Collecting, Visualising, Communicating and Modelling Geographic Data for the Social Sciences.

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New web technologies and task specific software packages and services are fundamentally changing the way we share, collect, visualise, communicate and distribute geographic information. Coupled with these new technologies is the emergence of rich fine scale and extensive geographical datasets of the built environment. Such technologies and data are providing opportunities for the social sciences that were unimaginable ten years ago.

Within this paper we discuss such change from our own experiences at the Centre of Advanced Spatial Analysis. Specifically, how it is now possible to harness the crowd to collect peoples’ opinions about topical events such as the current financial crisis, in real time and map the results, through the use of our GMapCreator software and the MapTube website. Furthermore, such tools allow for widespread dissemination and visualisation of geographic data to whoever has an internet connection. We will explore how one can use new datasets to visualise the city using our Virtual London model as an example. Within the model individual buildings are tagged with multiple attributes providing a lens to explore the urban structure offering a plethora of research applications. Finally we turn to how one can visualise and communicate such data through low cost software and virtual worlds such as Crysis and Second Life with a look into their potential for modelling.