ps.6

A proposed spatial data infrastructure for Scotland

Angus McDonald, Director, CALMap Digital Mapping and GIS Services

Abstract

Following on from previous work encapsulating the spatial data/information cycle in the form of mindmaps (McDONALD 2000, McDONALD 2001), the author has turned his attention to mindmapping national location based (spatial) information infrastructures (choose yourself where to insert the brackets). Although inspired by work done by AGI Scotland on defining and developing a NLBII for Scotland, the mindmap is not specific to one nation. Indeed for 'National' the reader can substitute 'Group', 'Organisation', 'Sector', 'Community', 'District', 'Region', 'Continent', or 'Planet', the issues are the same, only the scale of the stakeholders differs.

The author's intention is that the mindmap, which is designed to be printed at A4 size, can be used by all the stakeholders who wish to develop an LBII (at whatever level) in:

- Discussions between themselves to identify and facilitate

- Discussions with managers, politicians and other non 'GI' professionals who must be engaged with

Further work is required by the author to fill in the boxes specifically for Scotland, but at least others will not have to reinvent the wheel (again!).
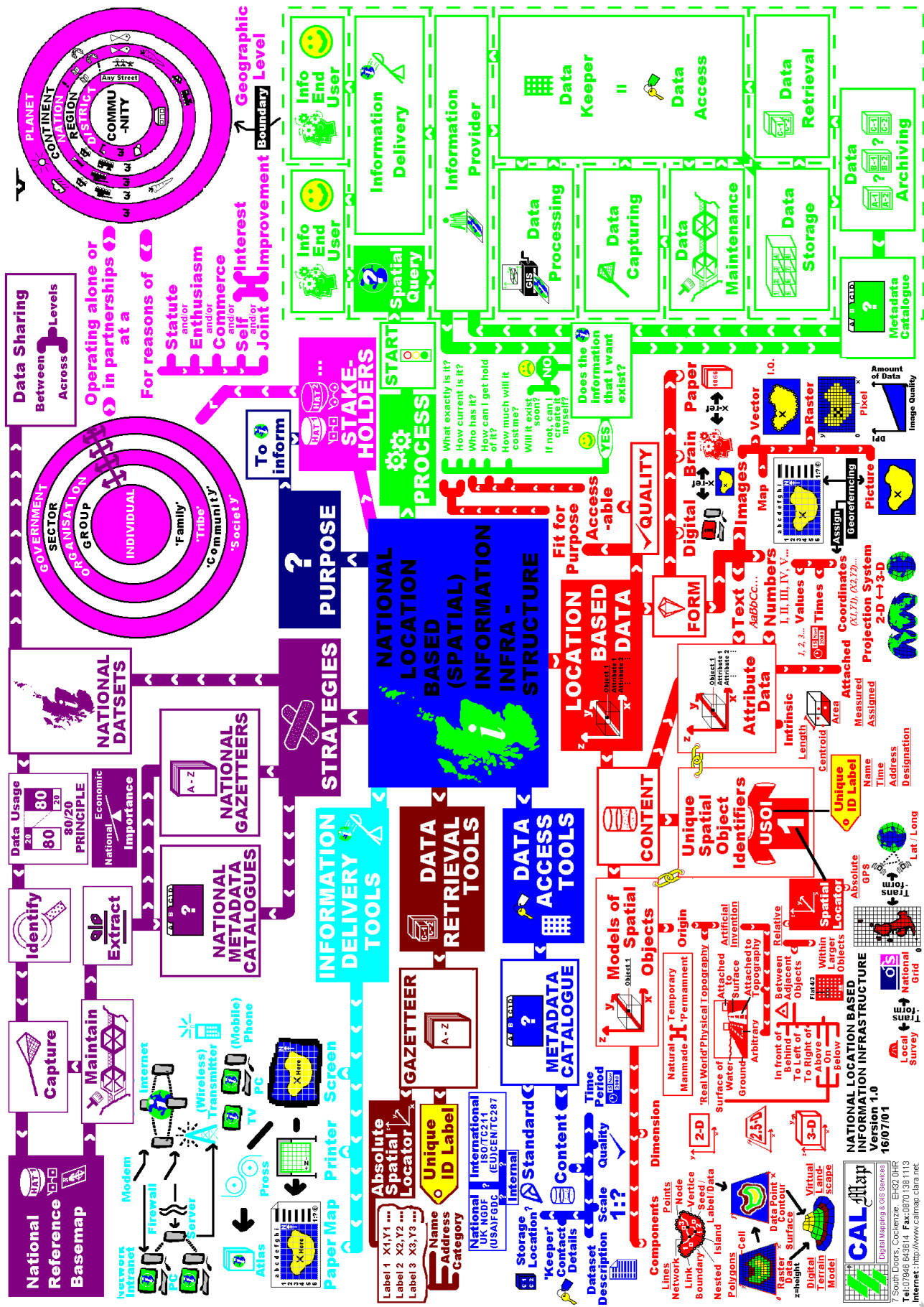
To aid interpretation, readers are reminded of the basic premises of mindmaps:

1. The mindmap technique is essentially an organic one such that the mechanical process of drawing the mindmap is part of the whole thinking process (rather than the map being solely the product of the process) ie. the more you look at it and do it, the more mental connections are made and the more relationships become apparent. Thus a mindmap is really only a snapshot of the mental process and can never really be said to be definitive or complete.

2. The mindmap is a product of one individual or groups' thoughts and knowledge on a given issue at a given time. Another individual or group, or even the same individual or group at a different time, may come up with a different mindmap depending upon the prevailing circumstances. This is not really an important issue as long as the mindmap serves a useful purpose to that individual or group at the time ie. it is what you achieve through the process of creating the map that is important, the map itself is merely a useful record of that achievement.

3. It also follows that a mindmap does not necessarily have a start or end point, any more than a road atlas has a start or end point (that's why it's called a map!).

4. The whole point of producing the mindmap is to encapsulate and summarise a particular issue in diagrammatic form. In other words the mindmap must capture it's very essence, the nub of the issue, cut to the chase etc. By its very nature therefore it's impact is diluted by reams of 'explanatory' text. Thus a mindmap should not be considered as an accompanying illustrative figure in a paper in the traditional sense, it is a paper in itself!

5. Furthermore a well made mindmap should prove it's use (even if only serving as a 'jumping off point') in the consideration of a number of issues related (or otherwise) to the one originally under consideration. It is impossible to anticipate what all of these might be, so too much 'explanatory' text can become too constrictive. It is worth pointing out to potential mindmappers that there comes a point where it becomes better to construct a new mindmap on a new issue by using parts of one or more previous maps rather than trying to contort an existing one.

6. Mindmapping is all about making mental connections and anything that enables that process to happen more easily or more quickly must be considered as valid. Thus mindmappers should make ample use of:

   - Turns of phrase like proverbs, similes, colloquialisms

   - Puns (words and pictures)

   - Text emphasis (like CAPITALS, bold, underline or colour)

   - Simple but effective graphics and doodles (the fewer lines the better – think icons and logos!)

   - Repetition of graphics so that things that occur more than once on a mindmap are readily identifiable

References

McDONALD, Angus (2000), *Rough Guide to Geospatial Data Strategies or 'Taming the Beast' Proceedings from AGI Conference 2000*

About the Author

Angus McDonald (32) is an independent, geospatial information consultant based in Edinburgh, Scotland operating under the name of CALMap Digital Mapping & GIS Services. With a BSc. in Geology & Chemistry, an M.Sc. in Environmental Science, several years working in both local government and the private sector, as well as being a keen outdoor enthusiast, he has always been involved in using location based information. Throughout he has always found himself having to promote the benefits and use of properly managed Geospatial Information to non GI managers, colleagues family and friends. He would like to know if the brick wall is crumbling yet?

NB – Gif versions of the mindmaps shown in this and previous papers are available from the author via e-mail

Angus McDonald (Director)

Tel: 01875 812482   Mob: 07946 643614

E-mail: angus@calmap.clara.co.uk