Creating 'engagement geographies' from individual sense of place and social capital spatial dimensions

ESR4: Albert Acedo Sánchez
Nova Information Management School
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

📍 Context

- Nowadays, cities use their hierarchical administrative boundaries to deliver their policies and actions, to some extent, due to the availability of census and socioeconomic data in those boundaries.

- However, usually not all citizens are aware of, or identified with a whole parish or neighborhood.

  - They are linked to places that are meaningful to them for some reason (sense of place (SOP)) (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001)
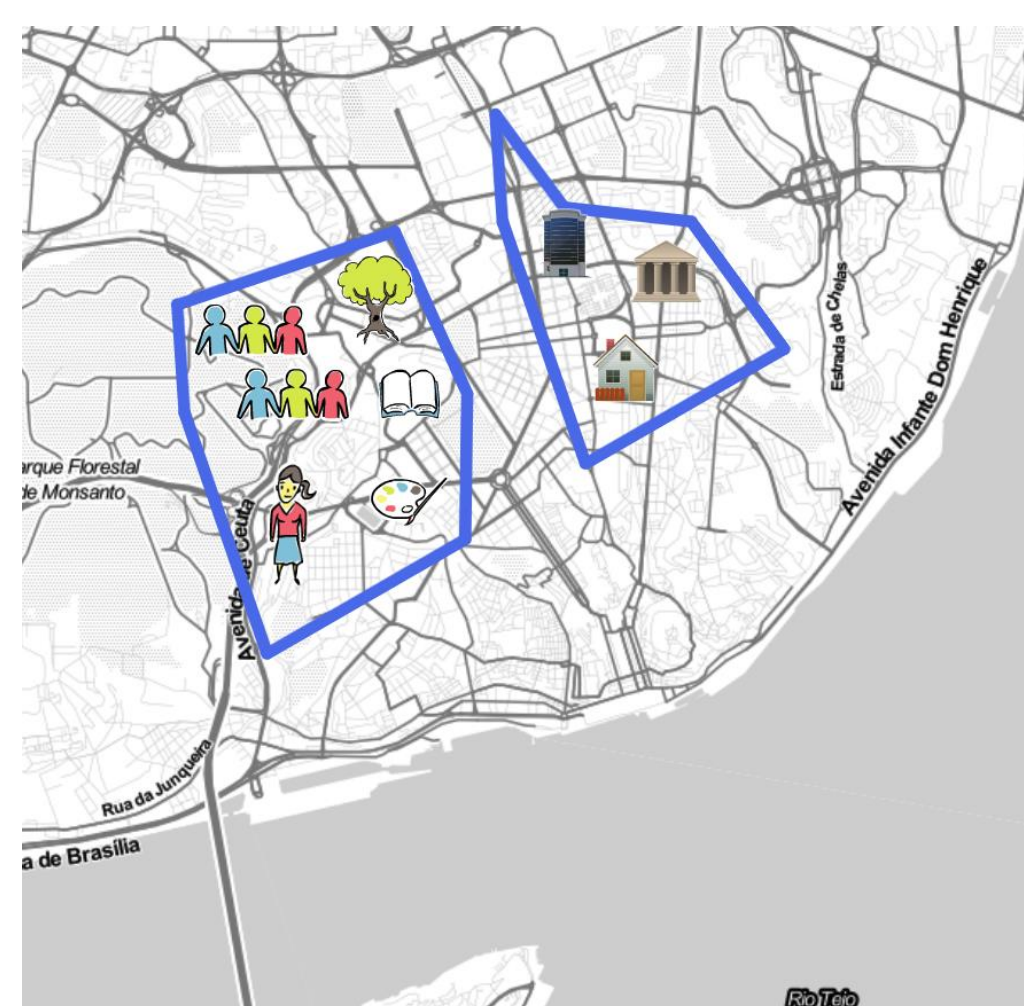

Figure 1. SOP areas example for a citizen

  - And/or they are settlers of geographically located social networks (social capital (SC)) (Perkins and Long, 2002)

Figure 2. SC areas example for a citizen.

- Mostly, we are using administrative boundaries instead of functional ones to treat contemporary social problems and participatory processes.

- The spatial inclusion and understanding of citizens' social aspects in the urban context, such as our feelings, perceptions, and behaviors toward places (SOP) and human relationships (SC), is becoming a need.

❗ Challenges

Currently

- Researchers observe that civic engagement (CE) is decreasing in developed nations.

Therefore

- It makes sense to wonder if our cities are pointing to the appropriate areas to develop participatory processes and treat local social issues.
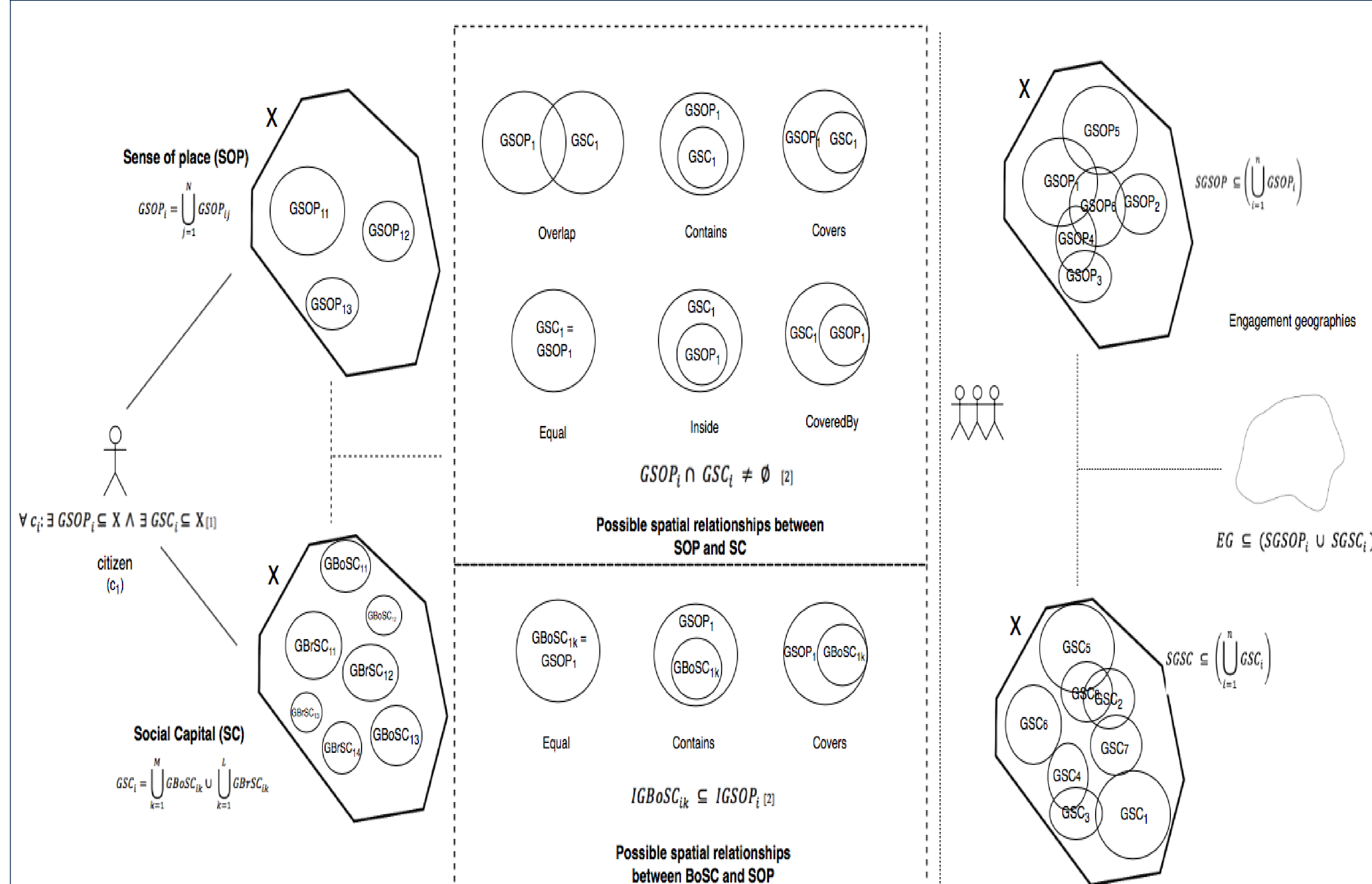
But

- There is a lack of spatial understanding of common social concepts (SOP and SC) in the the smart city context. These places that embed social citizens' aspects (SOP and SC) are unknown at the city level.

Hence

- This spatial perspective to social concepts (SOP and SC) might be the pivotal aspect to embed them into the urban context and transfer to another areas of knowledge.

⚒ Actions

Figure 3. General overview of the project

💾 Results

- Guidelines and methodology for the creation of Engagement Geographies at any city:

  - Detection of communities of place

  - Better grounds of engagement, collaboration and participation.

  - Contribution of a new explanatory model for CE.

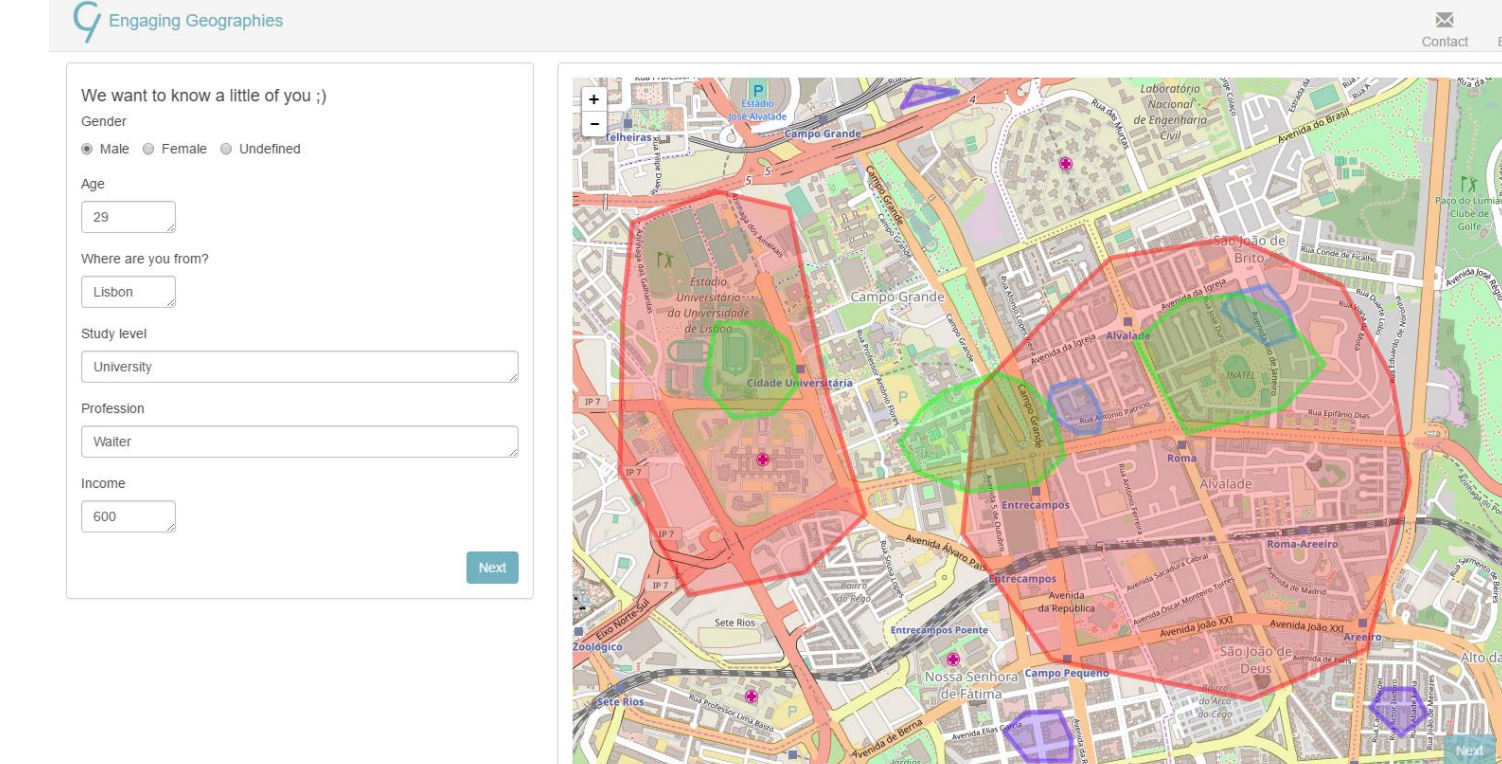OCT contribution: web map-based application

Figure 4. OCT contribution (interface)

📈 Scaling Up

- We are creating alternative local citizen-based spatial clusters that can be the base for collaborative, "commons" and "shared" approaches, even for citizen science actions or share economy.

- We are providing a novel perspective for city councils to manage the city in terms of participation, social and planning issues.

- Our application can supply new methodologies or products based on SOP, SC and CE and it is open source, therefore, replicable and reusable.

⚡ Impact

- This investigation

  - contributes to the emerging movement of spatializing environmental and social psychological concepts.

  - contributes through GISc and its related tools to satisfy the pervasive demand of citizen social information at the city level.

  - contributes to the creation of new synergies in the city relating citizens which share meaningful places and place based relationships.

  - provides alternative citizen-based areas in the urban domain based on feelings, perceptions and behaviors toward places (SOP) and social relations (SC), for:

    - creating a more collaborative and sharable cities.

    - the management of the city based on a more functional approach.

Consortium

WESTFÄLISCHE WILHELMS-UNIVERSITÄT MÜNSTER

NOVA IMS

UNIVERSITAT JAUME·I

Acknowledgements

Contact:

acedo@novaims.unl.pt

References:

Jorgensen, B.S. & Stedman, R.C. (2001) Sense of place as an attitude: lakeshore owners attitudes toward their properties. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. [Online] 21 (3), 233–248. Available from: doi:10.1006/jevp.2001.0226 [Accessed: 12 June 2015].

Perkins, D.D. & Long, D.A. (2002) Neighborhood sense of community and social capital: A multi-level analysis. In: A. Fischer, C. Sonn, & B. Bishop (eds.). *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications and implications*. New York, Plenum Press. pp. 291–318.