

THE SAGE HANDBOOK OF SOCIAL GEOGRAPHIES, edited by S.J. Smith, R. Pain, S.A. Marston and J.P. Jones III, Los-Angeles: Sage Publications, 2010.

If the turn of the 20th century can be viewed as the collapse of old ideologies and antiquated regimes, socially significant ideas and ideals melting into new avenues of thought and the apparition of new urban representations, the turn into the 21st century may be viewed as the era of social and economic uncertainty. Over the last two decades of the former century, economic activity drastically shifted from national to global scales, old industry found itself giving place to an industry based on ideas more than on “classic” production, “signs” and signifiers more than goods, thus having an unprecedented impact on labor relations, professional, familial and personal sense of instability or social insecurity. On the other hand, communication technology gave birth to new networks of interrelationship accentuating new dialogues and information flow among individuals and groups.

Social Geography, not being indifferent to those changes, did undergo a belated transformation as well, in which questions and research methods have been taken up and further expanded to a different set of concerns. New arguments arose and presented new challenges and themes of query and methodological stances. Some elementary approaches like space being a social product are now renegotiated and light is shed on more complex and dialectic issues on space-society questions and practices, not only issues regarding the reconstruction, representation or the dispute over space, but issues on spatial and social production, exclusion, gender, health inequality *etc.*.

And still, challenging 21st century social geography should always look for new theoretical approaches and understandings based on how spatially society is organized. The logic of space being reified concomitantly as society does, is more or less put at margins, giving place to ideas claiming that space, like time, is only one of the dimensions of the “social”. This said, one should understand more accurately the role and importance of the variations, accentuations and attenuations of social processes and tensions, revealing in their turn, spatial differentiations.

The book is specifically engaged with the confluence of geography with the *social* and offers an engagement with a wide range of debates standing at the center of today’s social geography agenda. The five sections and twenty seven chapters of this handbook (not being a dictionary neither “a little of everything” as the editors claim) significantly broaden the ambition and willingness to expand the scope of socio-geographical studies.

The first section deals broadly with what geography of diversity and difference is. Historically and methodologically, questions and approaches to social division are analyzed, contrasts between the *naturalness* of differences and the constructivist and anti-essentialist claim are questioned and new approaches to injustice or inherent division are now *de rigueur*. Classic divides must make place to newer ones, identities and subdivisions must be redrawn, and weight must be given to more *avant*

garde ideas such as post-human realms, the place of nature, and the object world and so on.

The second section handles issues of society and economy. Special emphasis is given to the role of social geography in explaining worldwide monetary inequalities and other fiduciary divisions, long understood to be dealt only by economists. This section discusses the causes of monetary mechanisms causing inequalities and raises the question why these causes (long thought to be based on “pure” economic factors like supply and demand, prices, markets etc.) have been taken for granted without raising questions on issues of the subjective order like emotions or concerns. Appropriate weight is given to social and cultural variables, not to say the political ones. Furthermore, this section sheds light on the relative importance of subjective decision making by individuals, households, small and large firms or even the relative weight of daily life and individual routines.

The third section focuses on issues of geographical wellbeing, in other words, geographical issues of the mental and physical sense of wellbeing and distress. Light is shed on the spatiality of fear and anxiety and the ontological evolution toward newer accounts of what health geography is, the spatiality of victimization, community safety and insecurity, leading hitherto to newer understandings of what spatialities of strength and vulnerabilities should be, not neglecting the geography of the emotional order, i.e. affection, resilience, hope and even the environmental facets of hatred and the like.

Geographies of social justice are the core of the fourth chapter. Weight is given to the history and epistemology of what social justice is, its connection to environmental issues, its tensions and struggles with politics and other concerns having in common distribution of power and the right of access to society in its broader meaning, i.e. cultural, social and other public resources. Focus is also given to ethics and feministic issues.

The ending fifth section tackles the “doing” of social geography. The authors claim that no suggestions on how to run research are presented, but instead offer to engage with fields and research strategies run outside social geography. Personal accounts given by few scholars, each on its own specific field of action, are presented, each suggesting a different practice or scope of research.

The trajectory of the book moves from an initial exposé on the main ideas prevailing today in social geography to a concluding focus on how social geography is done, through a convincing set of discussions on the role of the main influencing actors and agents in this field and their relative weight, just to name a few: economy, wellbeing and health, justice and ethics. Other important topics, methods and arguments are also present and confirm the centrality of socio-geographical studies in our attempts to understand society in the 21st century.

If this handbook succeeded to find some novel perspective within this huge industry of ideas and fieldwork, the question still remains whether society in the 21st century will have the similar traits of 20th century’s society. Will it dissolve in order

to give place to other forms of society? Did individualization really marked social practices in this new society which presumably is trying to leave old eschatological concepts? Is 21st century society as “liquid” as Zygmunt Baumann has stipulated? And finally what role does the concept of space play in our endeavors to understand society? Most of these issues are raised in this volume, the essays are scholarly well argued, but still, a closing article focusing only on what does future holds for this scientific branch is to be expected.

The book aims to be accessible to students and specialists alike. Its success lies in emphasizing the crossovers between geography and social studies. The good editorial work is evident and the participating contributors are well-established scholars in their respective fields. One may find special interest in the *avant garde* views more than in the ongoing debate largely raised, but the good bibliography proposed at the end of each chapter will relieve the thirst for additional knowledge.

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MAPPING: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO CARTOGRAPHY AND GIS,
by Jeremy W. Crampton. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Mapping: A critical introduction to cartography and GIS, by Jeremy W. Crampton, is above all about questioning. Although mapping, cartography and GIS are indeed the thematic core of this book, if one word is to be chosen to highlight its title it would be *critical*. The book questions the importance of mapping, cartography and GIS in life and science while demonstrating this value through different aspects of human geography and particularly political geography. Why is such a book of necessity nowadays? The author provides two arguments: (i) there is lack of discussion of mapping, cartography and GIS in today's prominent textbooks on cultural, political or social geography; and (ii) apparently cartographers and GIS people do not remain debtor and they do not apply their methodologies often for political, power and social geography. Elsewhere we have published in *Geography Research Forum* a special issue on GIS, remote sensing and human geography and have found a notable lack in such studies (Svoray, 2002). I therefore agree that a book discussing the complex bonds between cartography, GIS and political geography is a welcome addition to the geographical literature and should be of interest to geographers and mainly human geographers.

One of the earliest issues in mapping politics discussed in the book is the way technology i.e., web-based and open source GIS affect the democratization of mapping. Web-based GIS is now common knowledge but despite the increasing use of Google maps, for example, the question of how much hits recorded on the computers actually represent “people's” opinion is not trivial. Perlmutter (2006), for