A Review of “Qualitative GIS: A Mixed Methods Approach”
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from a deeper reflection on the “paradox” between modernity and postmodernity as represented in Bennett’s body of work and its significance to the diversity of lived experiences in Leeds today.

Chapter 6 builds on the historical lessons presented in chapter 5 to present the topography of race that defines space and power in the postmodern Leeds landscape. This racial perspective marks a distinct departure and important perspective on the lived experience—one that is certainly different from the white middle-class experience of Alan Bennett. Chapters 7 and 8 provide a historical account of the role(s) of football and rugby in the redefinition of a “Leeds identity” and its sense of place. Chapter 9 examines the alienation of ethnic minorities in sport—specifically the participation of Muslim women in football—to provide a postmodern perspective on race, sport, and the “multicultural question.” These chapters illustrate that although issues associated with gender, race, and class in a postmodern city are certainly complex, the “voices of the other” are critical agents of change that cannot be overlooked or ignored. The authors challenge us to look harder and beyond historically embedded “truths” and “norms” to discover and confront the ways in which identity is socially constructed and spatially represented in the postmodern city.

In chapter 10, Wagg and Bramham draw out some of the contradictions that have manifested out of the transformation process in Leeds. Although the chapter rightfully begins with a discussion of the city’s contemporary vibrancy, the book would not be complete without a critical analysis of the “fragility” of the new Leeds. Although city councillors have declared an end to class politics and have instead given priority to equality of opportunity, social exclusion is the most noteworthy outcome of the city’s transformation and arguably, the most important theme to emerge from the book’s analysis. Social inclusion principles might be prioritized by local government, but the reality is that not all citizens are provided with opportunities to contribute to and benefit from change. Individuals and communities have been geographically, socially, and politically marginalized while foreign investors have been invited to engage in “sustainable development” and politicians have been offering incentives. This paradox has created a political lightning rod and a media storm about the “People a City Forgot.” In a time where inclusion and accessibility are deeply embedded in the sustainable development, urban planning, and leisure sciences literature, it appears that Leeds has perhaps rushed into deindustrializing and in the process has overlooked the true balance required of a sustainable postmodern city.

Sport, Leisure and Culture in the Postmodern City is an advanced read that is best suited to senior-level undergraduate students, postgraduate students, or established researchers. It provides an introduction to basic concepts such as transformation, globalization, and postmodernity, and it adds to the stock of cautionary tales of cities in transition. The postmodern city promises quality of life, democratic engagement, and a “life of leisure,” but the Leeds tale reminds us of the central role that people must play in the political, social, economic, and cultural transformation of the urban landscape. Finally, this book is a poignant testimony to the fragility of the postmodern city, a fragility echoed in other cities in the United Kingdom and around the world.

Key Words: city, culture, leisure, postmodern, sport.

References


Reviewed by Rex J. Rowley, Geography Program, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

In Qualitative GIS, Meghan Cope and Sarah Elwood have edited a compilation that
addresses an important void in both geographic information systems (GIS) and geographic methodology literature. GIS as a technique and a toolbox has, of course, been well accepted and lauded by geographers and scholars in other fields, especially in recent years following the so-called spatial turn. At the same time, qualitative and mixed methodologies also have been embraced by a growing number of practitioners. Combined, however, qualitative methods and GIS can be used to understand the richness and multifaceted nature of human and cultural workings in space and place. In this concise collection appropriately aimed at professional geographers and aspiring graduate students, the editors successfully show how these two often-separated approaches in the geographic repertoire can and should be integrated.

Elwood and Cope introduce the collection and set the stage by framing qualitative GIS as an important mixed-methods approach for geographers. Marianna Pavlovskaya completes that setting in an eloquent, yet pragmatic argument disassembling the notion that GIS is inherently quantitative, thereby showing that it can be qualitative. The remainder of the book is divided into three sections.

In the section titled “Representations,” contributors Nadine Schuurman, Sarah Elwood, and coauthors Jon Corbett and Giacomo Ram baldi discuss how metadata (information about GIS data) can be employed to imbue GIS data structures with qualitative background and context, how participatory mapping can be used to empower communities, and how a map’s different purposes, contexts, and authors can change the significance and meaning of cartographic representation, thereby identifying the inherently qualitative constructions of identity and place.

Next, in “Analytical Interventions and Innovations,” coauthors LaDonna Knigge and Meghan Cope review grounded visualization as a way of directly integrating traditional GIS-based mapping of commonly available datasets (i.e., from U.S. Census or municipal sources) with grounded theory and ethnography to provide a richer and more thorough understanding of the human experience in place. Jin-Kyu Jung’s contribution describes a software-level integration of images, texts, drawings, and other qualitative data with the map as well as a method for directly combining results from popular computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) with spatially referenced data.

Finally, in “Conceptual Engagements,” Stewart Aitken and Jim Craine argue that cartographic productions can be viewed as more than simple representations and should be used in describing and analyzing affective and emotional geographies. Matthew Wilson then situates the “genealogy” of qualitative GIS within the broader notions of critical GIS and GIS and society traditions to understand the implications of integrating qualitative methods and GIS. Cope and Elwood conclude the book by exhorting scholars to build on what is compiled here to take advantage of the benefits of qualitative GIS—its reflexive and changeable nature, its ability to be both fixed and flexible, its way of fostering new knowledge and ways of knowing, its criticality, and its concern for place.

Beyond the obvious commonality between the chapters that brings them together in the first place, I found two significant threads running throughout the book. First, Qualitative GIS has a largely urban bent. This thematic concentration makes sense given the research background of the contributors. Urban areas also are convenient places to employ a mixed-methods approach; GIS data are abundant, inherently complex human patterns can benefit from the deciphering power of multiple methodological angles, and geographers are doing good urban ethnography today. Aside from Corbett and Gambaldi’s examples of community mapping in indigenous communities in the developing world and Schuurman’s discussion of metadata for forestry data, however, I would like to have seen additional work detailing how qualitative GIS might be employed in studies concerned with the rural half of the world’s population.

Second, and more important, nearly all contributors recognized the map as an essential way of integrating “qualitative” and “GIS.” That recognition was implied several times in the book but is said best and most directly by Pavlovskaya: “In short, visualization is the most telling non-quantitative functionality of GIS” (p. 23). GIS-based maps and other cartographic visualizations often can tell stories that interviews alone cannot. Additionally, maps can act as a data source for qualitative research analyzing such things as power relations
between producer and reader, the impact of a fixed representation versus an interactive display, and the political implications of using one type of map over another. One problem, however, is that the human and cultural geographers who could benefit from the better use of GIS-based maps and visualizations often are not adequately trained to do so or suffer from a phobia of GIS, thus making the integration of qualitative methods and GIS more difficult where it otherwise might fit comfortably. Beyond Pavlovskaya’s comments and other peripheral statements, the book lacked a direct discussion of this concern.

In one sense, Cope and Elwood’s book is nothing new; much of the research presented in the chapters, after all, is built on previously published or presented work. Yet, the assemblage of such research into a thin volume is what makes this compilation a novel contribution to the field of geographic methodology. Qualitative GIS gives geographers (and anyone employing a spatial perspective) a reference source that is succinct yet comprehensive, approachable yet rigorous. Most significantly, it can assist researchers who are either new or experienced in GIS or qualitative methods to achieve the synergy and richness that can be had in the combination of the two methodologies that is likely impossible when employed separately.

Key Words: cartography, critical GIS, ethnography, GIS, mixed-methods, qualitative GIS, qualitative methods.


Reviewed by Madhuri Sharma, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

Understanding African diaspora in the United States and Canada has historically been shrouded in confusion largely because of the diverse social, cultural, and economic context of these communities and how it has been tied to global economic and demographic shifts in the last several centuries. The editors of this volume thus deserve praise for attempting one of the most difficult tasks in urban social geography: situating “Africans” socio-spatially in the U.S.-Canadian landscape. *The African Diaspora in the United States and Canada at the Dawn of the 21st Century* is the story of the emergence, existence, and maintenance of the Africans in the United States and Canada. This carefully crafted book edited by John W. Frazier, Joe T. Darden, and Norah F. Henry is a collection of original essays that takes an innovative approach to the intersection of race and ethnicity while examining their interaction across residential and business and work spaces rather than simply focusing on their assimilation into North American society. This volume is dedicated to understanding historical and sociocultural contexts, the theories pertaining to migration that occurs from macroscale economic globalization and changing political, social, and policy dynamics across North America.

The central concern of this edited volume is to open a dialogue among scholars and researchers from across disciplines while contributing to the informed and yet difficult decisions of policymakers in the United States and Canada that have, in several ways, led to difficult assimilation and transition of African American immigrants into the host society. The contributors have meticulously summarized varied experiences of several African descendents across North America during the past four centuries, which is a very difficult task given the wide scope of their settlements in different parts of the continent. In the twenty essays organized across four sections the editors bring together the work of twenty-one social scientists who contribute to the place perspective while recognizing the influence of the global processes.

The introductory chapter of section 1 by Henry, Darden, and Frazier makes great reading, as it provides a snapshot of the problems and issues affecting the black experience in Canada and the United States. So what does this book have to offer? Section 2 is made up of five contributions that share experiences and historical backgrounds of African immigrants in Canada. Each chapter is succinctly written and self-contained. Two of these are particularly noteworthy. First, Joseph Mensah and David Firang’s chapter, “The African Diaspora in Montreal and Halifax: A Comparative Overview of the Entangled Burdens of