESH MARKET
SOI NAK BAMRUNG
CURRY
H
TROK MOM CHUSRI RD.


CAFÉ AND RESTAURANTS
1. Patina Café
2. Dough Bakehouse
3. Piggy Pack
4. ก๋วยจั๊บนายเล็ก(อ้วน)เยาวราช (Nai Lek Kway Chap)
5. Ayutthaya Boat Noodle
6. Poj Stir-fried Gravy Noodle
7. ร้านทอดมันปลากราย (Fish Cake Shop)
8. ส้มตำแม่เต้ากับน้องต่าย (Bunny and Turtle's Somtam)
9. Tukta's home (Made to Order Dishes)
10. ก๋วยเตี๋ยวเต็งหนึ่งลูกชิ้นปลา (fish ball noodle)
11. Natsu Curry Express (Japanese Curry)
12. Fresh Market
13. Pek's Bar
ATTRACTIONS
1. Facade unique to Mahanak
2. Asvin: Exhibition of Thailand's film history
3. Shrine
4. Cemetery and Public Park
HIDDEN GEMS (NOT ON GOOGLE MAPS!)
1. Farida shop: Roti, Gulab Jamun
2. Louis' restaurant: Curry noodles and made-to-order dishes
3. Nang Loeng Market: Duck noodles
4. Sophia's restaurant
5. Nuer Yim Nok

5 Conclusions and Future Developments

Overall, this project discusses different aspects of making a community collaborative map in the form of a leaflet to draw the authentic stories and facts about the Mahanak community, mainly through three key stages: researching and teaching children how to draw icons and conduct interviews, drafting the style of the leaflet, and finally designing the map and putting it into a complete brochure.

5.1 Future Developments

To further develop this project, I aim to publish the community-engaged map online through websites and social media and contact local store owners to distribute the brochures, broadening the reach of information about Mahanak. I would also extend this project by creating a community-engaged map of other areas in Bangkok, such as Khlong Toei, to further develop my investigation. I'm interested in organising events in the community to attract more tourists. This could include more art lessons, but instead of restricting them to children, they could be open to anyone interested. Another avenue I would be interested in pursuing is developing an interactive exhibition that includes all the work the students have completed, as well as audio recordings from the interview process.

Furthermore, in the long term, I am very motivated to develop further my passion for helping struggling economies through art and collaboration with the locals. In future endeavours, I will experiment with other projects such as organising an exhibition, classes, or events like movie nights, to create a more impactful change in the local community. Thus, as I go off to college, I am excited to continue cultivating my love for revitalising communities through my passion for art, through similar projects that challenge me to grow as both an artist and a thinker.

5.2 Advice for Prospective EPQ Students

One of the biggest challenges I faced whilst carrying out my EPQ was time management. Because I changed my EPQ at the last minute, I had to repeat the process of doing a literature review, finding sources, and other tasks while also balancing my other academic and extracurricular commitments, as well as college applications. Thus, I feel that effective planning and quickly finalising their EPQ are integral to success. I would advise prospective EPQ students to create a time-management plan, set deadlines for each stage, and finalise the project as early as possible to avoid last-minute changes.

Similarly, I believe that students should find a document to take notes on what they did during the week, so even if they have not filled out the activity logs, they would have a note that they can come back to and wouldn’t have to think all the way back to what they were doing that day.

This can take form depending on their preferences. For example, I used Google Sheets to take quick notes, and next to it I kept all my activity logs. This doesn't necessarily apply only to activity logs, but to other things as well, such as keeping track of sources. This helps with organisation as it keeps everything in one place. So I would advise prospective EPQ students to find an organisational tool that suits them, whether this be through a notebook or digital spreadsheets.

6 Evaluation

6.1 Direction of the Project

When I started my EPQ, I thought about places and problems closest to me. One place that stood out to me in particular was the Mahanak. Initially, I planned to write a dissertation on what qualifies a place to be revitalised into a new economic hub. This plan was in the working title *'How to assess whether a location has the potential to become a new economic hub'*, combining my interest in Mahanak with my A-level subject economics. However, after feedback from my EPQ supervisor, I realised this title, while fascinating, wouldn't let me fully focus on Mahanak; instead, it would use it as a case study in the dissertation. Thus, after reconsidering what I wanted the project to focus on, I decided to change my project to an artefact, fully focusing on Mahanak and its tourism. I changed my working title to its current iteration: *'Designing a participatory narrative map to document and communicate the cultural identity of the Mahanak community, Bangkok'*.

This change ultimately strengthened the project as it allowed me to ground my project in a community I have been part of and provided more opportunities to work with children and elders. It has also allowed me to explore another passion of mine (art) while combining it with economics.

In retrospect, finding a substantial direction for my project was initially challenging; however, once I created a working title that was both personal and interesting, the project became much more straightforward. Looking back, I could have selected and finalised the title sooner, giving me more time to develop the project in greater depth. If I had more time, I would have also tested the leaflet's design and colour choices with local communities to see their impact, get feedback, and confirm they matched what I was looking for.

6.2 Research and Literature Review

My approach to organising my sources was extremely helpful: I created an acronym to validate the sources and rated them out of 5 for each section. This helped me decide whether to include or exclude certain sources based on their reliability. After gathering all the sources I needed for the literature review, I created a bullet-point list of what I needed to include. This made the writing process easier, faster, and more effective.

However, from the skills sessions on writing a literature review, I found that I still did not fully understand what needed to be included and how to write it because I had no previous experience writing literature reviews. I then decided to read many past examples of EPQ literature reviews,

specifically artefacts and what they require. Alongside reading examples, I discussed the literature review outline with my supervisor, which also helped clarify the process.

A major challenge for me was changing my working title at the last minute and AS examinations, which left me almost no time to continue with my EPQ. This meant I did not gather as many sources as I intended before going on summer holidays, and I spent most of my time on the literature review rather than the artefact itself.

6.3 Monitoring Progress Throughout the Journey

My use of structured time management documents, such as my Gantt Chart, gave me a clear overview of upcoming deadlines and how I was progressing throughout the EPQ journey. A clear plan also helped me break complex tasks into smaller ones, so I could maintain progress and minimise procrastination.

However, I sometimes find keeping up with my activity logs challenging, even though after each session I wrote down notes of what I did each week. That meant I had to go back and log some of them at once. Even though it didn't happen often, I should have taken more time and be more proactive with my time management and set aside 10 minutes each week to complete my activity logs after each EPQ work session. This would have allowed me to write them in a more detail with greater accuracy.

6.4 Making the Artefact

Below, I have reflected and evaluated my Design Brief objectives, rating each category out of 10.

1. **Physical map as leaflet** - 10/10

I initially produced my artefact as a physical map, then digitally imported it into Canva to turn it into a leaflet. I then printed it on different types of paper and rated which material was most suitable for a tourist brochure.

2. **Map Accuracy** - 8/10

I traced my artefact over a Google Map of the area; therefore, the relative positions and proportions of the roads were based on Google Maps, improving the map's geographical accuracy. However, because the map area is small, I couldn't include every landmark and restaurant.

3. **Input from Locals** - 9/10

Through interviews between the students and the elders I spoke with, I recorded audio of their conversations about their favourite restaurants, traditions, and drastic changes in the area since they have lived there. It allowed me to incorporate their quotes and suggestions into the leaflet. The interviews strengthened the participatory aspect of the artefact because the final map reflected local knowledge rather than relying only on my own research. However, I interviewed over 10 elders and couldn't include all the information they shared because there wasn't enough space in the leaflet and the map.

4. **Cohesiveness of design choices with purpose** - 9/10

In my artefact, I utilised all colours associated with the 2 communities: red/yellow for Thai-Chinese, and mainly green for Muslims. To contrast the bright colours for the teenage audience, I used a darker colour (brown) for the cover to appeal to a more mature audience, especially tourists and working-age people. However, I did not have the opportunity to test whether older and younger audiences responded differently to the leaflet's colours.

6.5 The Write-up

My first draft of my write-up included my Introduction, Design Brief, Literature Review, Methodology, Conclusion, and Bibliography sections. After submitting this to my supervisor, I received valuable feedback to make certain areas throughout my EPQ clearer, as well as to pay attention to the language used to ensure it is not too informal. I found redrafting these sections manageable, as most involved adding definitions and fixing minor outlining issues. After I finished these points, I completed my Evaluation and Abstract sections. Completing the Evaluation and Abstract was more manageable because I had maintained records of key decisions throughout the project. However, the redrafting process showed me that I should have considered clarity and formality earlier, rather than correcting these issues mainly at the final stage.

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