

# AfriGIS: A different picture

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If a picture paints a thousand words, what does a map do? Taking into account the different roads, points of interests, and all the terrain, chances are it does a great deal more than that. But, making the most of that map is not an easy ask. Imagine an explorer trying to travel from Cape to Cairo (sans GPS unfortunately, only his traditional map). Through how much data does he need to work to find a suitable route? Which roads are best, seeing that there are hundreds of roads linked to other roads linked to yet even more roads? Now, how about being able to fill up with petrol at the right distance, and to stop at the different must-see points along the way?

For Magnus Rademeyer, MD of technology innovation company AfriGIS, this problem is nothing more than the unlocking of big data, since finding your solution (the most suitable route) relies on locating the golden thread, done by the analysis of large disparate data sets, namely the massive amount of data that went into the construction of the different road- and points of interest maps.

## In time and space

For companies such as AfriGIS focussing on geographic information system analysis, the solution to problems that their clients face often lies in answering the question of "Where?". For example, a gender-based violence charity receives a call from an abused spouse. Where is the call coming from? What is the address? Where are the social workers situated and which one is the closest? Which is the road that will connect them the fastest? In order to figure this out, you would have to depend on a solution that can pull lots of different unstructured data together from different geographical information sources. Rademeyer believes that the solutions that AfriGIS offer provide this golden thread in order to help establish patterns in disparate data sets.

"Geographical analysis is the analysis of big data, and the way that patterns emerge there can be married to how you analyse established patterns in standard unstructured data," Rademeyer notes. "The decision tree of geographical information is similar to the decision tree of big data analysis," he continues, explaining this by referring back to our would-be Kingsley Holgate's planned journey from Cape to Cairo, pointing out the choices the explorer faces just at the first T-Junction out of Cape Town. Does he go left, right, back or should he simply stay put seeing that it's dark already? With this type of choice at every T-junction along his journey, his travels can quickly turn into a nightmare.

## Unlocking the map

For a business related example, Rademeyer points the benefits of AfriGIS's GISlike solution for a potential franchise owner. With mapping data flowing from different data sets, the franchise owner can do a lot of research via GISlike before putting up shop. This can entail learning about the average income of the neighbourhood he plans to establish his business in, the traffic flowing past his shop, the number of other businesses in the area, and even the crime rate in the region.

Rademeyer notes that this is typically some of the large number of data sets that AfriGIS and its partners have collected over the past few years, and for which the company has created the tools needed to find this type of needle-in-a-haystack information. And with many companies now trying to utilise the power of big data, Rademeyer notes that this is actually what spatial analysis has been doing this since its start.

## But it's also visual

For Rademeyer, the power of geographic information system knowledge lies in part in the visual representation of it. Being able to see a visual depiction of information on a map unlocks the visual cortex which process information differently than

simply reading the information off a report. In an age where information overload is a problem, this visual representation (maps) and the subsequent analysis of it, can allow companies insight which could not been gained using more traditional assessment. After all, if a picture paints a thousand words, what can a map do?

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