

## Minutes of meeting of Output Area Classification User Group (OACUG) Steering Group.

13/01/2010, 2pm, Campion Room, Royal Statistical Society (RSS), 12 Errol Street, London, EC1Y 8LX

### 1. Welcome by Chair (Alex Singleton), Individual Group Introductions, Apologies.

Attendees: Alexander Singleton (AS); Daniel Lewis (DL); Daniel Vickers (DV); Stephen Richards (SR); Alan Lewis (AL); Oliver Duke-Williams (ODW); Alistair Edwardes (AE); Tony Duckenfield (TD); Sheila Quan (SQ).

Apologies: Keith Dugmore; Martin Callingham; John Fisher; Laura Edwards; Martin Robson (MR); Chris Denham (CD); Gesche Schmid (GS); Stephen Bond (SB); Henry Burroughs.

### 2. News

Note from **Keith Dugmore**:

- Professor Martin Callingham spoke at the **Demographics User Group conference** in October on "Using OAC to create new insight from the Expenditure and Food Survey".  
<http://bit.ly/4t0zAm>
- The winner of **DUG's annual Award for better information from government** was Stephen Penneck of the Office for National Statistics for the decision to code the ONS's sample surveys with its OAC geodemographic classification. <http://bit.ly/8axeyA>
- ONS's new **Wealth and Assets Survey** was published in December, and I'm encouraging them to code it with OAC ASAP.

Note from **Chris Denham**:

- **2011 Census Output Consultation:** Whilst on the face of it the output for area classification should be OK, there remains an absence of final commitment on the terms essential for open geodemographics, i.e. variables and geography free at the point of use and without restriction on use. Therefore the steering group may wish to consider how far, if to any extent, it should as a group plough through the detail with the aim of making a submission on behalf of OAC users and/to approach ONS with a high level statement of requirements, or whether it should simply encourage individual members to respond. *This question is resolved later in the meeting.*
- **Website Ideas:** Needs refreshing, but maybe we should be cautious about too much change to what a typical reader would expect to find there. Recommend new means of communication i.e. Twitter, but without immediately removing pages of information on things like events. I would definitely not remove links as surely if done mutually this boosts prominence on search engines. *This question is resolved later in the meeting.*
- **Events:** Behind Daniel Vicker's suggestion of an OAC seminar in September provided there is the right output and terms. Otherwise there might be scope for a retrospective 'What has OAC 2001 achieved, and what are the lessons for the next decade?' *Also Discussed Later*

News from **Oliver Duke-Williams**:

- Using OAC Profiler in teaching Web GIS, integrating CASAs GMAP creator for tile set creation. Once complete will consider sharing these resources and packaging for the OACUG website.

- **Action – ODW to email AS or DL any teaching material that could form part of a teaching pack aimed at undergraduate or masters students.**

News from **Stephen Richards** (and notes from **Gesche Schmid**):

- No funding for research project on Customer-led transformation as LGA couldn't be the lead authority on it.
- Group from the W. Midlands are interested in using OAC. They are advanced users of geodemographics for customer insight but currently use MOSAIC.
- A Presentation at the LARIA conference was not secured as the conference was already full. However, there has been an offer to possibly get in contact with Jill Tuffnell to give a presentation at a Laria tools and technical workshop.
- Suggestion that we need to create a guideline on how to use OAC, possibly for the website.
- Report on progress for printing OAC maps for Local Authorities - currently uncertain but seen as a good idea. Discussion of whether it should be done for every Local Authority, or just by GOR. Daniel Vickers points out that at GOR it will be difficult to see any patterns, and that the Green "Countryside" Class will be dominant. The line of enquiry is subsequently dropped.
- **Action – AS and SB to meet with the W. Midlands local authority.**
- **Action – SB to continue to follow up the production of maps with the LGA**

News from **Alistair Edwardes**:

- Explanation of the use of the place typology for benchmarking, comparison, performance etc as ongoing research and the place database as a dataset of national indicators.
- AS enquires whether OAC profiles can be incorporated into this database - possibly.
- The output of the place typology is likely to be a best practice toolkit for policy themes.
- The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) tend to use commercial geodemographics for customer insight and OAC to handle social or community data, generally the focus at DCLG is on Mosaic and Acorn.

News from **Tony Duckenfield**:

- Seconds AE observations about OAC in comparison to other, commercial geodemographics, with use of MOSAIC emphasised in commercial marketing and OAC for more social applications.
- OAC is being used in DASTS (Delivering a Sustainable Transport Strategy) project. Considers of long-term strategy planning at Local Authority level using OAC profiling. In conjunction with Department for Transport (DfT). Primarily looking at connectivity between places.
- General travel behaviour (i.e. use of different travel types) has been mapped to OAC, except that the OAC groups have been re-aggregated to be more useful for transport planning. This should hypothetically be public domain.
- AS enquires whether these data could form a 'Grand Index' wherein index scores are recorded against OAC groups for a number of ancillary datasets giving insight and aiding description. *More on this later.*

News from **Alan Lewis**:

- The London Data Store is now live at <http://data.london.gov.uk/>
- However, much of the data that is actually up at the moment is already available from other sources, it has simply been clipped to the London Boundaries.
- Real values would be added by getting some TfL (Transport for London) or MET Police data up on the site. Some more visualisations would also be nice.
- There is a possible new 'skin' for the website being developed and the 'full' launch (thus far the launch has been only a 'soft' launch) is due at the end of January.

News from **Daniel Vickers:**

- Some interest from the BBC about bidding for a program on Social Areas.
- New paper out which is a qualitative review of OAC. (Academic link) <http://bit.ly/7cQ9E7>

News from **Alexander Singleton:**

- Building a database in order to create some new general classifications. Particularly useful for putting together the start of an (aforementioned) Grand Index.
- New blog on Area Profiles started- contents are general geodemographic stuff.
- Created a London arson map to test London Data Store Pilot.
- Raised issue of renewal of London Data Store. TD also notes that Land Registry Data (LLPG?) would be good to have linked to OAC, this is only available at postcode sector however and would ideally be required at unit postcode level.

News from **Daniel Lewis:**

- Some interest in building a London-specific Geodemographic, referencing work previously carried out in health by Jacob Petersen see: <http://bit.ly/8O8pjp>

Chair - **Action on 2011 Census Output Consultation**

Following on from **Chris Denham's** comments do we want to put together a document from the OACUG?

Decision is made that such an endeavour is worth the time. The consultation is open until March. There is some consideration of the benefits of a new classification; DV notes that we will not be able to compare a classification over time.

Nonetheless we need a commitment from the ONS for open UK-wide key variables. It is acknowledged that this is difficult in terms of religion and ethnicity. In doing something additional to the Statistics User Forum (SUF) we should acknowledge that the data should be: free at point of use; at OA/small area level, and constitute key statistics.

- **Action – AS to enquire whether CD would be willing to draft such a document.**

**3. Administrative Procedures and roles**

Announcements regarding the use of meet-o-matic and the appointment **of Alexander Singleton** as Chair and **Daniel Lewis** as secretary were accepted.

**c. Website and case studies.**

It is accepted that MR become the case studies manager and be responsible for the maintenance and acquisition of case studies.

- We need to integrate news stories regarding OAC into the news feed on the website. Thus any OAC-related stories that members come across should be passed to either AS ([a.singleton@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.singleton@ucl.ac.uk)) or DL ([d.lewis@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:d.lewis@ucl.ac.uk)) to go up on the website (provided they are public domain).
- AS will arrange for the new committee members to go up on the website, contact information in the form of an email address will also be provided.
- GS suggests (in absentia) that we might want a template to provide easy access to the case study material in order to provide a summary. The idea that this might be geared towards 'selling' OAC to execs is strongly raised by DV. It is generally agreed that it will not be a selling exercise, but that the page needs reorganising.
- AS intends to move the website forward to be more in line with a normal blog, this is generally agreed. The 'Events' page will be removed to appear in the main feed tagged as 'Events'
- DV suggests we implement a system whereby the pictures on the website change intermittently so as to suggest a 'live' website.
- AE suggests vignettes based upon how OAC could be used in topic subjects.
- Adding Training Materials is discussed with reference back to using some of ODW teaching resources.
- AS announces that he will set up a twitter feed so that every time a post is added to the OACUG website it goes out on twitter. This is generally agreed, but met with some apprehension.
- A discussion of whether a links page is required, or whether we should use some form of social bookmarking i.e. delicious concludes that we should do both. Hard linking important resources and using delicious for more transient or inconsequential ones.
- **Action – AS to conduct significant update to the website**
- **Action – DL to conduct contact MR to discuss a summary template for the case studies**

## 5. Event ideas for 2010

In terms of events there is discussion of whether we want to host larger events, or smaller 'show and tells'. This depends on the aim - it is agreed that the aim of such events is **promotion**. To this end it is suggested that use, where appropriate, of mailing lists extra- to the OACUG list will be advantageous.

- **Action – AS to contact MC to discuss if he would like to run further events and under what terms.**

It is suggested that we might conduct a larger event with a commercial classification provider, however, concerns were raised that this not be turned into a comparative exercise. It is noted that such an event may be inappropriate in the context of 'open and free' geodemographics. Thus the alternative theme of "**Recession OAC**" is posited.

**Sheila Quan** raised the possibility of having a geodemographics stream at the AGI. Possibly including presentations from commercial geodemographics. This is widely seen as a good idea, however it transpires that the deadline for sessions at the AGI may have passed and the idea is held for the following year. Sheila Also suggests that any publicity for an event could come through a paper in **Geoconnection**.

The possibility of doing our own event in September or October is raised.

- **Action – DL to contact the RSS to see what dates are available for a conference in Sept/Oct.**

It is also noted that the LGA might have another GeoFutures event which would be of interest. Likewise it might be useful to submit a paper to LARIA in the spring.

Finally, a reminder from Chris Denham of the 'no holds barred' meeting on the 2011 Census to be held at the RSS on 24 February for which places need to be booked\*\*

\*\*2011 Census – Special Presentation by Glen Watson, ONS, at the RSS on 24 February at 3 pm

This is to remind you that Glen Watson, the ONS Director responsible for the 2011 Census, will be coming to give a talk to some RSS members and associates on 24 February at Errol St. We have already discussed the public controversy that has already occurred over the census. There will undoubtedly be further controversy as the date approaches. Everyone who works as a statistician, or uses statistics is highly likely to be asked at some point, by friends, family, work colleagues or even people you meet casually, about the census, why it is important and why people should complete it. This meeting - to cover census procedures, what results are used for, why some of the questions are needed etc - has therefore been arranged as a private briefing for certain RSS and SUF Forum members to help them deal with these type of queries. Importantly it will also give us all a chance to raise any questions or doubts with Glen. The meeting will be held under Chatham House rules to enable "full and frank" discussion!

If you would like to attend please send confirmation to Mawreen Chapman ([M.Chapman@rss.org.uk](mailto:M.Chapman@rss.org.uk))