Dr. Michael Phoenix

Michael Phoenix has been the Manager of Education Solutions at ESRI Redlands for 15 years. The mission of the ESRI's Education Team is to encourage the spread of spatial literacy by helping universities and schools to get access to the tools of spatial analysis and to help them understand the importance of geographic information science. In that role he has traveled around the world promoting GIS education to many countries, including Japan, India, Poland, Kenya and many other countries. Before coming to ESRI he taught geography and GIS for a number of years at universities in the United States. He has a Ph.D. in Geography from Clark University in Massachusetts, USA. During his long career, he worked in Asia, Latin America and Africa for a variety of organizations including the US Peace Corps, the US Agency for International Development and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Recently, he spent one year in Bhutan (2001) as a United Nations Volunteer helping to implement a nation-wide GIS agency. In 2008 he was elected Educator of the Year by the University Consortium for Geographic Information Science for his contribution to GIS education world-wide.

Abstract
The Importance of Spatial Thinking in Social Sciences

This paper will argue that the inclusion of a spatial dimension to research in the social sciences is both timely and necessary. It literally adds a new dimension to the social sciences.

The inclusion of a spatial dimension in the social sciences was, in the past, limited by access to tools for spatial analysis, sparse digital data of the spatial component, and appropriate techniques for spatial analysis of social processes. All this has changed. We now live in a data rich environment and we need to use all the tools available for making the most of this opportunity.

This paper will also briefly address some of the techniques and processes of spatial analysis of social data.

keywords: spatial literacy, education, social science, GIS, spatial analysis, spatial techniques