

The Power Within Digital Data: Identifying Social Isolation and Loneliness

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Abstract

This presentation would be to introduce a nascent PhD (first year) and to open up for discussion the concepts and theories guiding it. The title of the PhD is **Identifying Social Isolation and Loneliness (SIL) in working age people through Digital Data**. The purpose is to demonstrate the ‘value’ (and also highlight the danger) of digital data already collected by Local Authorities (LAs). The process will be to develop a model that will take data already held (often within SILO databases) within LAs that may help identify SIL and generate a heat map highlighting areas of potential SIL within their LA boundary. Subsequently work around geographic analysis of SIL will take place including comparison of SIL across Urban/Suburban and Rural environments. This is likely to take in both natural (eg topological) and manmade (eg public transport, infrastructure, architecture, employment migration) impacts on SIL.

SIL is being recognised as a problem in the UK with the world’s first Minister for Loneliness appointed here in 2018. There are established links from SIL through to mental health problems and harmful addictions that add pressure to already stretched public services. Identifying SIL and offering support at an early stage could lead to improved productivity and less service demand.

Key Statistics:

1. Loneliness is as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)
2. Loneliness is worse for you than obesity. (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)
3. Loneliness is likely to increase your risk of death by 29%. (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)
4. 43% of 17–25 year olds surveyed had experienced problems with loneliness. (Action for Children)
5. 24% of parents surveyed said they were always or often lonely. (Action for Children)
6. Disconnected communities could be costing the UK economy £32 billion every year.
(Eden Project – The Big Lunch)

In order to establish and measure success in this PhD, definitions of what SIL relates to will be established and grounding data is being sought to support identification of digital data that can identify SIL. Discussion on this is one area I would be interested in exploring along with ideas for potentially useful GIS related studies in this area.

From Data to Decisions Potential Topics

Spatially informed practice, policy and planning

Socially inclusive geospatial practice

Spatial decision support

Geospatial visualisation

Applied analytics and modelling

From data to decisions in the geospatial industry

Geospatial big data

References

Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review. PLoS Med 7(7): e1000316. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-facts-on-loneliness/>

<https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/the-cost-of-disconnected-communities>