

UCSB GEOGRAPHY COLLOQUIUM

Thursday, 1/26/12; 3:30 – 4:45; 1930 Buchanan

A presentation by

Professor Helen Couclelis

The Earth as Sensor and as Enigma: Rethinking Geographical Science in the Global Data Age

Abstract

No longer dismissed as ‘the data glut’, the growing availability of current, accessible, high quality data on potentially everything that may be counted, measured, weighed, tracked, timed, photographed, or located is justly celebrated as a great achievement of our era. Coupled with what seems to be unlimited computational power and information-transmitting connectivity, the global data bonanza promises to raise the threshold of what can be known. An ambitious billion-euro initiative was recently announced in the EU, aiming to create a simulator that can replicate and predict every process of interest on earth based on the assumption of ubiquitous data. I will present some reflections on data-driven megaprojects of this kind, and, using some of my recent work as a thinking aid, I will suggest that new kinds of models may be needed to support the fundamentally new research paradigms that appear to be emerging.

Bio

Dr. Couclelis received a PhD in Urban Modeling from Cambridge University in 1977, and she joined the UCSB Department of Geography in 1982. Her research interests include urban and regional modeling and planning, spatial cognition, geographic information science, and the geography of the information society. Dr. Couclelis teaches numerous courses at UCSB, including: 108, Urban Geography; 156, Great Cities of the World; 159, Geography of Europe; 180, Geography of the Information Society; 182, Global Cities; 185A, Geography in Planning and Policy Making; 185C, Urban and Regional Modeling and Planning; 225, Urban Problems / Urban Models; 227, Scientific Reasoning in Geography. She was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, in 1999; her most recent book is *The Handbook of GIS and Society*, co-edited with T. H. Nyerges and R. McMaster in 2011 (London: SAGE Publications).