Geographers discover alternative 'world'

Reported by Professor Oleg McNoleg

A team of Geographic Information Science (GIS) researchers from the Brigadoon University of Longitudinal Learning reports the discovery of an 'outside' world. This major breakthrough in GIS research was the result of an accidental discovery while inadvertently staring out of the window. Team leader, professor Pixel, describes the discovery thus. "Normally, we keep the blinds closed because the bright light outside reflects off the computer screens, making them difficult to read. However, during a power outage we were in need of light." It was then that they noticed a startling resemblance between the view outside of the window and a campus map that happened to be lying on the table. "At first we thought it was just a coincidence, but further investigation showed that we were on to something."

What they found was that the relationship is very complex and extremely difficult to describe formally. However they are confident that if the outside world could be suitably packaged that it "…might provide additional novel insights that could be added to existing maps, models, images and geo-databases—a truly exciting concept." When asked to describe what this world is like Professor Pixel describes it as: "Quite like a hyperspectral, multi-scale, remotely-sensed image, except not usually as flat—except in Kansas."

The team has plans to study this new phenomenon by traversing through it (either in Peano, Morton or scan-line order, they are unsure as yet which might be the most suitable) then making and recording observations. Professor Pixel notes that: "Investigating this is going to be difficult; our existing methods were not designed for such a confusing and unstructured environment."

The outside world is thought to have some similarities with existing models of landcover change, spatial interaction and even (though distantly) with spatial data models and data structures (this last point is considered as only a tenuous hypothesis by the researchers at this point).

The team is also keen to keep their discoveries in perspective: when asked if the outside world might ever form the subject of serious geographical scholarship their reply is categorical. "Certainly not, it is overly complex, contains a confusing mix of scales and even worse is unbounded. So it can never be a candidate for the serious geographical modeler."