## Generalisation

"the reduction of detail or simplification of reality"



Lawren Harris

# "Nothing is less real than realism. Details are confusing. It is only by selection, by elimination, by emphasis that we get at the real meaning of things".

Georgia O'Keefe (1922)



Lake George, Georgia O'Keefe

### Generalisation



Watercolor map of Greater Vancouver rendered by Stamen Designs using OpenStreetMap data. https://stamen.com/ "A map is a scaled, 2-D, <u>generalized</u> representation of a planetary surface"

# But isn't it already mapped ?

No, especially not for all Canada

Range of types and designs

Range of scales (details)

#### "A map is a scaled, 2-D, <u>generalized</u> representation of a planetary surface"

#### Photos/images are not generalized: they need interpretation to be readable by users. Air photo interpreted (= generalised) -> map



The process of **generalization** consists of these three steps:

1. simplification -> 2. selection -> 3. classification (4. -> symbolisation)

# 1. Simplification

All features have three dimensions: length, width and height They lose the third dimension as map displays are usually flat. Simplification determines the most important characteristics (dimensions)

> 3D Volumes (reality)

>2D Areas / polygons

➢ 1D Lines / arcs

 $\succ$  OD Points



### As SCALE decreases, generalisation increases

Simplification: features lose dimensionality

This is called **<u>collapsing</u>** 

Examples :

areas -> lines: e.g. rivers

areas -> points: e.g. cities

lines -> points: ? (few examples)

### 2. Selection

> The map /data can NOT retain all features/details

>Which feature types depend on the map **purpose** 

e.g. topographic map, parks map, city map

>How many features/details depends mostly on map scale e.g. more details on 1:50,000 than 1:250,000

Scale **Example:** Vienna Selection can be subdivided into: 1:750.000 a. Aggregation (merging of several elements, most common with areas) 1.1.500.000 b. Elimination (removal of certain 1:3.000.000 elements: points, lines and areas) 1:6.000.000 c. Smoothing (removal of details in shape or outline: lines and areas) 1.20,000,000

Figure 4. Selected from generalisations of the outline of Vienna.



http://maps.google.ca



Decreasing Data Capture Scale

Increasing Generalization

#### All four panels have the same display scale".

\*Actual display scale of the figure above depends on your computer monitor size.

#### Benoit Mandelbrot: "How Long Is the Coast of Britain?" 'Fractals' Statistical Self-Similarity and Fractional Dimension (1967)



Unit = 200 km, Unit = 50 km, length = 2400 km length = 3400 km

CIA: Ordnance Survey: 17,820 km (1:50,000)

12,429 km (1:100,000) Infinite? ->



#### Length of Coastline by Country



Canada – we're #1 (at any scale)

Length = 202,080 km or 265,523 km or .....



A) Nonorthogonal features

B) Orthogonal features

<u>http://resources.esri.com/help/9.3/arcgisengine/java/gp\_toolref/data\_management\_toolbox/an\_overview\_of\_the\_gen</u> <u>eralization\_toolset.htm</u>

#### ArcGIS generalization tools – 'GIS analysis'

| Aggregate Points                     | Creates polygon features around clusters of proximate point features.  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Aggregate Polygons                   | Combines polygons within a specified distance of each other into new polygons.   |
| Collapse Dual Lines To<br>Centerline | Derives centerlines from dual-line (or double-line) features, such as road casings, based on specified width tolerances.   |
| Collapse Road Detail                 | Collapses small, open configurations of road segments that interrupt the general trend of a road network, such as traffic circles, for example, and replaces them with a simplified depiction.                         |
| Delineate Built-Up Areas             | Creates polygons to represent built-up areas by delineating densely clustered arrangements of buildings on small-scale maps.   |
| Create Cartographic<br>Partitions    | Creates a mesh of polygon features that cover the input feature class where each polygon encloses no more than a specified number of input features, determined by the density and distribution of the input features. |
| Merge Divided Roads                  | Generates single-line road features in place of matched pairs of divided road lanes.   |
| Simplify Building                    | Simplifies the boundary or footprint of building polygons while maintaining their essential shape and size.  |
| Simplify Line                        | Simplifies lines by removing extraneous bends while preserving essential shape.  |
| Simplify Polygon                     | Simplifies polygons by removing extraneous bends while preserving essential shape.   |
| Smooth Line                          | Smooths sharp angles in lines to improve aesthetic or cartographic quality.  |
| Smooth Polygon                       | Smooths sharp angles in polygon outlines to improve aesthetic or cartographic quality.   |
| Thin Road Network                    | Generates a simplified road network that retains connectivity and general character for display at a smaller scale.  |

http://resources.arcgis.com/en/help/main/10.1/index.html#//0070000002r000000

## 3. Classification (by attributes)

We can't keep all features unique – e.g. every road or building might have special characteristics, but they have to be grouped.

in one of 3 ways:

Nominal: by 'name type' - categorical

Ordinal: in sequence (hierarchy) - ranked

Interval: numerical (by size) - quantitative

# Classification

generalisation into groups

Note:

with classification, we are generalising feature attributes, while simplification and selection are more often applied to spatial elements



## **Categorical (nominal) classes**





### **Quantitative (interval) classes**



## Summary of scale and generalization

Scale is the prime control on generalization

Data captured at one scale are <u>not</u> transferable to all scales:

>data from a larger scale are too detailed for smaller scales,

>data from a small scale are too generalised for larger scales.



## Scale and Resolution

As scale decreases, both <u>spatial</u> and <u>attribute</u> details decrease

There is a practical level of detail associated with any scale

One could identify a visual <u>'minimal resolvable unit</u>' (MRU) of ~ 0.5 mm.

This translates for common display scales in metres:

| 1:20,000    | 10m |
|-------------|-----|
| 1:50,000    | 25  |
| 1:250,000   | 125 |
| 1:1,000,000 | 500 |

This is also synonymous with **resolution** or **precision** This is fixed with printed maps, variable with digital display

# Digital data scales for mapping

Digital data correspond directly to their analogue maps, and data are available at these common scales:

- Global: 1:1,000,000 largest scale for whole world?
- Federal:1:250,000largest scale for all Canada before 2012
- Federal:1: 50,000largest scale for all Canada (since 2012)

Provincial: 1: 20,000 largest scale for all BC (+ some provinces)

Municipal: 1: 1,000 to 5,000 scale for most cities / municipalities

These are most often the data layers we see on online map viewers .... New Zealand: <u>http://www.topomap.co.nz/</u>

Norway: <u>http://www.norgeskart.no</u>

Canada: http://atlas.gc.ca/toporama/en/index.html

## Other Controls on Generalization (apart from scale)

Map / output purpose: how much detail, and what types of features

Graphic production limits: how much detail can the display convey

**Data quality:** survey methods may limit the details possible

**Perceptual limits:** the human eye / brain likes <= 7 classes

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\_Magical\_Number\_Seven, Plus\_or\_Minus\_Two

Data quality: Spatial generalization, accuracy and precision: GPS and GIS

# Trans Allegheny Trails

### GPS Coordinates for Our Trailheads

#### 6 to 10 Trail

2 trailheads

Allegheny Portage Railroad NHS: 40.458654,-78.54909 Foot of Ten Trailhead: 40.408106,-78.460739

#### 6 decimal places

 $1^{\circ} = 111 \text{km};$  .1 = 11 km, .01 = 1 km .001 = 100 m,.0001 = 10 m, .00001 = 1 m, .000001 = 10 cm

Don't just repeat decimal places from GPS / GIS software !

#### Data quality: Spatial generalization, accuracy and precision: GPS and GIS

#### Trailhead

Johnston Canyon Resort, 17.5 km (11 mi) northwest along the Bow Valley Parkway from the Trans-Canada Hwy.

**GPS** Coordinates

Latitude: 51.24542307241623 Longitude: -115.83992958068848

14 decimal places ! -too precise; NOT accurate -not enough **generalization** Last digit = millionths of a mm

#### **Detailed Map**



## Summary review questions

Why is generalisation necessary ?

How is it related to map scale ?

What happens to points, lines, areas as scale decreases ?

What is meant by aggregation, elimination and smoothing ?

What are the three types of data classification ?