Visual Communications

The art of showing complex data and messages effectively

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today

1. Principles of data presentation

2. A practical guide to GIS mapping

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1. Principles of data presentation

2. A practical guide to GIS mapping

Automated Mapping

- One of the big breakthroughs in visual data representation is the rise of automated mapping.
- Mapping software (ARCGis, QGis) can fit data to a map quickly using shapefiles (.shp).
- About 5 years ago the more common method was to use a scalable vector (.svg) file and replace the tags for geographic spaces.
- This is also fairly easy.

A Very Simple Automated World Map



A Very Simple Automated World Map



Countries surveyed once by the WVS

Mapping WVS Items



Social Trust Map of the World. Percentage Responding "People can generally be trusted". Source: World Values Survey (2000-5), Global Barometer surveys.

How to do it (1) – SVG Files

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How to do it (2) – Use GIS Software

- A faster way is to use GIS software, such as ARCGIS (commercial) or Quantum GIS (free).
- These use shapefiles (.shp) to get the boundary outlines (like .svg files) but allow dynamic updating of the map, without having to toggle manually with the marker id's.
- Is also a lot more convenient for getting new maps (doesn't involve complex fiddling around with the raw data).

- Quantum GIS (QGIS) is a good program to get started with, as it has much of the functionality of ArcGIS but is also free to download.
- The software can be downloaded at the QGIS website (<u>www.qgis.org</u>).
- In this presentation I will assume you are using QGIS though the steps for ArcGIS would be largely the same.

- The first thing you need is to get a 'shapefile' (extension .shp).
- A shapefile is simply a set of map coordinates and instructions of how to join them in order to make some basic shapes – such as the outlines of countries, or subnational country regions.
- Many common shapefiles are available for free online.

• Let's assume you have found a shapefile, and want to start using it for visualisation of your data.

 The first thing is to add it as a vector layer – in other words, one level of the data/graphic file you'll be making.

Adding a vector layer

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• This is how you load up the shapefile.

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The shapefile, loaded



Zoom in, fairly detailed



Embedded data

 Often shapefiles already contain data embedded within them, that we can start using in order to generate maps.

• As this is a 2011 India census file, it contains a data table with a number of variables already.

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Generating variables internally

- We can find aggregates like total population, and total number of literates.
- This is a good opportunity to show how to manipulate variables from within QGIS.
- QGIS has a cumbersome interface called the field calculator. Alas it doesn't allow copy and paste from a spreadsheet, so this is how we have to alter variables.

Using the field calculator

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Gradiating a map to some variable

- We now have a variable for the literacy rate, running from 0-100%.
- How to colour the map?
- For this we need to click on layer \rightarrow properties.
- This will bring up the layer properties.

Setting a gradient variable

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Doing something with the map

- If we want to use the map (in a document or presentation) it can be exported using file → save as image.
- Note that it will take whatever is currently in the screen view.
- This can be useful when seeking to export only a portion of an image, but otherwise not.

Multiple layers

- Because the data is georeferenced, we can have multiple layers.
- An obvious extension is to have multiple layers of administrative boundary – e.g. a country map within a world map, or sub-district boundaries within a single district.
- This is really limited by the memory capacity of your computer (as can become quite resource intense)

Multiple layers

- Here I can add the federal state boundaries as well as the districts.
- This is done by downloading the federal state shapefile, and importing it to the workspace the same way that I imported the district boundaries file.

Two shapefiles together





District gradation, state lines



Multiple layers

- Note that the state level file also contains data, and we can alter its properties so as to manipulate the master image.
- For example, we might want to only show data from one state, and de-emphasise the others.
- To do this, we go to the properties window for the state-level file (on the left tab) and make the colouring 'rule-based'.
- We then make a rule to shade-out any entry that is not of a certain state.



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- Shapefiles typically have data already embedded. Sometimes this data is quite useful.
- The India file for example has lots of data already from the 2011 census.
- But this is quite limiting. what if we want to add our own data? I have some data on historical taxes across India that I have collected, and would like to add.

- The method of inserting data into a shapefile is called 'joining'.
- Because we can have multiple layers in our workspace, we simply import our (csv) data table as a new layer, and then 'join' the data table to the existing shapefile.
- They are matched on the basis of a shared variable almost always the regional or country name/id.

- Because QGIS demands use of the .csv format, first we need to get the data in a spreadsheet file (your statistics package may allow automatic export; otherwise you will have to copy and paste).
- Make sure that the match variable does, in fact, match. It can be either a string or a numerical id, but obviously any case than cannot be found in the corresponding dataset will simply be dropped.

Joining the data

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- We just select the same option for adding a 'data layer' as we would for adding a new shape file.
- The data table will then appear alongside the map shapefiles in the right panel.
- QGIS basically treats spreadsheet as data tables that are not (yet) linked to any map coordinates or objects.



And here is the data

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Joining the data to an existing file



Mapping the new data



Other stuff

- We aren't restricted to adding shapefiles and gradiating our maps with new data.
- We could add a wide range of other things to a map, including (for example) contour lines, labels, features (lines), nodes (e.g. to represent cities, airports, etc)
- We might be able to import many of these. But we can also draw them ourselves.

Adding nodes to a map



Other stuff

- Here there are two additional features a set of nodes that represent major cities of Karnataka, and a line that represents the northernmost border of the Mysore Empire in 1782.
- Note that these are lain over the state and the district shapefiles (so there are here 4 layers of data)
- The nodes were simply drawn manually based on a graphic overlay.
- Easy to add / remove nodes and manipulate their appearance e.g. :

Capture a new point...



Give it some attributes

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Give it some attributes



with new node



(before)



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Customising nodes

- As with shapefile layers, we can fully customise the colour scheme. I've opted for a simple binary rule-based scheme whereby some of the nodes get coded as big red dots, and the others as small white ones, depending on the variable 'response'.
- We could do something more sophisticated. For example, having a variable for population and then sizing or colouring the node by the size of the city.
- Even better things are possible e.g. having a georeference for each individual survey respondent, and then drawing 'heatmaps' based on answers to survey items.

The border



The border

- The border is just another layer, consisting a series of arbitrary (user-defined) nodes that are connected by a (slightly ugly) green line (following the line of a 1907 textbook map – Joppen's Atlas of India).
- As such, they are very easily manipulated QGIS allows us to drag the points etc. similar to any graphics package would do.

Other data

- QGIS also allows for the overlay of other kinds of data, for example contour maps.
- Also, we are not restricted to dealing with geographic maps: we could for example have neighbourhood maps, using data from <u>openstreetmap.org</u>, with nodes to show the location of survey respondents, or interviewees, or other subjects of interest.

E.g. overlaying a contour map layer



Example: what heatmaps look like





Or: using streetmap data



Underlying data – London landmarks

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Highlighting the pubs in London

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Summing up

- Geospatial mapping is a flexible way of visualising data in a visually appealing and intuitive way.
- It is easy to learn how to do.
- Is also becoming a new benchmark for the presentation of data: enables rapid analysis and descriptive statistics, and is aesthetically appealing.

This report was presented at the training methodological workshop "Economic and Social Changes: values effects across Eurasia".

March 31 - April 6, 2015 – Turkey.

http://lcsr.hse.ru/en/seminar m2015

Настоящий доклад был представлен на методологическом учебном семинаре «Экономические и социальные изменения: оценка эффектов по всей Евразии».

31 марта – 6 апреля 2015 года – Турция.

http://lcsr.hse.ru/seminar m2015