

Mapping the Light: An Interactive Repository of Alternative Stories

It is difficult not to feel disheartened and terrified in the face of the ecological, political, and economic crises rampant around the globe. From news coverage to social media posts to entertainment media, the stories most often shared are those steeped in a sense of impending doom, and not without good reason. However, while anger and fear can be strong motivators for driving change, they are just as likely to overwhelm us into inaction and a loss of hope that anything can get better. "Mapping the Light" is a project that aims to rekindle hope and one's sense of community, by excavating and amplifying stories of positive experiences, communities, and initiatives from around the world to inspire positive change.

Overview

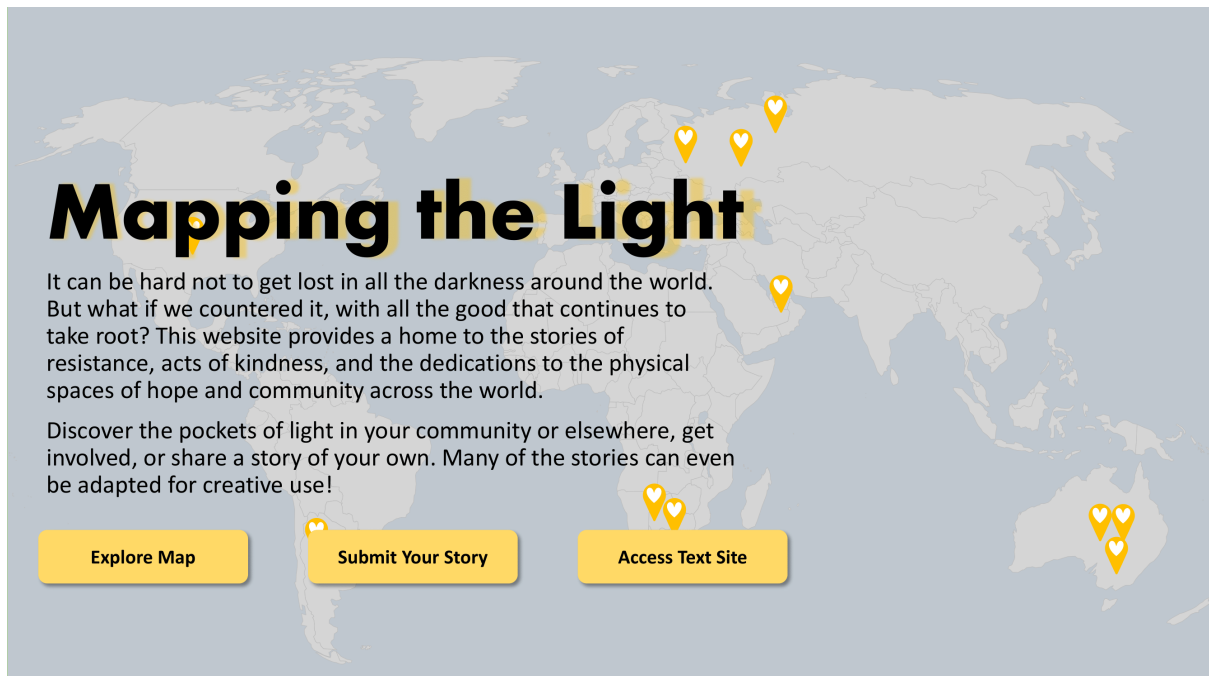


Figure 1: Example design of the "Mapping the Light" website homepage

"Mapping the Light" is envisioned as part interactive website, part global repository of stories. These tales may be tied to themes of environmental sustainability, economic

equality, social justice for marginalised peoples, and more, but they would challenge – not enhance – feelings of alienation, hopelessness, and doom.

Visitors would thus be able to read about positive place-based memories, grassroots initiatives that they could also get involved in, or creative dedications to locations around the world, as well as contribute stories of their own. By showcasing these counternarratives that highlight social good, “Mapping the Light” aims to inspire visitors and expand their imaginations to envision less dystopian realities, as well as provide them with opportunities to engage with or build on any ongoing efforts in their communities to combat environmental and socioeconomic challenges.

Additionally, storytellers would be able to use the site as a source of inspiration for their own projects by browsing submissions marked as free to adapt; they could then either incorporate the stories into their own repository as-is, localise them for their context, or transform them to a different medium entirely.

Practical and Ethical Considerations

“Mapping the Light” is perhaps not an easy tool to develop and maintain. Beyond concerns of user experience, one would also need continuously ensure the site is free from spam, hateful language counter to the site’s mission, or potential copyright violations, to name but a few examples. The process of submitting and adapting stories would also need to be made clearer, especially in relation to support for languages beyond English. In its current envisioned form, all this would require a strong team of moderators and developers, as well as continued engagement with cultural experts to ensure stories are not being shared or adapted disrespectfully.

User Experience



Figure 2: Sample render of the interactive map users can use to browse and/or submit stories

Drawing inspiration from designer Lucas LaRochelle’s *Queering the Map* (Boone and Echenique), a crowdsourced digital map that allows anonymous users to share queer experiences, “Mapping the Light” would feature an interactive map for visitors to pin the location where their stories take place. Hovering over any of the pins would provide a preview that they could then click through to read in full.

Mapping the Light

[Homepage](#)[Explore Tags](#)[Submit Your Story](#)[Contact](#)

Nights Under the Stars

One of the most special memories I have is going on camping trips with my grandfather when I was a girl. We would spend the day hiking, picking berries and edible plants. At night, with the fire roaring and the Milky Way shining bright above us, he would tell me stories about the constellations, like [Orion the Hunter](#) and the [Great Bear](#).

Sometimes he would combine stories, and pretend to be the Great Bear himself, chasing me around the fire before Orion scared him away with his bow and arrow. I used to squeal and laugh and run to hide in my tent. Then he'd coax me back out, calling me Little Bear, and teach me how I could use those same stars to find my way home.

My grandfather has long passed away, but I continue the tradition every year with my own grandkids. We hike the same trails, and munch on berries, and in the evenings, right around where my granddad and I would pitch our tents, I chase them around the campfire as the Great Bear.

Tags: Astronomy, Nature, Camping, Plant-life, Navigation

This story has been marked as: **Free to Adapt to Any Medium (No Attribution Required)**



Click here to share!

Photo by [Tim Woollicroft](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Figure 3: A fictional example of a submitted story. This is an individual memory tied to place, family traditions, and one's relationship with nature. The photo is a royalty-free image meant to represent the user submitting a photograph of their own

Visitors would also have the option to browse stories via a regular text blog version of the site, for ease of navigation as well as accessibility. Similar to the *Earth Stories Collection* website ('The Earth Stories Collection'), submissions would be organised and tagged according to subject matter, key themes and topics, as well as whether or not other creatives are free to adapt the work.

Mapping the Light

Homepage

Explore Tags

Submit Your Story

Contact

Search 

Submit Your Story

Name:*	<input type="text"/>	Can others adapt this story?*	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Email:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text" value="Yes – No Attribution Required"/>
Affiliated Organisation:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text" value="Yes – Attribution Required"/>
Location of Story:*	<input type="text" value="Start typing to find location..."/>		<input type="text" value="Upon Request"/>
Format of Story:*	<input type="text" value="True Personal Account"/>	[If you are part of a community initiative, non-profit, etc] Are there ways people can get involved and support your efforts?	<input type="text" value="Add website link or social media page here"/>
<small>(Please note that if you submit a creative piece, you must prove you have distribution rights)</small>	<input type="text" value="Own Creative Dedication"/>		
	<input type="text" value="Other (Please Type in Text Box Below)"/>		
Would you like your name published with your piece?*	<input type="text" value="Yes"/>	Enter Story Text:*	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text" value="No"/>		
		Upload:	<input type="button" value="Browse..."/>
<input type="button" value="Submit"/>			

Figure 4: Story submission page

Anyone interested in sharing a story of their own would be able to navigate to the submission page by either clicking directly on the button in the homepage or navigation bar, or by pinning a location on the interactive map. The draft form showcased in *Figure 4* is designed to be simple, yet comprehensive enough to allow for stories to be more easily reviewed and tagged by the site’s moderators.

Not discounting the practical and ethical considerations highlighted previously, it is still vital to create a digital space such as this, wherein stories of hope and activism can be showcased and multiplied across the globe. The link to physical space via the map – to the “where” in addition to the “what” and “how” – helps ground these stories in the real world. The goal here is not just to raise collective spirits, as that is not sufficient to mobilise action, but also to open minds to alternative ways of living, being, and doing that do not come at the expense of the environment or specific groups of people. These alternative stories can then be built upon, and new futures imagined. There may even be potential for the site

itself to be further expanded so people can collaborate and share resources beyond the stories, deepening interdependent relationships between communities and furthering positive change.

Works Cited

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