



UrbanMetaMapping Conference: Mapping "Post-Conflict Cities" 20 - 21 October 2022

Registration via: talks.urbanmetamapping@uni-bamberg.de



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KEYNOTE: Geographical Information Systems for understanding the geographies of the past

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) provide a digital platform to store, manipulate and visualise data linked to locations on the Earth's surface. As such they should provide an ideal tool to understand the geographies of the past. However, GIS was developed by computer scientists and others to work in modern, data rich environments such as the Earth sciences or the commercial sectors. They have rarely been designed with the humanities in mind. As a result, historians wishing to use GIS appropriately in their research must apply the models and techniques in a critical manner that is sympathetic to humanities research paradigms. This may involve adapting the approaches as appropriate to deal with the types of sources more frequently used by historians. While this poses challenges, it also provides opportunities. If done well, the use of GIS in the humanities provides new opportunities to understand the past, and also to change the use of GIS to make it more usable with sources such as texts on which many humanities scholars rely. This paper will present an overview of the opportunities and challenges of using a range of humanities sources to better local geographies of the past and how these have changed.

Ian Gregory is Professor in Digital Humanities at Lancaster University. He is particularly interested in using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) with a wide range of humanities sources including texts, maps and quantitative evidence. He has used these approaches to study a range of topics from historical demography to Lake District literature. This research has been the subject of a number of major projects including the European Research Council funded Spatial Humanities: Texts, GIS, Places, the Leverhulme Trust funded Geospatial Innovation in the Digital Humanities, and the ESRC/NSF funded Understanding Space and Time in Narratives.



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