How to map local experts

Identify professionals and creatives in your area who can contribute to your library's make-a-thek journey.

13.02.2026
Written by Daan Sonnemans (Fab City Foundation)

Summary

How to identify professionals and creatives in your area who can contribute to your library's make-a-thek journey.

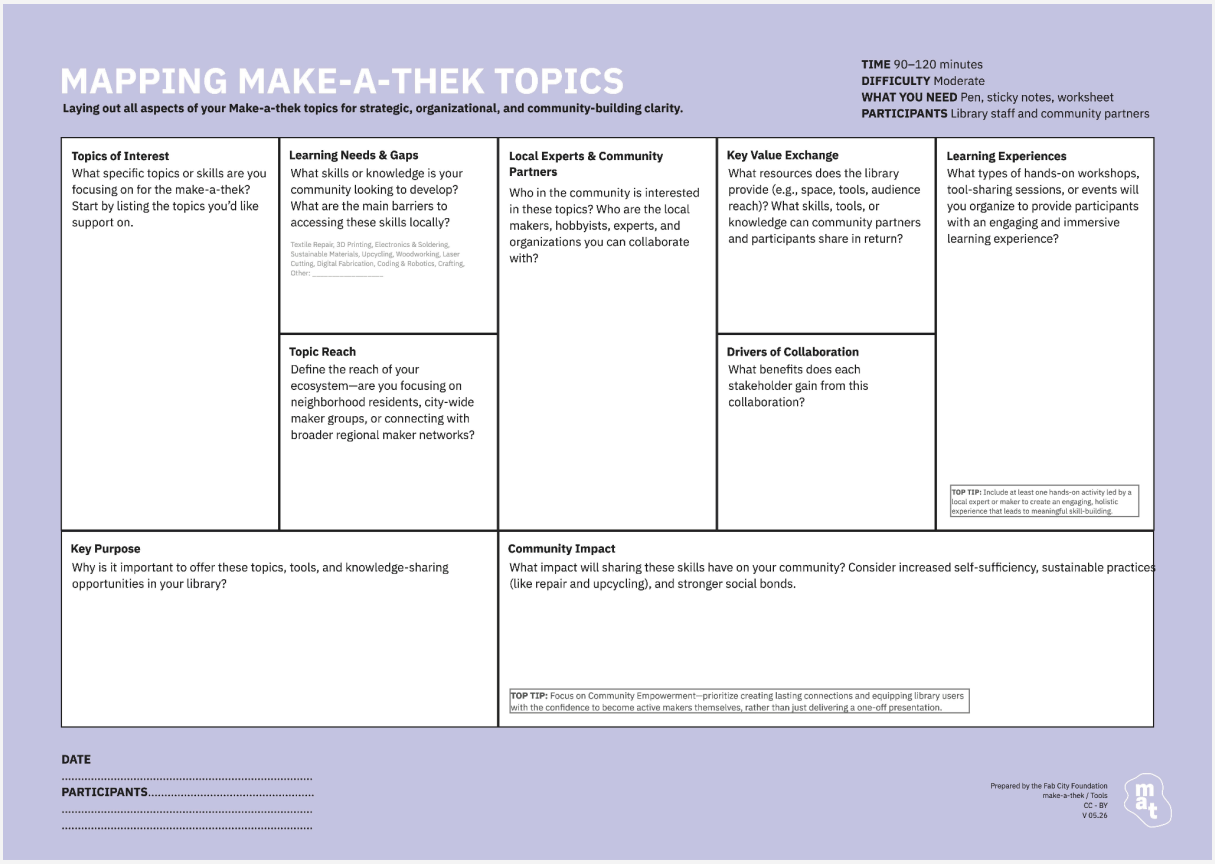
Mapping your local experts means understanding who around you has skills, knowledge, and interest in circularity, crafts, digital fabrication, and design. These people can become trainers, collaborators, or even long-term partners.

How to use this resource

Print the worksheets below on A3 or larger and use **sticky notes** or use the worksheet on Miro to co-map your ecosystem with your team or community.

Steps to get started

1. **List your challenges and topics of interest**
   Start by listing the topics you'd like support on: e.g., textile repair, 3D printing, sustainable materials, etc.



MAPPING MAKE-A-THEK TOPICS

Laying out all aspects of your Make-a-thek topics for strategic, organizational, and community-building clarity.

TIME 90–120 minutes
DIFFICULTY Moderate
WHAT YOU NEED Pen, sticky notes, worksheet
PARTICIPANTS Library staff and community partners

Topics of Interest
What specific topics or skills are you focusing on for the make-a-thek? Start by listing the topics you'd like support on.

Learning Needs & Gaps
What skills or knowledge is your community looking to develop? What are the main barriers to accessing these skills locally?
Textile Repair, 3D Printing, Electronics & Soldering, Sustainable Materials, Upcycling, Woodworking, Laser Cutting, Digital Fabrication, Coding & Robotics, Crafting, Other: _____

Topic Reach
Define the reach of your ecosystem—are you focusing on neighborhood residents, city-wide maker groups, or connecting with broader regional maker networks?

Local Experts & Community Partners
Who in the community is interested in these topics? Who are the local makers, hobbyists, experts, and organizations you can collaborate with?

Key Value Exchange
What resources does the library provide (e.g., space, tools, audience reach)? What skills, tools, or knowledge can community partners and participants share in return?

Drivers of Collaboration
What benefits does each stakeholder gain from this collaboration?

Learning Experiences
What types of hands-on workshops, tool-sharing sessions, or events will you organize to provide participants with an engaging and immersive learning experience?

TOP TIP: Include at least one hands-on activity led by a local expert or maker to create an engaging, holistic experience that leads to meaningful skill-building.

Key Purpose
Why is it important to offer these topics, tools, and knowledge-sharing opportunities in your library?

Community Impact
What impact will sharing these skills have on your community? Consider increased self-sufficiency, sustainable practices (like repair and upcycling), and stronger social bonds.

TOP TIP: Focus on Community Empowerment—prioritize creating lasting connections and equipping library users with the confidence to become active makers themselves, rather than just delivering a one-off presentation.

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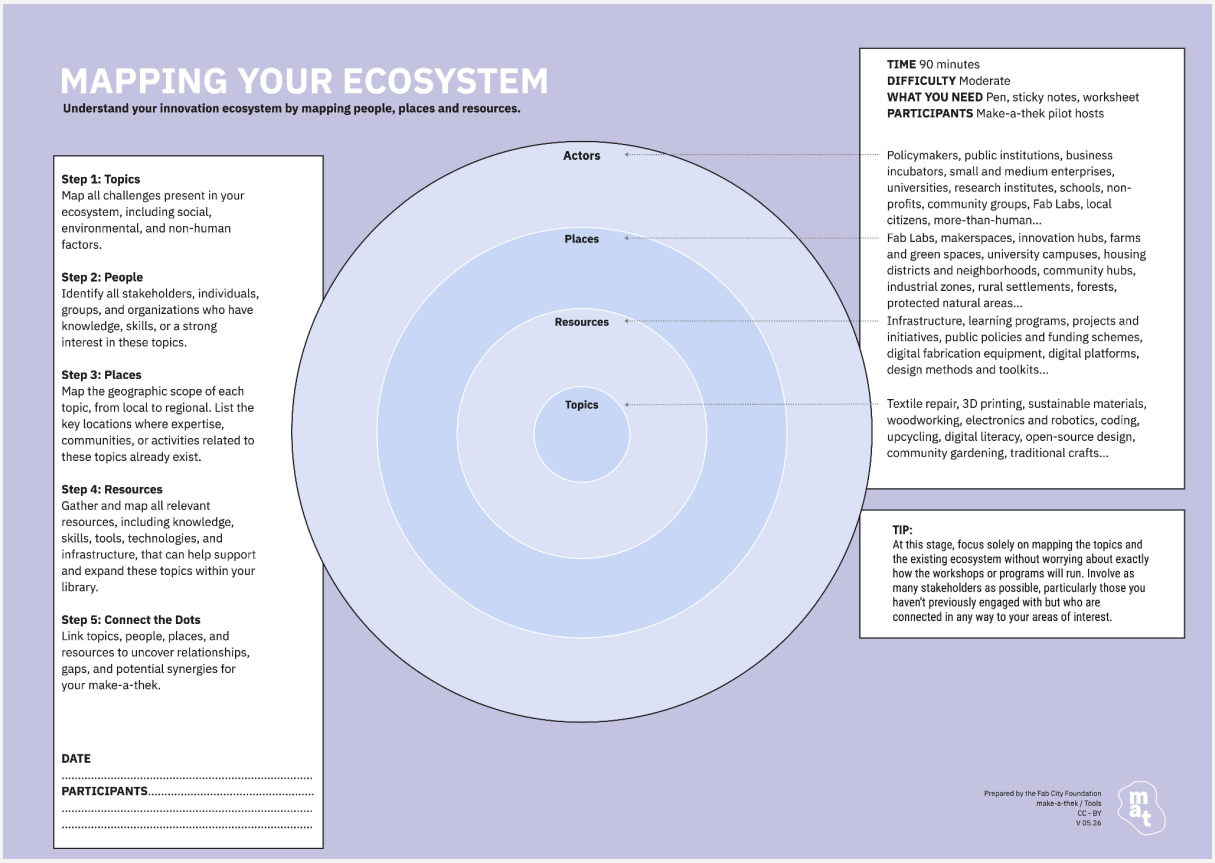
2. **Map your ecosystem**
   Use the *Mapping Your Ecosystem* worksheet to:
   - Identify **people** (makers, designers, artists, engineers...)
   - Spot **places** like fablabs, studios, schools
   - List available **resources** (machines, tools, materials, know-how)

   Be as specific as possible, if you can add names and contact details, perfect! Easier to reach out to them later.

Funded by the European Union

make-a-thek has received funding from the European Horizon Europe programme under grant agreement No. 101177660.



3. **Look beyond the usual suspects**
   Don't only contact who you already know: seek out underrepresented skills or voices (e.g., independent tailors, migrant artisans, tech-savvy students).

4. **Use interviews or informal chats**
   Invite local experts to visit your space or co-design something small. This builds trust and future opportunities.

5. **Document your findings**
   Use the *Ecosystem Mapping* chart to visualize connections and gaps. Think: who do we have? Who do we need? Where's the energy?

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MAPPING YOUR ECOSYSTEM

Understand your innovation ecosystem by mapping people, places and resources.

Step 1: Topics
Map all challenges present in your ecosystem, including social, environmental, and non-human factors.

Step 2: People
Identify all stakeholders, individuals, groups, and organizations who have knowledge, skills, or a strong interest in these topics.

Step 3: Places
Map the geographic scope of each topic, from local to regional. List the key locations where expertise, communities, or activities related to these topics already exist.

Step 4: Resources
Gather and map all relevant resources, including knowledge, skills, tools, technologies, and infrastructure, that can help support and expand these topics within your library.

Step 5: Connect the Dots
Link topics, people, places, and resources to uncover relationships, gaps, and potential synergies for your make-a-thek.

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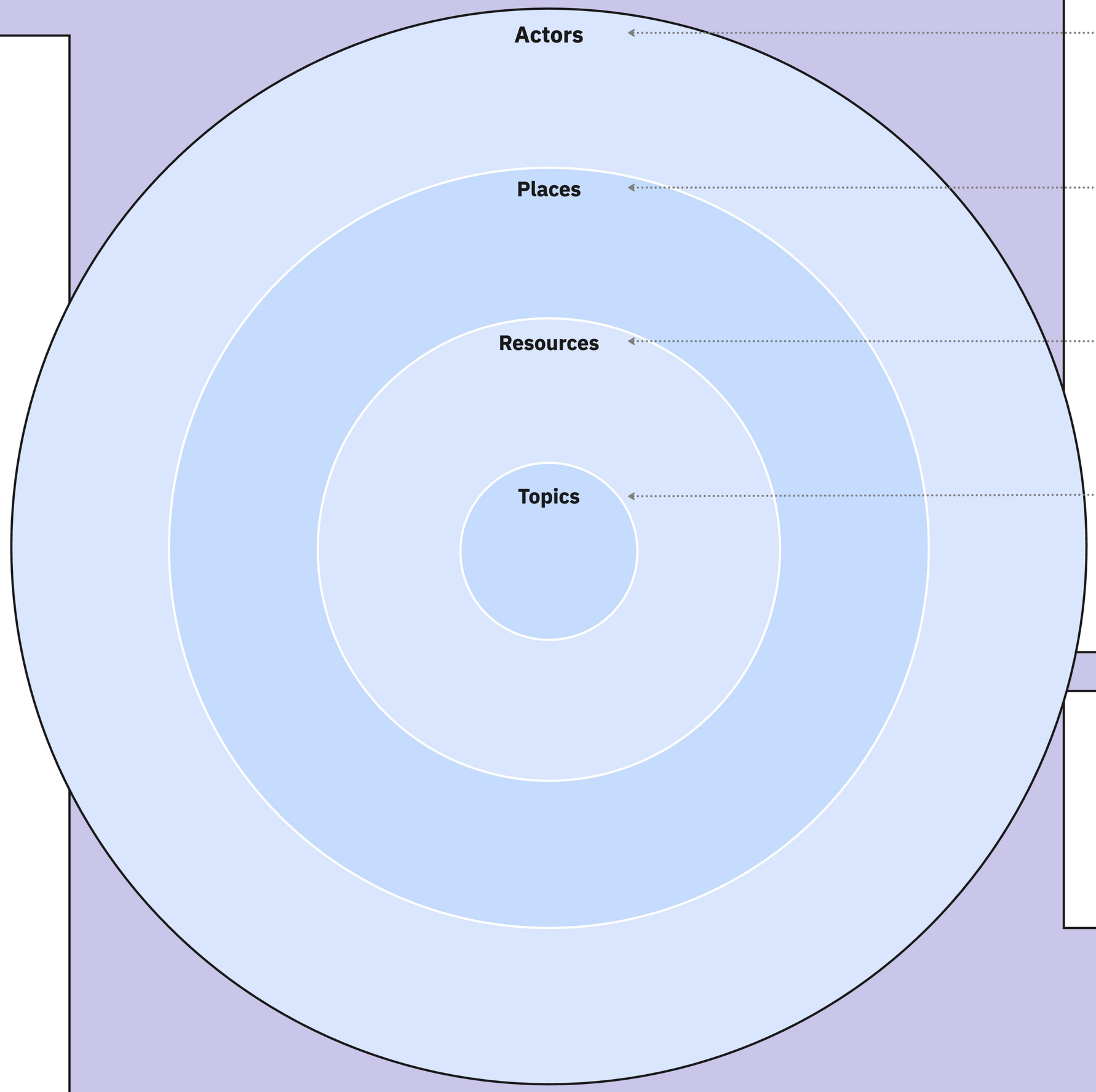

TIME 90 minutes
DIFFICULTY Moderate
WHAT YOU NEED Pen, sticky notes, worksheet
PARTICIPANTS Make-a-thek pilot hosts

Policymakers, public institutions, business incubators, small and medium enterprises, universities, research institutes, schools, non-profits, community groups, Fab Labs, local citizens, more-than-human...

Fab Labs, makerspaces, innovation hubs, farms and green spaces, university campuses, housing districts and neighborhoods, community hubs, industrial zones, rural settlements, forests, protected natural areas...

Infrastructure, learning programs, projects and initiatives, public policies and funding schemes, digital fabrication equipment, digital platforms, design methods and toolkits...

Textile repair, 3D printing, sustainable materials, woodworking, electronics and robotics, coding, upcycling, digital literacy, open-source design, community gardening, traditional crafts...

TIP:
At this stage, focus solely on mapping the topics and the existing ecosystem without worrying about exactly how the workshops or programs will run. Involve as many stakeholders as possible, particularly those you haven't previously engaged with but who are connected in any way to your areas of interest.

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