

# DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

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Arthur H. Robinson Colloquium Speaker  
Public Lecture

### Socializing Data: Mapping Culture and Governing Cities in the Era of Big Social Media

Friday, February 19, 2016  
3:30-5:00 p.m.  
Derby Hall 1080

New sources of geographically referenced “big data” have become central to the perception and governance of cities. Of particular interest are crowd-sourced contributions from social media that provide key raw material for automatically-coded representations of places (e.g., a map based search for amenities on a mobile phone). This talk reviews the power-laden ways in which social media-derived data represent the cultures of cities as well as the potential/problems in using these data for urban research and decision-making. The recent style of “smart cities” urban governance, leverages big data – collected from mobile phones, social media feeds, sensors embedded in the built environment, etc. – to rationalize the management of urban areas. After documenting the historical longevity associated with the central ideas within smart city governance – particular the idea that enough data/information/knowledge can solve society problems – this talk critiques the idealized approach to urban governance found both in marketing materials and some criticisms. In contrast to these overly simplistic approaches, this talk demonstrates how social media data and derived metrics might offer useful insight and policy direction, while recognizing that the decisions of what is important and possible to record is simultaneously producing the cities that we aim to measure.



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