

# Grassroots Mapping

## Balloon mapping - a low-cost alternative to satellite imaging



Project author or developer:  
**Public Laboratory**

Where:  
**US / United States / New York**

Website:  
**[publiclaboratory.org/home](http://publiclaboratory.org/home)**

The Grassroots Mapping project began in the summer of 2010 when a group of activists, educators, and technologists known as the Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science (PLOTS) began documenting the BP oil spill on the American Gulf Coast using balloon mapping – an accessible and low-cost alternative to satellite imaging. Recognizing the power of “community satellites” to subvert the power dynamics associated with cartography, the project has since expanded to nine environmentally compromised sites across the country. Their website [GrassrootsMapping.org](http://GrassrootsMapping.org) includes how-to instructions for balloon and kite mapping as well as other low-cost DIY environmental sensing devices. Awarded a \$500,000 grant last year by Knight News, PLOTS is expanding its work to support community action through locally produced environmental and civic data.

