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"Urban Data Science - More Than a Buzzword?"

Analyzing urban data is not a new topic. So why the need for a new name? This talk looks beyond the buzzword to show the potential as well as the challenges of applying data science approaches in urban settings. Ideally, urban data science should aim to tackle real urban challenges, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. However, instead of starting with a problem and critically evaluating how it may be addressed using data-driven approaches, many data science projects - at their core - are a the proverbial person with a hammer (a new fancy dataset or data analysis method) looking for a nail (a reason to play with it). The key takeaway message of this talk is that it is essential to stay vigilant and critical of what is presented as urban data science. Just because there is a novel dataset or trendy machine learning method, it is not automatically a good fit for analyses that aim to inform urban decision and policy making. As scientists, we have to strive to balance between not underselling our work and thus leaving the field to industry players (and their marketing departments) on one side and - on the other side - remaining critical and communicating openly about the limitations of our own data science projects.

Short bio

Anita Graser is a researcher, open source GIS developer, and author. She works at the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology in Vienna, teaches Python for QGIS at UNIGIS Salzburg and serves on the QGIS project steering committee. She has published several books about QGIS, including "Learning QGIS" and "QGIS Map Design". Her latest project is MovingPandas, a Python library for analyzing movement data.

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