

Working with Ecomaps

Similar to the genogram, the ecomap is a resource-finder that helps us delve into a goldmine of relationships. However, there are some marked differences.

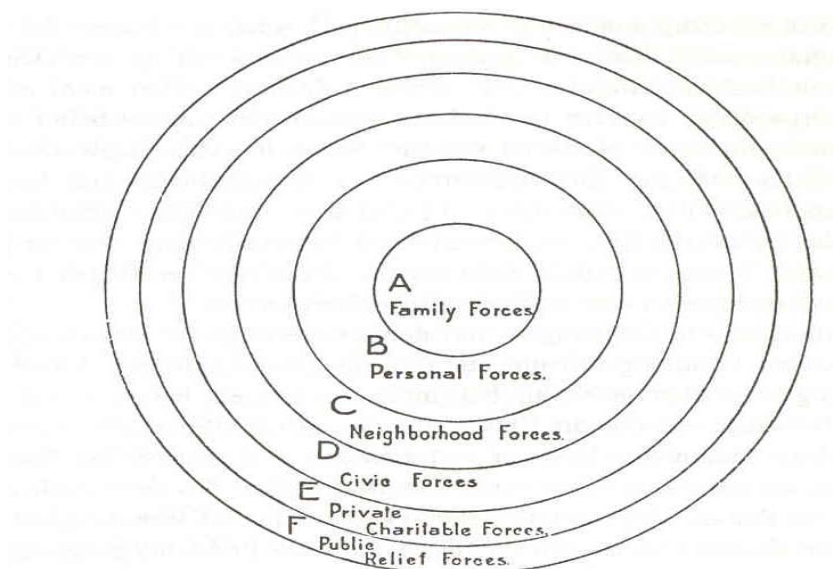
Unlike a genogram, which maps only kinship ties, the ecomap is much broader in its scope and is flexible and inclusive enough to accommodate non-relatives as well. Through a drawing, the ecomap shows all of your client's relationship systems. Some systems may encompass relationships at school, at the gym, within a soccer team, in the workplace or amongst a group of specific people—like buddies on a Friendster or Facebook network.



Mary Richmond—the grandmother of the first ecomap

Furthermore, unlike the genogram, the ecomap can be used to show the degree of closeness to different people or networks. For example, consider the ecomap below with its concentric inner and outer circles.

Most importantly, an ecomap serves to capture the networks that your client moves around in.



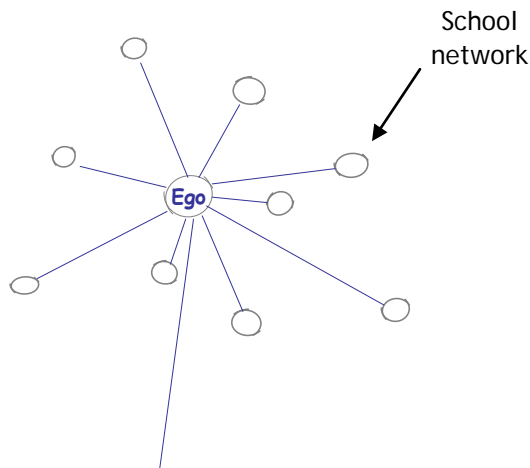
An ecomap stems from an idea borrowed from zoology.

In zoology, an ecological system is an entire natural system that helps an animal or plant to survive.

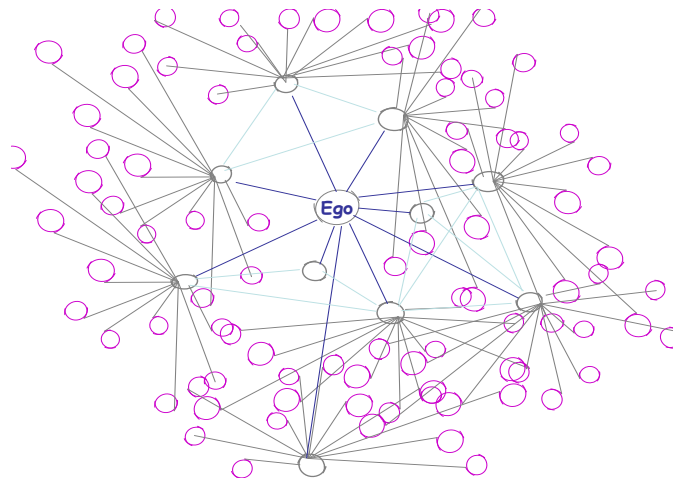
Hence, an ecomap refers to a person's your entire ecological network.

Drawing an ecomap

The easiest way of starting an ecomap with your client is by positioning him or her in the chart first. Ecomaps are all about networks—and networks beget networks. A simple ecomap could turn out looking like this, with your client at the centre as the 'ego'.

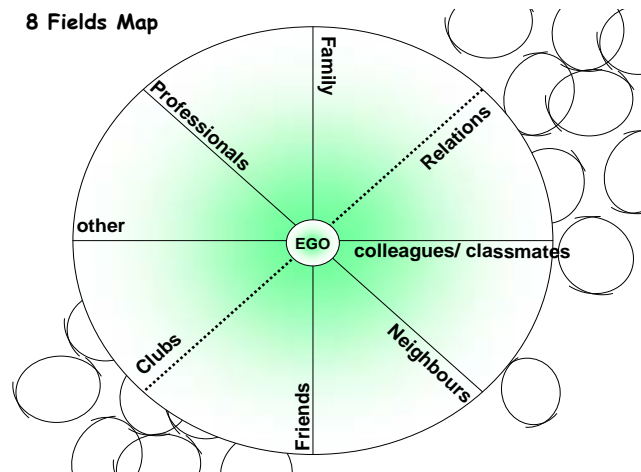


Ultimately, when a number of networks are identified, the ecomap may look like this (below), with the people within the networks represented by pink circles. Once again, like the genogram, the ecomap reminds us that we are not human islands. These little pink circles form our community of care.



! Though this ecomap clearly shows that we are not human islands, having a resource map like this may not be entirely helpful because it does not help the client identify resources at a glance.

In systematically charting networks and relationships, the typical ecomap—usually an 8 Fields Map—looks very much like a pizza that is divided into eight segments, each segment representing a network.



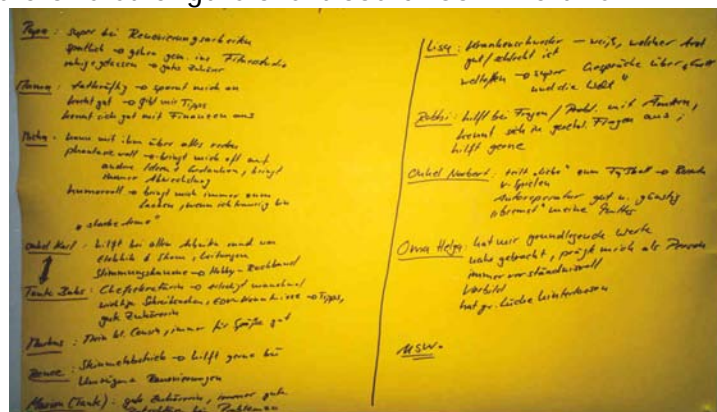
Matching strengths with resources

Like the genogram, an ecomap is not complete if the strengths of your client’s resources within each of the networks are not seen. Therefore, a simple genogram or ecomap drawing can be accompanied by the strengths list, as Mi Zhen has done below.

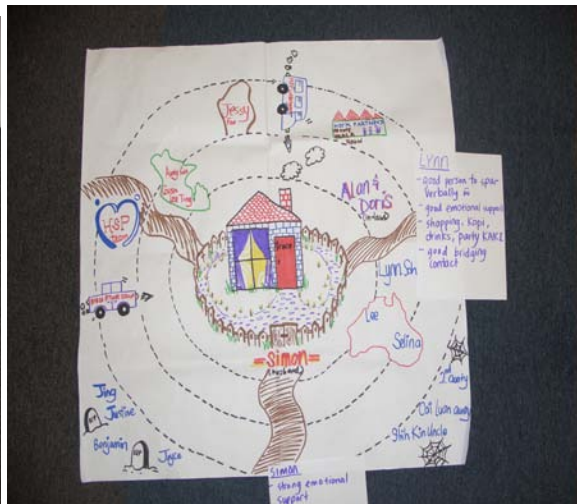
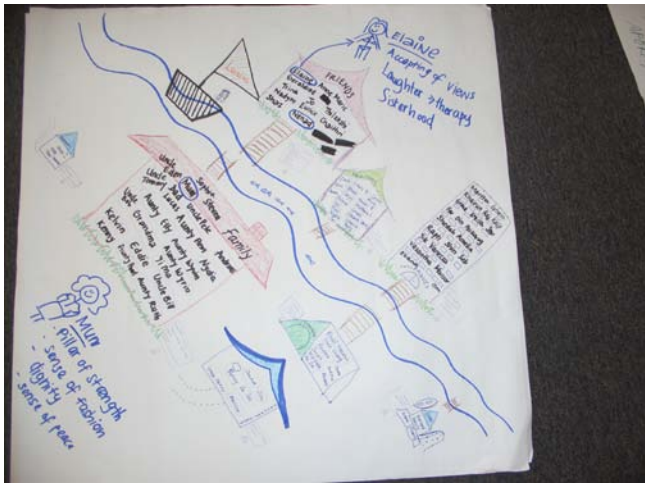
Mi Zhen’s list of resources

Name of resource	Relationship	What that person brings to me/means to me
Mr. Josef	Part time employer	A job, teaches me about bikes, a friend, helps me out, gives me friendship
Ma	Mother	Live in her house, she cooks food

Another example of a strengths chart could look like this:



Some examples of ecomaps:



How do you make hidden ties visible?

Having to go through a long comprehensive list of people in your networks can be tiring. Genograms are a little easier because, most often, you remember family relationships. As they say, unlike your friends, you do not get to choose your family!

On your first attempt at drawing your own ecomap, only a few names might pop into mind. They might be people you see very often, live with or work with. Important resources that are yet a little further away from you might slip your mind.

Here are some questions that can be used to dig for hidden ties:

- ✓ *Think of your friends from former times—from primary and secondary school, National Service, and your former workplaces.*
- ✓ *Who do you keep contact with? How often? On which occasions?*
- ✓ *Who would you invite to your wedding?*
- ✓ *Who would you have sitting at your reunion dinner table?*
- ✓ *Who would you visit, or who would visit you, during Hari Raya, Deepavali, Christmas or other festivals?*
- ✓ *Think of your favourite place in Singapore. Who would you like to meet there?*
- ✓ *How would you like spending your time? With whom?*
- ✓ *Who lived in or near your street/block?*
- ✓ *Scroll through your handphone number list. Who did you call last week?*
- ✓ *Who has left you voicemails?*
- ✓ *Who sends you forwarded emails?*
- ✓ *Who would you like to go on holiday with?*
- ✓ *Who would you be comfortable borrowing money from?*
- ✓ *Who has been with you during a crisis or a troubled time?*
- ✓ *Who would you contact when feeling stressed, or when you need advice?*

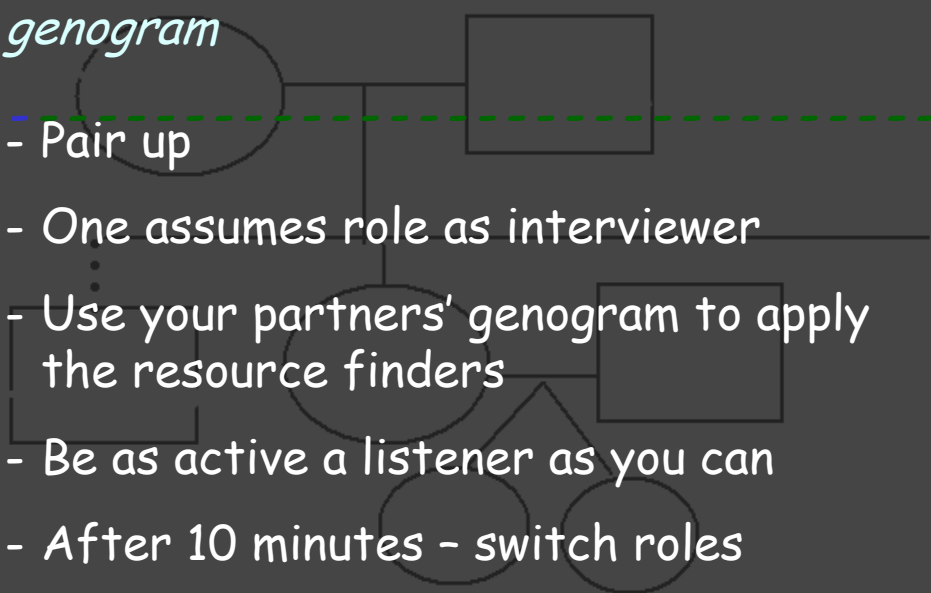
Are genograms and ecomaps the same?

Genograms and ecomaps can be used to complement each other. As techniques of building rapport between the community worker and the client, they are the same. However, key differences in their functions exist, captured in this table:

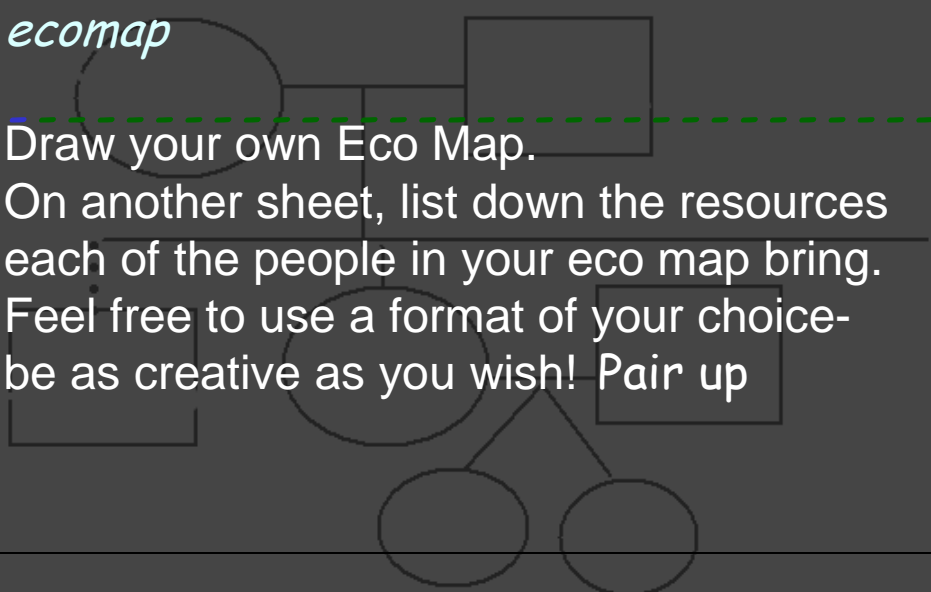
	The Genogram	The Ecomap
Represents	Family/ kinship ties—immediate and extended family members	Entire social networks/ social circles that people move around in
Examples of situations	Sourcing for alternative live-in/ care arrangements for children and youth	Family Group Conferencing Sourcing for jobs



Breakout Exercise 1- Draw your genogram

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- Pair up
 - One assumes role as interviewer
 - Use your partners' genogram to apply the resource finders
 - Be as active a listener as you can
 - After 10 minutes - switch roles

Breakout Exercise 2- Draw your ecomap



Draw your own Eco Map.
On another sheet, list down the resources each of the people in your eco map bring.
Feel free to use a format of your choice- be as creative as you wish! Pair up