Geothink

Geothink Canada Newsletter | Issue 7 July 2015

Update from the Geothink Summer Institute and Annual General Meeting 2015

This issue we bring an update on two recent Geothink events: the Geothink Summer Institute and the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Both events were hosted by the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, with the Summer Institute running from 15-17 June and the AGM running 18-19 June. This was an exciting week, with Geothink students coming in from across the continent, many of them meeting for the first time.

We would like to thank the partners, co-applicants, students, and the University of Waterloo, for participating in and contributing to the two events. As always, whether you are an academic or a partner, we welcome your participation at future AGMs.

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Geothink Summer Institute 2015

Thank you to the Profs. Peter Johnson and Rob Feick, and the University of Waterloo for hosting us this year.

The inaugural Geothink Summer Institute was held from 15-17 June, at the University of Waterloo's Faculty of Environment. Our goal for this 3 day course was to provide students (especially Students of Geothink and others interested in the topic) with hands-on training on a Geothink related topic. The topic this year was **crowdsourcing.** The aim was to expose students to theoretical and practical approaches to crowdsourcing and provide a real world scenario with which they could apply their skills.

Instruction was provided by three speakers and our Principal Investigator, Prof. Renee Sieber.

Instructors at the Summer Institute included experts in crowdsourcing. Geothink co-applicant Prof. Daren Brabham (University of Southern California) has written extensively on the topic of crowdsourcing. In his writing, he has focused on crowdsourcing as a problem-solving approach to issues. Recently, he published a book, Crowdsourcing in the Public Sector, as a way to provide a practical 'how-to' guide for civil servants wishing to implement crowdsourcing projects, including a list of ten best practices.

Prof. Robert Goodspeed (University of Michigan) is professor in urban planning (Taubman College of Architecture) and has a background in GIS and planning, combining information technologies with planning processes.

Prof. Monica Stephens (University at Buffalo, SUNY) is a professor in GIScience and integrates Geographic Information Science with Social Network Analysis and Big Data. She has worked on bringing to surface inequalities that exist in social media and user-generated content. She is also a contributor on floatingsheep.org.

The Summer Institute consisted of formal lectures and workshop sessions led by our speakers. After an introductory lecture session, students were introduced to a case study provided by the planners from the City of Ottawa (another Geothink research partner). The case study required students to come up with proposals for an initiative to promote Ottawa through crowdsourcing. This included engaging citizens, collecting data, and promoting a long-term vision of Ottawa.

On the first day, a broad introduction to crowdsourcing was given, which then moved into various approaches, tools and case studies on the second and third days day. It quickly became clear that the concept of crowdsourcing can be viewed and interpreted from different perspectives and that there are a multitude of ways to implement it. Some focus on crowdsourcing in terms of tools and technology used to collect data from the public, while others focus on crowdsourcing as a process or method for solving problems. Not only are there different takes on crowdsourcing, there are also subcategories of crowdsourcing. Prof. Brabham presented four types of crowdsourcing based on four general types of problems that could be solved: knowledge discovery and management, distributed human intelligence tasking, broadcast search, and peer-vetted creative production.

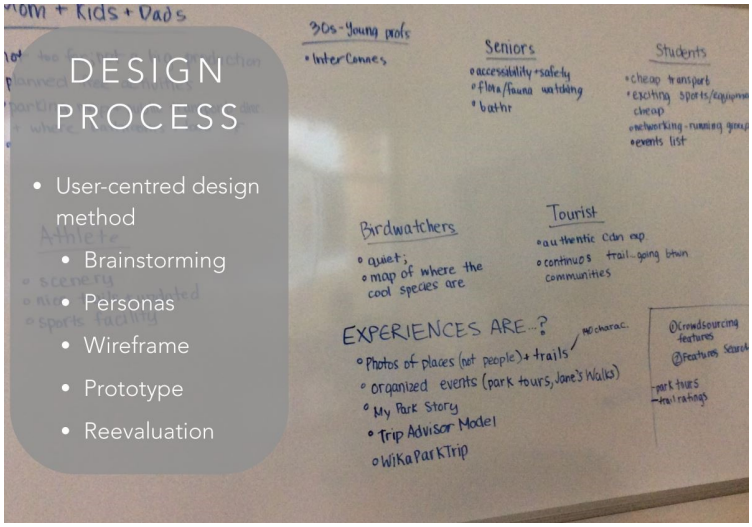
Other lectures from our speakers also highlighted some of the data issues (such as accuracy, reliability, distribution) and ethical issues (inequalities, motivations and bias) that arise from collecting data from a largely unknown population. One of the main messages of the Summer Institute was that the planning of crowdsourcing or any geospatial mapping project in general should never separate the technology from society and culture. Our cultural predispositions affect the way we use technology to answer questions, while technologies and methods are never developed outside of a social context.

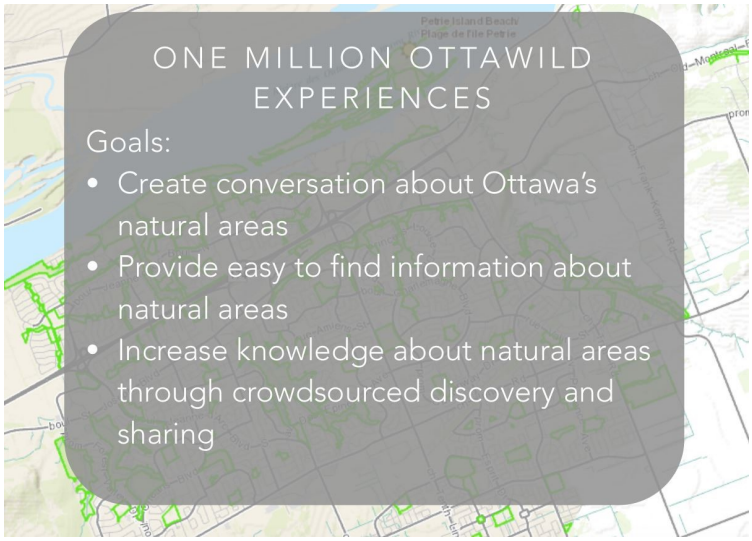
Speakers also highlighted useful case studies, such as Next Stop Design, a crowdsourcing project started by Prof. Brabham to test public participation in transportation planning in the USA.

29 students came from across the continent, with backgrounds ranging from geography and GIS, to communications and law. A grouping into interdisciplinary teams resulted in a wide variety of

very creative crowdsourcing proposals. Each team had one member with programming skills, one with experience in spatial analysis, and one with either a communications or a law background.

At the end of the third day, each team presented their solution to the City of Ottawa and a winner was chosen. While all proposals were of very high quality, one team was chosen by a City of Ottawa panel as the overall winner, Team 'Geo One'. They presented a proposal for a crowdsourcing project to collect visitors' experiences of Ottawa natural areas such as parks and rivers. The data collection interface included a mobile app and a website. Their proposal included multiple types of input (text and photos), social interaction through comments and shared events, as well as elements of gamification to promote interaction. Two of their presentation slides are reproduced here.

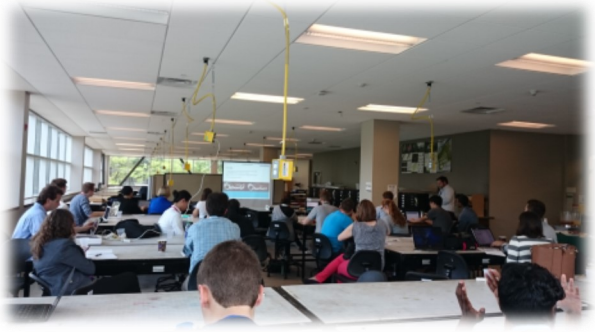




Many thanks to the City of Ottawa for putting forward the case study for students to work with and for judging the proposals. We would also like to thank our three main speakers, and everyone involved in the organisation of the event.

Our next Summer Institute's topic is yet to be decided, but we will certainly be welcoming involvement again from any of our partners. This is a great time to provide instruction to Geothink students, as well as for knowledge exchange between students.

Visit summerinstitute.geothink.ca for more information on the speakers and the agenda. A list of the attendees as well as other materials can be found here.



Video conferencing with the City of Ottawa

Morning registration in the Environment 3 building, University of Waterloo

Summer Institute attendees and speakers

Geo One—the winning team with the speakers

Prof. Monica Stephens speaking on gender and other imbalances in user contributions and resulting issues

Another group, Geo Play, presenting their fun focused app

Geothink Annual General Meeting 2015

The Geothink AGM 2015 took place 18-19 June at the University of Waterloo.

Co-applicants, collaborators, and partners met at the University of Waterloo to give updates on the previous year's progress and to discuss the next year of Geothink operations.

Updates on research

Each co-applicant presented one slide per project (or student) and highlighted current findings and future steps in their research.

The entire set of slides from researchers can be accessed here. A few of the slides have been reproduced on the next page.

Planned academic publications

At the AGM a session was devoted to knowledge mobilization of Geothink research. In the planning stages now are two academic books, to be written and published for next year, while more books have been discussed for the future.

One book will be lead by Profs. Elizabeth Judge (U. Ottawa) and Leslie Shade (U. Toronto). They are working on a book prospectus for a volume on policy and regulatory issues surrounding the geoweb. See the next page for their call for papers.

A second book for 2016 will be lead by Prof. Teresa Scassa (U. Ottawa). This will be on ideas of citizenship, open data, and different meanings and perspectives on open data/government.

Prof. Jon Corbett (UBC), will lead a book on social justice, detailing digital literacy, inclusion, exclusion, and other divides, and how to digitize social justice.

Prof. Daniel Pare (U. Ottawa) and Prof. Pamela Robinson (Ryerson) will head a book on citizenship. This will deal with citizenry on the geoweb and will detail citizens, consumers, clients, and the appification of the city.

Finally, Prof. Claus Rinner (Ryerson) will head a special journal issue on infomediaries and their role in the geoweb (see Current Projects).

Two journal special issues are also planned.

Planned non-academic publications

Citizen's Guide to Open Data

Prof. Leslie Shade is creating a guide to open data for the general public. This covers a variety of topics such as the state of data, data literacy (skills/methods on how to utilise data), privacy, and hackathons. This will help newcomers to open data and the open data community in exploring data and creating from it. The guide itself may not be restricted to just text, but may include web and video content.

Geothink is a collaborative project and we are open to any input from our partners. We welcome contributions to the planned publications from all of you.

Partner feedback

Partners present were also given the chance to give feedback to the co-applicants. If you were not present, we still welcome your feedback as usual.

Planning for the future

The future of Geothink beyond 2018 was also discussed, as well as future outputs from the partnership. One idea that surfaced was the need for Geothink to branch out further to build linkages with different groups. We discussed publishing in journals or publications targeted towards practitioners, and setting up meetings with municipal leaders to increase the reach of our work.

Other actions

We are also looking to revitalize our resource sharing within Geothink, such as bibliographies of academic papers and other resources. Additionally, we are working on improving our information collection within the grant to update everyone in Geothink.

Peter Johnson and Sara Harrison (MES):

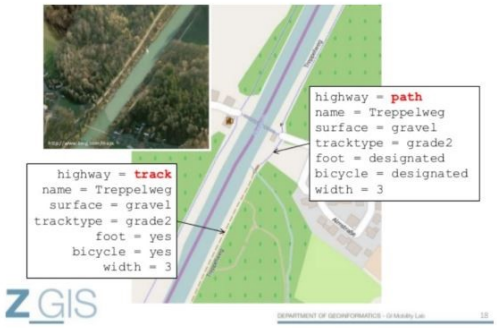
Developing a framework for government adoption of VGI to improve crisis response services

- Understand the reasons for and challenges of government adoption of crowdsourcing and VGI for crisis response.
- Develop a framework for governments to follow when considering adopting or developing a crisis response crowdsourcing application.
- Understand municipal constraints to adoption of VGI in specific context

City of Kitchener Storm Damage Reporting Web app

Richard Wen & Claus Rinner: Semantic Pattern Recognition in VGI Using Neural Networks

- Can neural networks accurately predict OpenStreetMap tags based on geospatial semantics?
- 1 in 1,000 OSM objects have attribute inconsistencies*; OSM tag wars are raging…
- Master of Spatial Analysis (MSA) thesis in progress
- Relevant to research on accuracy, government use of crowd-source geospatial data



*Source: Martin Loidl, AAG 2015 presentation

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Pamela Robinson

RQ: *what is the relationship between bricks and mortar civic institutions and geoweb enabled activities?*

Proposition: we need civic infomediaries - civic institutions can help, libraries have tremendous potential - working to define library work, explore role(s) of other civic institutions too

Theme 4: open everything - the open data isn't the end product of open government, it's an input. The release of the data ≠ "open", we need to think ahead and more about who the users are and to what end? Civic informediaries can bridge expert-community member divide.

Current Projects

To increase awareness of the work happening at Geothink, we are reproducing calls for papers as well as announcements of new knowledge mobilisation projects such as books and journal special issues. This lets everyone know when work on a planned book or paper is started. Partners are also invited to collaborate in writing. Not only are we including calls for papers or chapters for Geothink-specific output, we are also including related calls for papers from Geothink researchers.

Calls for book chapters

This is a call for contributions to a book that Profs. Elizabeth Judge and Leslie Shade are editing.

Elizabeth Judge, Leslie Regan Shade

We are putting together a draft prospectus for consideration by the University of Ottawa Press for their Law, Technology and Media book series. The edited volume will focus on the legal, policy, regulatory, and ethical issues arising from the geoweb. Anticipated issues that the volume will cover include privacy, surveillance, IP, licensing, open data, the public/private divide, citizen engagement, and governance.

We seek brief expressions of interest for chapters from all Geothink members. Please send to both Elizabeth and Leslie, by **August 15**, a **chapter title and a short (150-200 word) abstract** for our consideration.

Elizabeth Judge
(elizabeth.judge@uottawa.ca)

Leslie Regan Shade
(leslie.shade@utoronto.ca)

Other Geothink works in progress

Open Data and Volunteered Geographic Information - The Role of Intermediaries and Infomediaries

Edited by Claus Rinner & Victoria Fast, Geography, Ryerson University

Open data and volunteered geographic information (VGI) are two widespread phenomena that share a common result: They make increasing volumes and variety of geospatial data and content publicly available.

When the accelerating velocity of data collection is added, the three V's characterizing "big data" are present, which implies technical challenges beyond 'normal' GIS-based data processing. While public availability of data is the intended result when government and other organizations open up their datasets, it is a side effect of VGI projects. However, both types of projects share the common challenge that members of the public often do not have the knowledge and tools needed to access, process, and benefit from these newly available data sources.

The purpose of this special issue is to outline the digital literacies needed to use open geospatial data and VGI, and to discuss the emerging roles of intermediaries and infomediaries who negotiate the gap between open data providers, VGI contributors, and end-users. These emerging roles promise to increase the societal and economic benefits of open data and the level of citizen engagement through VGI projects.

This is **not** a call for papers, as the journal issue is pre-arranged based on expressions of interest from Geothink co-applicants at the Annual General Meeting.

Calls from Geothink partners

Muki Haklay

Call for papers on a special issue on past, present and future of Participatory GIS and Public Participation in GIS.

In the 1990s, participatory GIS (PGIS) and Public Participation GIS (PPGIS) emerged as an approach and tool to make geospatial technologies more relevant and accessible to marginalized groups. The goal has been to integrate the qualitative and experiential knowledge of local communities and individuals, thereby empowering local peoples and non-profit organizations to participate in political decision-making. By enabling the participation of local people from different walks of life, P/PGIS has provided a platform where these people can share their viewpoints and create maps depicting alternative views of the same problem, but from a local perspective.

Over the years, numerous applications integrating GIS and social and spatial knowledge of local groups have been developed. P/PGIS appears well articulated as a technique. With the growth of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), from an epistemological view point the relationship of P/PGIS constructs (society, technology and institutions) and the use of components (access, power relations, diverse knowledge) in P/PGIS necessitates an exploration of what P/PGIS means in 21st century.

A related field, Citizen Science a.k.a. public participation in scientific research is a research technique that allows participation of public in the discovery of new scientific knowledge through data collection, analysis, or reporting. This approach can be viewed to be somewhat similar in its implementation to P/PGIS, which broadens the scope of data collection and enables information sharing among stakeholders in specific policies to solve a problem. The success of all three concepts, citizen science, PGIS and PPGIS, is influenced by the Geoweb – an integration of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) (e.g., social networking sites) and geospatial technologies (e.g., virtual globes like Google Earth, free and open source GIS like QGIS and location enabled devices like the iPhone) – that allows a platform for non-experts to participate in the creation and sharing of geospatial information without the aid of geospatial professionals.

Following a successful session in the AAG 2015 Annual Meeting, this call is for papers that will appear in a special issue of The Cartographic Journal. We are calling for reflections on P/PGIS and citizen science that address some of the questions that are listed below.

1. What social theories form the basis for the current implementation of P/PGIS? Have these theories changed? What remains persistent and intractable?
2. What role do spatial theories, such as Tobler's law of spatial relations or issues of spatial data accuracy, have in P/PGIS, Citizen Science or crowdsourcing?
3. Since Schlossberg and Shuford, have we gotten better at understanding who the public is in PPGIS and what their role is in a successful deployment of PGIS?
4. Which new knowledge should be included in data collection, mapping and decision-making and knowledge production? To what extent are rural, developing country, or marginalized communities really involved in the counter-mapping process? Are they represented when this action is undertaken by volunteers?
5. What role do new ICTs and the emergence of crowdsourcing plays in the inclusion of indigenous and local knowledge? Do new tech and concepts hinder the participatory process or enable empowerment of local communities? Do we have new insights on what could be considered technological determinism?
6. Do we need to revisit P/PGIS in light of any of these shifts? How often do P/PGIS projects need to be revisited to address the dynamic nature of society and political factors and to allow future growth?
7. How effective have P/PGIS and Citizen Science been in addressing issues of environmental and social justice and resource allocation, especially, from a policy-making perspective?
8. Are we any better at measuring the success of P/PGIS and/or Citizen Science? Should there be policies to monitor citizen scientists' participation in Geoweb? If so, for what purpose?
9. What should be the role of privacy in P/PGIS, for example, when it influences the accuracy of the data and subsequent usability of final products? How have our notions of needed literacy (e.g., GIS) and skills shifted with the emergence of new technologies?
10. How has the concept of the digital divide been impacted by the emergence of the Geoweb, crowdsourcing and/or neogeography?
11. What is the range of participatory practices in Citizen Science and what are the values and theories that they encapsulate?
12. What are the different applications of Citizen Science from policy and scientific research perspective?
13. To what extent do the spatial distribution of citizens influence their participation in decision making process and resolving scientific problems?

14. How have our notions of needed literacy (e.g., GIS) and skills shifted with the emergence of new technologies?

Editors: Muki Haklay (m.haklay@ucl.ac.uk), University College London, UK; Renee Sieber (renee.sieber@mcgill.ca), McGill University; Rina Ghose (rghose@uwm.edu), University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee; Bandana Kar (bandana.kar@usm.edu), University of Southern Mississippi – Hattiesburg.
Please use the link to send queries about the special issues, or contact one of the editors.

Submission Deadlines

Abstract – a 250 word abstract along with the title of the paper, name(s) of authors and their affiliations must be submitted by 15th August 2015 to Muki Haklay (use the links above). The editorial team will make a decision if the paper is suitable for the special issue by 1st September.

Paper – The final paper created following the guidelines of The Cartographic Journal must be submitted by 30th October 2015.

Our aim is that the final issue will be published in early 2016.

News and Publications

Since the last issue of the newsletter, we have had two papers and a book published.

Brandusescu, A., Sieber, R. E., & Jochems, S. (2015). Confronting the hype The use of crisis mapping for community development. Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, 1354856515584320.

Crisis mapping has emerged as a method of connecting and empowering citizens during emergencies. This article explores the hyperbole behind crisis mapping as it extends into more long-term or 'chronic' community development practices. We critically examined developer issues and participant (i.e. community organization) usage within the context of local communities. We repurposed the predominant crisis mapping platform Crowdmap for three cases of community development in Canadian anglophone and francophone. Our case studies show mixed results about the actual cost of deployment, the results of disintermediation, and local context with the mapping application. Lastly, we discuss the relationship of hype, temporality, and community development as expressed in our cases.

http://con.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/05/15/1354856515584320.abstract

Sieber, R. E., & Johnson, P. A. (2015). Civic open data at a crossroads: Dominant models and current challenges. Government Information Quarterly.

As open data becomes more widely provided by government, it is important to ask questions about the future possibilities and forms that government open data may take. We present four models of open data as they relate to changing relations between citizens and government. These models include; a status quo 'data over the wall' form of government data publishing, a form of 'code exchange', with government acting as an open data activist, open data as a civic issue tracker, and participatory open data. These models represent multiple end points that can be currently viewed from the unfolding landscape of government open data. We position open data at a crossroads, with significant concerns of the conflicting motivations driving open data, the shifting role of government as a service provider, and the fragile nature of open data within the government space. We emphasize that the future of open data will be driven by the negotiation of the ethical-economic tension that exists between provisioning governments, citizens, and private sector data users.

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0740624X15000611

Brabham, D. C. (2015). Crowdsourcing in the Public Sector. (B. A. Radin, Ed.). Georgetown University Press. Retrieved from http://press.georgetown.edu/book/georgetown/crowdsourcing-public-sector

Crowdsourcing is a term that was coined in 2006 to describe how the commercial sector was beginning to outsource problems or tasks to the public through an open call for solutions over the internet or social media. Crowdsourcing works to generate new ideas or develop innovative solutions to problems by drawing on the wisdom of the many rather than the few. US local government experimented with rudimentary crowdsourcing strategies as early as 1989, but in the last few years local, state, and federal government have increasingly turned to crowdsourcing to enhance citizen participation in problem solving, setting priorities, and decision making. While crowdsourcing in the public sector holds much promise and is part of a larger movement toward more citizen participation in democratic government, many challenges, especially legal and ethical issues, need to be addressed to successfully adapt it for use in the public sector.

http://press.georgetown.edu/book/georgetown/crowdsourcing-public-sector

Ontario Early Researcher Award

Congratulations to Geothink co-applicant Prof. Peter Johnson (University of Waterloo), who recently received an Early Researcher Award from the Government of Ontario for his project, Measuring the Impact of Open Data.

Open data is government data that becomes shared publicly with citizens. In Ontario, delivering open data has become a major focus for provincial and municipal governments. Dr. Johnson will build partnerships with key open data stakeholders, developing case studies that measure the value and impact of open data initiatives, assessing how open data is used to generate economic and social benefits. This research will directly impact how governments provide open data and how stakeholders such as private software developers, other governments, non-profits, and citizens can build successful applications and businesses models that rely on open data.

https://uwaterloo.ca/environment/news/open-data-and-greenhouse-gas-measurement-projects-get

Student Spotlight: Mark Gill

Mark Gill is a Master's student in Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies focusing in Human Geography and Anthropology at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. In 2014, he received a BA in Anthropology from UBC Okanagan, and in 2012 received an AA in English from Thompson Rivers University. As a graduate student, he is broadly interested in open data and its relation to social justice, community engagement and participation, digital inequalities, and municipal open data. His research is focused on understanding how scale affects open data services in smaller Canadian municipalities by using municipalities and regional districts in the Okanagan Valley as a sample.

He sees his research as bridging between two Geothink themes. As much of his research is focused on municipal open data services and practices, his research fits well into the theme, "Open Everything". However, he is also concerned with accessibility of open data, and its use as a community development tool. Moreover, his exploration of scale does not consider scale as a naturalized category, rather he is interested in sociocultural and political economic approaches to understanding scale.

For Mark, the potential for collaboration within Geothink is really exciting. Events like the Summer Institute are really great opportunities to meet other students and faculty and to exchange ideas and talk about collaborative projects. Because of the diversity of the Geothink team, there is a lot of room for innovative research. He looks forward to seeing what projects come out of Geothink in the coming years.

CONTACT MARK

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Student Spotlight: Evan Hamilton

Evan Hamilton is a research assistant and Masters of Information student working with Geothink out of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information with Dr. Leslie Regan Shade. His thesis "Open Data Development and Journalism" examines the development of open data policy in Ontario and the impact that journalists and media have had on the open data movement. Evan's research explores how data driven journalism plays a role in community development, civic engagement and digital literacy, and critically examines the role of journalists as advocates for government transparency and openness. Evan is a graduate of Carleton University's journalism program and has worked in journalism/communications in North America, Africa and Asia.

In relation to the Geothink project, his research fits primarily with the theme of "Open Everything" as it examines how engagement, user acquisition and open content are shaped by media influence. He studies how journalists are using open data for social justice in developing nations, and critically examines open data hackathons and government policies at the municipal and federal level in Canada. As a data journalist and communications scholar, Evan is excited to work with Geothink students and researchers because of the interdisciplinary nature of the project.

Evan was selected as one of Open North's "Young Open Data Leaders" during the 2015 Canadian Open Data Summit. He currently works as a data and content specialist at Quandl, a Toronto based data startup.

CONTACT EVAN

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Geothink Research Themes

Theme 1: Anywhere, Anyone, Anytime

We believe that the Web 2.0 and its associated technologies will dramatically shift the way cities talk to their constituents and others. People can communicate with cities from anywhere, outside of a jurisdiction, and at any time, for example, which means outside formal venues like city council meetings. Anonymity implies that you do not know the identity of the contributor. This challenges traditional definitions of community, citizen, and participation. We will evaluate the processes of technology development and that impact on its city and the citizen.

Theme 2: Spatial Authenticity, Accuracy, and Standards

The moment you bring up volunteered geographic information (VGI) (e.g., with Open 311), you worry about the quality of data. This theme considers questions of data structures, standards, and documentation practices used by public agencies. The research produced also aims to develop consensus on terminology, data standards, and dissemination regarding the opening up of government data and acceptance of VGI .

Theme 3: Laws, Norms, Rights and Code

Data related to governance is not simply a technical matter. Issues that are policy-related and legal in nature will be a primary focus as we try to understand the way Geoweb 1) fits within existing laws and policy, and 2) shapes new policies and law. Specific legal domains of interest are privacy, intellectual property, access to information, access to justice, and the interplay between norms, codes and technology with regards to governance.

Theme 4: Open Everything

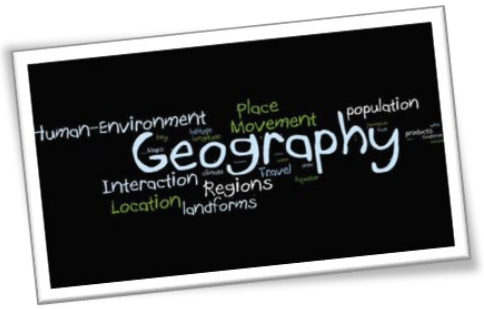
We will track municipal open data engagement over time, theorize about the impacts of open data on governance, and understand and develop best practices. We also have the opportunity to document these approaches and track the evolution of open data practices over time.

Theme 5: Social Justice

We will explore aspects of Geoweb – Society relationships as they pertain to social justice. We will identify the success and failures of Geoweb for community development. Using a case study approach we will employ participatory research to identify emerging concepts of place, the intersection of community, engagement and social justice, and accessibility to the Geoweb.

Theme 6: Geoweb Political Economy

This theme will focus on understanding the political economy of the Geoweb as it concerns ownership structures, institutions, and policies. Power relationships between actors and processes of inclusion and exclusion among social media owners and users also will be our focus.



Geothink Partners and Collaborators

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Sani International Technology Advisors Inc.	Markham	Ontario	Sani/Aaron	aaron.sani@gmail.com
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Geothink Partners and Collaborators

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