

Although the book is mainly about western, European global cities, its observations, insights and innovations suits and are applicable in other regions of the world's cities.

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THE SAGE HANDBOOK OF QUALITATIVE GEOGRAPHY, edited by Dydia DeLyser, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken, Mike Crang, and Linda McDowell. London: Sage, 2010.

The significance of this collection is not fully understood without some references to the “quantitative revolution” of the 1960s which marks the prevailing authority of a scientific approach to geographical research. Spatial statistics and computing technologies fascinated many who sought to enhance their research, promote the status of geography among its neighboring disciplines, and support progress through social engineering. By the 1970s some disappointed geographers who identified the growing gap between “real life” and the abstract nature of quantitative methods and modeling, started to challenge the standard of positivism and the authority of quantitative methods. Together with radical, Marxist, humanistic, feminist and other geographers they criticized positivist geography for discounting differences between people and societies; for its failure to deal with causal relations, and for its self-claim of objectivity. Consequently, and despite the development of GIS, the two following decades witnessed a decline in the leadership of quantitative research methods as human geography embraced a variety of social theories and became a far more diverse arena that welcomes alternative perspectives. Today human geography is seemingly divided by this positivist / non-positivist struggle which is often described in methodological terms as the quantitative/ qualitative split, though they do not necessarily represent contesting philosophies (Kwan, 2004; Sheppard, 2001). What makes this collection significant is precisely this, the elegant avoidance of this struggle and the prudent eschewal of this quantitative/qualitative contestation. Moreover, rather than underscoring the exciting and often unexpected findings collected through the use of qualitative methods, this collection of 23 interesting articles addresses the challenge of methodology itself, and looks into the underlining principles of such methods in geography, attempting also to bridge this quantitative/qualitative divide.

The articles are clustered into three sections, each aims at highlighting a focused viewpoint. The five articles that make up the first section consider the conceptualization of geographical research. It is, in my view, the most important section of this collection as it so boldly tackles the relations between real experiences such as segregation, subjugation and belonging to the belief embraced by the majority of qualitative researchers that our existence is socially constructed. Meghan Cope unveils the

roots of qualitative methods, especially of systematic observations, in the history of modern geography. This is achieved by evaluating the four characteristics of qualitative methods that connect past and present geographies: triangulation in the process of data collection; the social production of knowledge and the role of the Other; the integration of context and causality; and the effect of power relations on who, how and what is researched. In particular I appreciate Cope's addressing the complex interdependence of context (which relates to broader processes at various arenas such as economic, political, social), and causality (which contains experiences, thoughts and emotions, agency, and relations). Despite the lack of reference to the issue of scale, this characteristic emphasizes integration as a keystone of geographical thought and analysis, and explains the disruptive effect of the "quantitative revolution" on the connection between context and causality during the last decades of the twentieth century. While understandable, the disregard of pre-modern geography is quite distressing though enables a clear focus on the more recent history of the discipline. Sarah Elwood's chapter deals with the tendency to dichotomize quantitative and qualitative methods. Discussing the epistemological, ontological and practical challenges of mixed methods Elwood relies on geographical research to demonstrate possible convergences of the two, identifying some research areas such as, emotion, performativity, and non-representational theory that can be particularly enhanced by mixed methods.

The chapters of the second section move on and deal with strategies of research, assessing the effect of more and less common methods in geography. It is a rich and exciting section whose authors cope theoretically with a variety of methods from landscape observation and interpretation (Duncan and Duncan), and interviewing (McDowell), to the hardly studied stimulation of visual images (Crang). All these authors share a strong awareness of an emerging sense of self-consciousness which obliges scholars to define and re-define themselves with and against their topic of inquiry as part of the process of research. This facet is especially emphasized in the chapters by David Butz on Pakistani villagers and by Peter Jackson and Polly Russell on poultry farmers. This shared experience of the researcher's awareness well demonstrates flexibility to be one of the greatest assets of qualitative methods, while pertaining to issues such as reflexivity, positionality, ethics and power relations in research. In an especially interesting chapter Stuart Aitken and Mei-Po Kwan deal with the qualitative facets of GIS and visualization, illuminating the process of knowledge creation and representation with particular attention to planning and public participation.

The third section centers on the concluding part and the product of qualitative research. It tackles the tension between the inseparable creativity of data interpretation and the patterned linearity typical of authoring academic texts (DeLyser). It is acknowledged that knowledge is not simply collected in the field but rather bounded by this linearity. Handled and processed knowledge is transcribed, decoded, uprooted from its original context and relocated and reframed in different circum-

stances so that it is not only explored and presented but in fact created through this process. While this course is not limited to qualitative research, experienced scholars of qualitative methods are habitually more aware than others of the intersection of the research setting and their own circumstances. An excellent instance of the power of the researcher's circumstances is conveyed by the personal account of Deborah Martin (which is typical of her generation) who sought to learn, to be trained and specialized and also to teach qualitative geography. Her discussion of the tension between the theoretical facets of qualitative methods and the students' inclination toward the more practical facets – the “how” – of qualitative research, is insightful and useful for those who teach qualitative research methods and, I believe, also for students. Indeed, this chapter which illuminates issues in geographical education and concerns the quality of future research offers a fine closure to this valuable collection.

The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography is more about the way geographers conduct their research than about the intriguing geographies they unveil. It demystifies the complexities that surround qualitative work in the field and is an important addition on the shelves of geography books. This timely publication is indicative of the maturity of qualitative research within the community of geographers. By assembling the work of leading geographers who have chosen qualitative methods as a key means to accomplish their research, this volume also forwards dialogue between geographers and their colleagues in the humanities and other social sciences. It is a high-level, interesting and well-read book that will benefit graduates students, academics and practitioners. It is highly recommended for scholars in the various fields of human geography.

References

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THE SAGE HANDBOOK OF REMOTE SENSING, by Timothy A. Warner, M. Duane Nellis and Giles M. Foody. London: Sage Publications, 2009.

Remote sensing may be defined as the process of collecting data about objects, areas, or phenomena through observing them without physical contact. The first remote sensing data were collected over one hundred years ago, but the use of spa-