QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

A Methodological Approach

Edited by
Oana-Ramona ILOVAN • Iulia DOROFTEI

Presa Universitară Clujeană

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OANA-RAMONA ILOVAN and IULIA DOROFTEI

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PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

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Foreword

The aim of this book is to encourage Romanian students and geographers to take an interest in qualitative research. It answers a need in the Romanian university geographical system: that of exploring the role of qualitative research methods and their usefulness and relevance both for research and for university students' professional training. Given the fact that, for a very long time, Romanian geographers used the descriptive method and the quantitative ones, very often not trusting the qualitative methods and the results obtained with such "subjective" methodology, a pro domo book like this volume is necessary.

More than half of the authors of this volume are M.Sc. students who attended the courses on the *Methodology of Regional Research* (in Romanian) and *Region and Geographical Regionalisation* (in English) with the first editor of this volume (Associate professor Oana-Ramona Ilovan, Ph.D.), during their Master's studies at the educational programme *Planning and Regional Development*, in the Faculty of Geography, "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. They wrote the theory or the presentation of the case studies we used, according to the way they were required to solve assignments during their Master's studies.

During their courses and seminars, usually, the theoretical part was presented and explained by the professor (the first editor of this volume), who also provided students with relevant articles that they had to read and analyse in order to understand the theoretical part.

Among the other authors of the chapters included in this volume, are Ph.D. students and also professors and researchers experienced in using the respective qualitative methods, their contribution being a theoretical and reflective

one. They cooperated with the students for the chapters they co-authored and gave critical and constructive feedback on students' contribution.

More than once, the peer-review process (among the professors and researchers themselves; among the M.Sc. students and Ph.D. students) on content, form, and on observing ethical norms during the writing process provided opportunities for dialogue and respectful collaboration.

For the presentation of the case studies used in the chapters of this book, students received relevant research articles selected by the second editor of this book, also student at the respective Master's programme.

For these students, authors of the chapters, the process of writing, which involved analysing the case studies from a methodological perspective, was a learning activity. At the same time, they did their best at explaining diverse qualitative research methods and their role in Regional Geography, so that this book enables younger students at the respective Master's programme to learn more easily and efficiently, while being aware of the crucial importance of methodology, and, in this particular situation, of the qualitative methods for excellent research.

Therefore, as coordinators of the hard work of documenting for and writing this volume, and as editors, we testify that involving both students and researchers in such a process was fruitful and rewarding for everybody who participated. We are grateful to our colleagues and to the M.Sc. and Ph.D. students for their quality writing and commitment. We hope (alongside them) that this volume will provide our future students in Regional Geography with the necessary knowledge and tools for improving their professional training.

This volume is useful especially for the students enrolled at the Master's programme on *Planning and Regional Development* and for those studying Regional Geography. Nevertheless, many other disciplines that require a regional geographical approach and are based on Regional Geography

research (e.g. The Geography of the Continents, Territorial Planning, Territorial Assessment and Prognosis, etc.) may benefit from the theory and case studies presented in this volume. The review of case studies is aimed at contributing through examples reflecting the theoretical discourse.

There were two books that guided us in writing this volume, but also before we took over this endeavour, more specifically during the teaching activities from the previous years, realised by the first editor of the volume. These books were: N. Clifford, S. French, & G. Valentine (eds.) (2012), *Key Methods in Geography*, second edition, London: Sage and L.M. Given (ed.) (2008), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods,* Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage.

In addition, research papers employing qualitative methods were selected with the M.Sc. students' involvement. Moreover, students themselves, when writing the chapters or parts of these, were advised to search for and use their own sources from the vast scientific literature in Geography and in the Social Sciences, but focusing on Regional Geography case studies as much as possible.

The guiding questions we provided our students with, in order to structure the analysis of the cases studies presented in the scientific literature, were the following:

1. Who, when, and where did that research?
2. What is the aim of the research?
3. What are the objectives?
4. What methodology did the authors use?
5. Which are the results/findings?
6. What are the conclusions and the relevance or usefulness of the respective research?

After answering those questions, students had to support with arguments the relevance or usefulness of the respective method (or mixture of methods) for that specific case study.

Foreword

This book may very well complement the literature recommended at diverse courses during students' Bachelor's, Master's, and even Ph.D. studies, especially now when most of the courses on the *Methodology of Research* in the diverse branches of Geography became optional in the curricula at the Bachelor's level in the Faculty of Geography of "Babeş-Bolyai" University, in Cluj-Napoca.

Oana-Ramona Ilovan & Iulia Doroftei

Chapter 1. Brief Approach to Qualitative Research and Qualitative Methods

Oana-Ramona Ilovan & Iulia Doroftei

> "[...] qualitative research is no longer bound by an objective positivist perspective and [...] contemporary qualitative researchers have a wide range of methods, theories, and paradigms from which to choose" (Lockyer, 2008, p. 709).

Contents

1. Definitions

"Research methodology consists of the assumptions, postulates, rules, and methods—the blueprint or roadmap—that researchers employ to render their work open to analysis, critique, replication, repetition, and/or adaptation and to

choose research methods". "[...] the constituent components of research methodology [...] [are the] guiding paradigms, aspects of research design (study community, population, sampling and analysis units), methods of data collection, and analysis and dissemination" (Schensul, 2008, p. 516).

"Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin, 2008, pp. 311-312).

2. History of qualitative research

Diverse approaches to knowledge, such as positivism, structuralism and post-structuralism influenced geographical research, which is very diversified thematically. Therefore, geographers used a varied methodology, from statistical analysis and mathematical modelling enabling quantitative methods to exploring people's values, perceptions, and emotions through qualitative methods (Clifford *et al.*, 2010, p. 3).

Qualitative research methodology, called also qualitative research methods or data collection techniques, enable researchers to explore respondents' lived situation through either "observation (what the researcher sees) and through interviewing (what respondents tell researchers)" (Schensul, 2008, pp. 516-517).

Presenting the development of qualitative research in Anglophone countries and qualitative debates in German-speaking areas, Lockyer (2008) points out that there are limits

of historical accounts because the content of these histories depends on their authors' choices (i.e. in terms of methodological preferences, interpretations, and experiences) (p. 710). In Table 1, we present the most important historical developments of qualitative research.

In North America, there are eight historical moments in the evolution of qualitative research: "the traditional (1900–1950); the modernist or golden age (1950–1970); blurred genres (1970–1986); the crisis of representation (1986–1990); the postmodern, a period of experimental and new ethnographies (1990–1995); postexperimental inquiry (1995–2000); the methodologically contested present (2000–2004); and the future, which is now (2005–)", where "[t]he eighth moment asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, freedom, and community" (Denzin, 2008, p. 311). In this context, a series of subdisciplines contributed significantly: cultural anthropology, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, feminism, cultural studies, etc. (Lockyer, 2008, p. 710).

In addition, this eighth moment enables qualitative researchers to play an active role both in the research process and in promoting a democratic society: "In this new era (the future), the qualitative researcher does more than observe history; he or she plays a part in it. New tales from the field will now be written, and they will reflect the researcher's direct and personal engagement with this historical period. Now at the dawn of this new century, we struggle to connect qualitative research to the hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic society" (Denzin, 2008, p. 311).

Table 1. History of qualitative research, based mostly on Vidich and Lyman's History of Qualitative Research and Denzin and Lincoln's Seven Moments of Qualitative Research (Lockyer, 2008, pp. 706-711; Schensul, 2008, p. 522)

	Time frame	**Period names**	**Researchers**	**Subject**	**Approaches and methods**	**Purpose and outcomes**
1	17th century	Early ethnography	Western researchers	"Primitive" societies	Observation of customs, practices, and behaviours	Acknowledgement of the limitations of religious (i.e., Christian) teachings to account for diversity. Racial and cultural diversity explained through new theories of racial and cultural historical origins.
2	17th-19th century	Colonial ethnography	Western explorers, missionaries, and colonial administrators	"Primitive" societies	Ethnographic descriptions and analyses	To civilize the world. Introduction of news terms such as *underdeveloped* and *third world*.
3	late 19th, early 20th century	Ethnography of the American Indian as Other	Anthropologists	American Indians	Ethnographic descriptions and analyses	Study of American Indians (regarded as primitive and as a specific Other).
4	1900-	Ethnography	W. E. B. Du-Bois	Black, Asian, and	Qualitative community	The desire to

	1950	of the Civic Other Traditional period	(*The Philadelphia Negro* study) University of Chicago's Department of Sociology Qualitative researcher as the *lone ethnographer*	European immigrants in America during the early days of industrialization	analysis, church-led and corporate sponsored community studies and ethnographies of the ethnic Other. The introduction of *participant observation*, besides ethnography. Observations and comments about strange societies and peoples.	incorporate immigrant groups (into existing Protestant ones). Research driven by a humanistic moral agenda. To debunk notions related to differences in intellect and capacity depending on racial belonging. To provide valid and objective accounts of the alien "Other". Ethnography and qualitative research were professionalized. Ethnography was recognized as a particular method of social research.
5	1950-1986	Ethnography of Assimilation	Native Americans, African Americans,	Native American, African American, Latino, and Asian American groups	Shift toward making qualitative methods as rigorous as quantitative approaches.	To give the underclass a voice and presence.

		Modernist Age Blurred Genres	Latinos, and Asian Americans seeking to take control of the study of their own groups			New interpretive theories (such as ethnomethodology and feminism). Introduction of computers in assisting data analysis in social research, resulting in ethical and political considerations coming to the forefront. Nonpositivist or antipositivist attitudes. Pluralism, research openness, flexibility and interpretive approaches. Methodological pluralism (mixed method or multimethod approaches), including within-method and between-method mixing.		Social scientists employed theories, methods, and concepts previously used by the humanities and therefore the disciplinary boundaries between the social sciences and humanities became blurred.
6	1986-1990	Crisis of Representa-tion Period	Ethnography today	Researchers across a number of disciplines	Cultural and develop-mental issues	Increase in reflexive research practice. Research led by feminist and racial and ethnic concerns.	Influences by post-structuralism and postmodernism Changes in the role of the observer.	Questioning the researcher's ability to capture social experiences (these were themselves created in the very act of writing the research text).
7	1990-	Postmodern		Researchers	Cultural	The	More and	Attempts to address

	1995	period		across a number of disciplines	and develop-mental issues	perception of the distant observer was eroded.	stronger criticism directed toward positivism. Methodological pluralism (mixed method or multimethod approaches), including within-method and between-method mixing.	the crises characterising the previous period. Situation-specific and localized theories replaced grand theories and narratives.
8	1995-2000	Postexperi-mental period		Researchers across a number of disciplines	Cultural and develop-mental issues	Use of poetry, drama, and multimedia techniques in ethnogra-phic writings.		Experiments in methods for representing lived experience. Innovative ethnographic writing.
9	After 2000	The Future		Researchers across a number of disciplines	Cultural and develop-mental issues	A more reflexive and interpretive approach to qualitative research. Wide range of methods, theories, and paradigms.		Research is no longer bound by an objective positivist perspective. Proposals of dropping the terms “qualitative” or “quantitative” research so that it is referred to simply as research.

British and American Human geographers promoted quantitative methods starting with 1950. At the international level, the 1960s was the period of the "quantitative revolution", which promoted the quantitative methods, concepts and reasoning specific to exact sciences and were used in Physical Geography research for explaining and understanding geographical phenomena, processes and models. Human geographers used these methods to interpret and predict human behaviour and decision making (Clifford *et al.*, 2010, p. 5).

Only starting with the 1970s, some geographers had a critical approach towards positivist research in Geography while pointing out that human beings are both rational and subjective. Therefore, the "objective" scientific methods were no longer enough for studying human behaviour. This informed and supported the appearance of the "qualitative turn" (McLafferty, 2010, p. 87), consisting in favouring the study of the subjective, complex and contradictory human behaviour. Such research focuses on studying individuals' emotions, intentions, perceptions of their actions and of space (Clifford *et al.*, 2010, pp. 5-6), where qualitative methods are a valuable tool for "the analysis and understanding of the patterned conduct and social processes of society" (Denzin, 2008, p. 312). Similarly, Jack (2008) argues that "qualitative research often provides an unparalleled understanding of the motivations behind human behavior, desires, and needs" (p. 36). This type of research methodology enabled geographers to find solutions for improving territorial planning and life quality for the researched communities (Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014).

In Regional Geography, geographers used mixed methodology (both quantitative and qualitative), thus being able to characterise regions, their specific features and uniqueness, to classify geographical phenomena and processes characteristic to regions, compare regions, and also discussed the methodology of regional research, bringing theoretical contributions to the concept of region (Cope, 2010, pp. 28-29).

Clifford, French, and Valentine pointed out that geographers should consider two premises when starting research: (a) methodology should be adapted to their research topic, to the circumstances and to the involved communities and (b) research hypothesis can be approached differently, depending on the perspectives and paradigms considered as any of them may lead to valid results (2010, pp. 3-14).

Recent research (Cope, 2010; Delyser, Aitken, Herbert, Crang, McDowell, 2010; Elwood, 2010; McDowell, 2010) underlines that quantitative and qualitative methods are complementary, as they are different ontological and epistemological approaches on knowledge and information, they answer different questions, in different manners and starting from different assumptions. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods provides "more depth and breadth in understanding complex developmental phenomena" (Skinner, 2008, p. 450). The *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* defines mixed methods research as "research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry" (Plano Clark, 2008, p. 476).

Social sciences, health sciences and the humanities had a significant impact on the development of qualitative research: "despite their differing theoretical assumptions and methodological preferences, these disciplines and subdisciplines are united in their reasons for employing qualitative research—to identify, analyze, and understand patterned behaviors and social processes" (Lockyer, 2008, p. 706).

Choosing the appropriate qualitative research methodology implies a series of decisions: "(a) selection of guiding paradigm; (b) identification of research questions; (c) development of a formative conceptual model; (d) site selection, study population, and study sample; (e) topics, procedures, and tools for data collection; and (f) procedures for data analysis and interpretation" (Schensul, 2008, p. 517).

Qualitative or intensive methods enable case study or intensive research (Table 2) (Clifford *et al.*, 2010, p. 11, *apud* Sayer, 1992, fig. 13, p. 243).

Table 2. The essential differences between extensive and intensive research designs

Notes	**Intensive**	**Extensive**
Research question	How? What? Why? In a certain case or example	How representative is a feature, pattern, or attribute of a population?
Type of explanation	Causes are elucidated through in-depth examination and interpretation	Representative generalizations are produced from repeated studies or large samples
Typical methods of research	Case study. Ethnography. Qualitative analysis	Questionnaires, large-scale surveys. Statistical analysis
Limitations	Relationships discovered will not be 'representative' or an average/generalization	Explanation is a generalization –it is difficult to relate to the individual observation. Generalization is specific to the group/population in question
Philosophy	Method and explanation rely on discovering the connection between events, mechanisms and causal properties	Explanation based upon formal relations of similarity and identification of taxonomic groups

Source: Clifford *et al.*, 2010, p. 11, based on Sayer, 1992, Figure 13, p. 243.

The usefulness of the case studies is that they "advocate in-depth strategies such as 'thick description' and 'process tracing', and they opt for a 'case-centered' approach rather than the 'variable-centered' one that dominates in

quantitative/positivist research" (Blatter, 2008, p. 68). Listing the strengths of case study research, Blatter (2008) underlines the following: empirical completeness, in depth analysis, conceptual richness, theoretical consistency, giving opportunity for methodological reflection and theoretical innovation, and securing internal validity of causal inferences (pp. 68-69).

The main qualitative methods are: the survey (also with a quantitative part), the semi-structured interview, the focus group, the participant observation, interpreting visual imagery, the participatory research (involving the community in researching and finding solutions to specific problems), the cross-cultural research, and the solicitated diary (Clifford *et al.*, 2010, pp. 77-201). "These methods do not offer researchers a route to 'the truth' but they do offer a route to partial insights into what people do and think" (Longhurst, 2010, p. 112).

3. Qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed methodology. Interdisciplinary research

Often mixed qualitative and quantitative methods are used to research the geographical environment, both "addressing issues of cultural sensitivity and describing and understanding patterns of change" (Skinner, 2008, p. 450). While defining the quantitative research in contrast to the qualitative one, Donmoyer (2008) asserts that the former refers to "approaches to empirical inquiry that collect, analyze, and display data in numerical rather than narrative form" (p. 713).

He also points out that "many quantitative researchers are interested in and study the qualitative aspects of phenomena. To study qualities quantitatively, of course, quantitative researchers translate gradations of quality into numerical scales that are amenable to statistical analysis" (Donmoyer, 2008, p. 713). Thus, Donmoyer (2008) argues that separating qualitative from quantitative research may be

sometimes misleading, especially when data undergo such processing, and that mixing quantitative and qualitative methods enlarges the sphere of possibilities in research and, moreover, descriptive statistics may be helpful to triangulate qualitative data (pp. 713-717). Lockyer (2008) underlines that soon the terms "qualitative" or "quantitative" will no longer be relevant in research in order to categorise it "so that it is referred to simply as research" (p. 710).

The potential of qualitative methods was experimented to investigate research questions in interdisciplinary research (introducing new approaches and models), to explore societal, familial, and individual features, and especially in the fields of sociology, psychology, education, public health, and nursing, by employing participant observation, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, life histories, and case studies, and thus bringing other disciplinary perspectives just by using these methods (Skinner, 2008, p. 448): "qualitative methods can suggest new lines of inquiry, new foci of investigation, alternative statistical models, and novel interpretations of complex phenomena" (Skinner, 2008, p. 448).

Skinner (2008) exemplifies the way in which interdisciplinary approaches and mixed methods help solving planning and societal issues: "For example, ethnographers' collaborations with a geographer on the Three-City Study led to a new method called geoethnography, where ethnographic data from participant observations and interviews are combined with geographic information systems (GIS) technology to map and depict important spatial dimensions of individuals' lives as affected by social structures and processes, in this case, the spatial and temporal aspects of how caregivers of children with disabilities navigated and linked services. Combining ethnographic data and GIS methods helped researchers to see both 'context' and 'content' in a spatial dimension, and the alternative way of representing data identified issues that would not have been apparent otherwise" (p. 448).

According to Skinner (2008), particular disciplinary traditions may enhance or impede the use of qualitative methods and the mixing of qualitative with quantitative approaches and the other way around: "[i]f disciplines are separate cultures, each with its own tradition of thought and practice, then interdisciplinary work, at least in the beginning, is much about coming to an understanding of cultures that are different from one's own" (p. 448). Practice showed the usefulness of linking qualitative and quantitative methods in the different stages of inquiry: "use qualitative research to indicate constructs or hypotheses that need to be addressed with quantitative data collection. In the next wave, quantitative data can be used to test hypotheses generated from (for example) ethnographic work, ensuring that conclusions drawn from the ethnographic work are not biased due to small or selected samples" (Skinner, 2008, pp. 448-449).

4. Subjectivity and rigour in qualitative research

Among the most often discussed themes related to qualitative methods are those of subjectivism, subjectivity, and rigour.

Ratner (2008) underlines that subjectivism is a dominant part of qualitative methodology during the collection and interpretation of data processes: "[Subjectivism] construes interactions between researcher and subjects (through interviews in particular) and the active interpretation of data—which are central features of qualitative research—as a license for the free exercise of subjective processes. [...] The subject is free to express whatever subjective idea he or she desires, and the researcher is free to subjectively interpret data" (Ratner, 2008, pp. 840-841). Due to this interaction, researchers are able to construct their argument, while empathising with the respondents: "Sensemaking through the eyes and lived experience of the people is at the heart of good qualitative research" (Schensul, 2008, p. 522).

Moreover, qualitative methods ease the way to learning about the Other: "[...] all qualitative research methods have common characteristics. They are conducted in an exchange between real people. They focus on meanings as conveyed by participants in the research setting in addition to behavior. And they take into consideration the social, cultural, and physical contexts within which individuals live, work, and interact. All forms of qualitative research including ethnography are most noted for their commitment to learning about and understanding the perspectives of others rather than imposing the researcher's own views, biases, and theories in explaining differences across populations or communities in beliefs and behaviors" (Schensul, 2008, pp. 521-522).

Subjectivity is defined as referring to "an individual's feelings, opinions, or preferences" and is considered to bring useful contributions to the process of inquiry due to the opportunities it offers for producing original insights and innovative thinking (Siegesmund, 2008, pp. 843-844). Siegesmund (2008) argues that the objectivity–subjectivity dichotomy, where subjective inquiry is deemed less scientific, is a result of the conflict between two types of values (i.e. those of the Enlightenment and of the postmodernity) and such a conception should be abandoned in science, because research "whether it is rigorously objective or subjective, needs to be evaluated on its capacity to provide useful insights into addressing practical problems" (pp. 843-844). Denzin (2008) also points out that "the qualitative research act can no longer be viewed from within a neutral or objective positivist perspective" (p. 312).

In explaining the standpoint of the positivist and postmodern (constructivist) approaches, Blatter (2008) relates them to the conception of reality: "Both naturalists and positivists make the ontological assumption that there exists a single objective reality that is independent of human observation. Constructivists, in contrast, do not assume any single reality and believe that empirical reality and theoretical concepts are mutually constitutive" (p. 69).

Subjectivism and subjectivity in science are discussed also together with the concept of *rigour*. The question is how valid and reliable is qualitative research? Saumure and Given (2008) define *rigour* in relation to the quality of the research process: "In essence, a more rigorous research process will result in more trustworthy findings. A number of features are thought to define rigorous qualitative research: transparency, maximal validity or credibility, maximal reliability or dependability, comparativeness, and reflexivity" (p. 795). These features are defined in the following: "transparency [...] refers to clarity in describing the research process", "a valid or credible study requires that the data be represented fairly and accurately", "a study is reliable or dependable, [if] similar participants and research methods should generally lead to similar results" (Saumure and Given, 2008, p. 795) and for reflexivity to become apparent "researchers must account for the fact that their presence has some influence on the research findings, and they should attempt to report how they, as the primary research instrument, may have influenced the study's results" (Saumure and Given, 2008, p. 796).

In addition, research, either objective or subjective, should be considered as a result of its usefulness: "[j]udgment of qualitative research (like all research) has always been based on the ability of the work to 'say something' to us by showing how we conceptualize our reality and our images of the world" (Denzin, 2008, p. 312).

5. Promoting qualitative research and methodology

Worldwide, there are a series of *institutions, associations, scientific events (conferences, workshops) and journals* that promote qualitative research and methodology. The most impactful ones are listed below.

The *International Institute for Qualitative Methodology* (IIQM) was established in 1998, at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. Its purpose is to enable at a global scale the development and use of qualitative inquiry. The institutions that are part of the huge network of IIQM have the common goal of developing qualitative methods. This network promotes a very large movement in the field of qualitative research through the programmes it develops (Morse, 2008, pp. 452-453).

The *Association for Qualitative Research* (AQR) is the main authority in the field of qualitative research methodology, analysis, and consultancy within the United Kingdom. It publishes *In Brief* and *In Depth* (Jack, 2008, p. 36).

The *International Association of Qualitative Inquiry* (IAQI) was established in 2005 at the *First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry* at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It supports the activities proposed by the members of the international qualitative inquiry community in the development of qualitative inquiry. It represents qualitative researchers' interests and concerns. It lobbies for the findings in the field of social justice facilitated by the qualitative methodology and an interdisciplinary approach. These findings support the IAQI to make policy recommendations (Salvo, 2008, pp. 450-451).

The *Center for Interpretive and Qualitative Research* (CIQR) at Duquesne University uses qualitative methods (from the fields of literature, philosophy, social and behavioural sciences) to facilitate communication between professors and students in this institution and to engage in community action research (Evans, 2008, pp. 73-74).

The *Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies Conference* is organised by the University of Georgia, since 1988, at the initiative of the Qualitative Interest Group (Preissle, 2008, pp. 446-447) and it is presented as "a venue for presentation of scholarship on qualitative research methods, design, epistemology, and related theoretical concerns as well as

examples of innovative qualitative work across the human and professional sciences" (Preissle, 2008, p. 446).

The *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry* is organised by the International Center for Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, since 2005, aiming "to facilitate the development of qualitative research methods across a wide variety of academic disciplines". At its first congress, called "Qualitative Inquiry in a Time of Global Uncertainty", the *International Association of Qualitative Inquiry* was created (Madill, 2008, p. 451).

The *International Human Science Research Conference* took place every year since 1982 (Halling, 2008, pp. 451-452).

The *Thinking Qualitatively Workshop Conference* takes place annually and includes workshops in conference format. It is organized by the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology, of the University of Alberta, Canada (Morse, 2008, pp. 880-881).

The *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* is an open-access multidisciplinary journal, established in 2002 and published quarterly. It is related to two IIQM international conferences (*Advances in Qualitative Methods* and *Qualitative Health Research*) (Morse, 2008, pp. 453-454).

The *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* was created in 1972 and publishes "research using ethnographic methods such as participant observation, unobtrusive observation, intensive interviewing, contextualized discourse analysis, and field sampling to analyze social life as it occurs in natural settings" and "ethnographies that are 'close-up' and 'analytic' descriptions of social life" (Ernst-Slavit, 2008, p. 475).

The *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* debuted in 2007. It was presented "as an international and multidisciplinary publication venue that focuses on methodological, theoretical, and empirical articles about

mixed methods research across the social, behavioral, health, and human sciences" (Plano Clark, 2008, p. 476).

Qualitative Inquiry is a bimonthly journal first published in 1995, accessed by social scientists to publish on qualitative methodology and research. The published articles are varied and innovative as format, methods, and contents compared to traditional journals. Its articles are responsive to social justice issues explored "across disciplinary, racial, ethnic, gender, national, and paradigmatic boundaries, presenting research from a variety of academic disciplines including anthropology, communication, cultural studies, education, evaluation, family studies, gerontology, health, history, management, medicine, nursing, psychology, and sociology" (Ernst-Slavit, 2008, p. 704).

The *Qualitative Report* is an online, open-access journal, launched in 1990, intended as a virtual learning environment which is "devoted to qualitative, critical, action, and collaborative inquiry and research" and which has the declared "mission to mentor authors and to support them throughout the entire paper development process" (Chenail, George, and Wulff, 2008, pp. 704-705).

The *Qualitative Research* is a journal that appeared in 2001, with an editorial team based at the Cardiff University, testifying its long tradition of qualitative research in the social sciences. *Qualitative Research* is a multidisciplinary journal that appears four times per year and publishes papers on "methodological or epistemological aspects of qualitative research from anthropologists, economists, educational researchers, geographers, historians, psychologists, and sociologists", as well as interdisciplinary research, while not devoting much to reporting empirical findings (Delamont and Atkinson, 2008, p. 705).

6. Conclusions

Denzin (2008) underlines the richness of approaches that qualitative researchers can choose from at present, especially due to a process of democratisation of research: "There have never been so many paradigms, strategies of inquiry, or methods of analysis to draw on and use. [...] we are in a moment of discovery and rediscovery as new ways of looking, interpreting, arguing, and writing are debated and discussed. [...] Class, race, gender, and ethnicity shape the process of inquiry, making research a multicultural process" (p. 317).

Qualitative methods are useful in the study of territorial identity – as "qualitative data collection techniques (research methods) focus on data collection at the sociocultural (collective) and individual levels" (Schensul, 2008, p. 517) – and development, for identifying inter- and intra-regional disparities (Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014).

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Chapter 2. Semi-structured Interview

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Contents

1. Definitions

"A semi-structured interview is a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions" (Longhurst, 2012, p. 103).

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that involves oral communication with individuals in a way that is self-conscious and based on a partially structured methodological course (Longhurst, 2012, p. 113).

"The semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions" (Ayres, 2008, p. 810).

2. Theoretical background

During the last decades, geographers have shown an increased scientific interest for qualitative research methods (Ilovan and Mihalca, 2013, 2014). The main purpose of this orientation is to study, through case-studies, individuals' emotions, perceptions, and personal feelings to extrapolate the final results for a larger area of interest. Basically, the qualitative research methods help, in our case geographers, to develop new hypotheses and territorial patterns.

One of the most commonly used methods of geographers is the semi-structured interview (Kitchin and Tate, 2000, p. 213). Semi-structured interviews make the transition from unstructured interviews (mainly oral communication) to structured interviews (template questions, asked in a specified order). The semi-structured interview is also a collaboration between the investigator and the informant (Ayres, 2008, p. 811).

One of the main advantages of the semi-structured interview is that it allows the subjects' open responses, instead of affirmative or negative brief answers.

The questions a semi-structured interview should contain must cover the entire topic of interest. It is important to start the interview with "warm-up questions", which the subjects feel comfortable answering. As soon as they have become at ease, the researcher can ask the more difficult ones. Basically, at the beginning, researchers have to get the respondents in the right mood, make a little comfortable conversation with them and make the transition from simple initial respondents to familiar conversation partners. To do that, the researcher can use some warm-up tricks, such as offering a snack, or beginning the conversation with a little game on the topic of interest (Longhurst, 2012, p. 107).

Another important aspect of a successful interview is represented by the participants whom the researchers choose

to question. In most cases, the subjects are chosen based on their suitability for the research topic (Cameron, 2005, cited by Longhurst, 2012, p. 108). For example, if a geographer has as research topic the student life quality from a college campus, he/she has to focus on respondents that live in student hostels, not on the ones that live in rented studios.

As Longhurst (2012) explains, in order to recruit participants for an interview, previously, the researcher can conduct simple questionnaires in the field. At the end of the questionnaire, he or she might ask people to check a box if they want to take part in an interview and also to give their address and telephone number, if they have one. Another way of finding subjects would be to call people and directly ask them if they want to take part in an interview or not (Longhurst, 2012, pp. 108-109).

To be successful in his or her activity, the researcher should take into account the place where he/she conducts the interaction with the subjects. The researcher has to avoid locations such as the respondents' workplaces or the places where people conduct their daily activity. The perfect location for an interview to be held at must be a neutral and quiet one, where the subjects feel comfortable (Longhurst, 2012, p. 109).

For example, if a researcher wants to find out about the quality of teaching in high schools, from students' perspective, he/she should not hold the interview inside the classrooms, where students might feel nervous and under pressure. Another example would be regarding the study of the crime rate in a city. If the researcher has to interview the victims of physical violence, the possible respondents will not want to meet in public places, so the interviewer should choose a more private place.

Once the researchers have conducted semi-structured interviews, they should transcribe the results as soon as they can. If the interviews have also been audio recorded or filmed, the researcher should listen to or watch them immediately, while they are still fresh (Longhurst, 2012, p. 110).

There are also, as in the case of most other research methods, ethical rules for the semi-structured interviews.

Firstly, the researcher must assure the respondents that their answers and all the qualitative data they give will remain secure. Nobody outside the research group will be able to access respondents' personal data.

Secondly, the researcher has to keep respondents anonymous to other people. Only if the respondents agree to their name appearing in the study, the researchers can skip this ethical issue (Longhurst, 2012, pp. 111-112).

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "Determining Factors for Local Economic Development: The Perception of Practitioners in the North West and Eastern Regions of the UK" (Wong, 1998)

This case study review refers to a research realised by Cecilia Wong, from the Department of Planning and Landscape, University of Manchester, in 1997, published one year later. Wong investigates the importance of various factors in the process of local development, from the perspective of local actors in two regions in the UK, with different paths of economic development: the North-Western region, and the Eastern region, respectively.

To have an overview of the situation, the author analyses several studies which approach the same issue and succeeds in identifying 11 factors considered to be important in the development process. Further on, she divides these 11 factors into two categories: (a) *hard factors*, including topography, location, infrastructure, population, economy, technology and innovation industry and (b*) soft factors*, such

as the quality of life, local identity, institutional capacity, and business culture.

The aim of the study is to rank the determinant factors for the local economy, in the regions of the North-West and the East of UK, from the perspective of those who contribute to the development process.

The objectives of the study are to assess the importance of key factors for the development of the local economy and to listen to local actors' point of view about the significance that each factor has in the development process.

The researcher chose two methods: the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview.

The use of the questionnaire involved distributing the 183 questionnaires (103 in the North-West region, and 80 in Eastern region) among organisations that were directly involved in the process of local development. This method proved to be popular among interviewees, fact confirmed by the high response rate - 70% in the North-West region, and 80% in the Eastern region - which the author attributes to authorities' high interest in local development.

The next methodological stage consisted in interviewing 22 participants in order to verify the data obtained using the questionnaire.

In the North-West region, the interview focused on the conurbations of Greater Manchester and Merseyside, in contrast to the predominantly rural nature of the Eastern region.

The results are nuanced due to the use of two methods in the research and also to the fact that the regions covered by the study have very different profiles - the North-Western region, even if it has an urban profile, has suffered from industrial decline, while the Eastern region presents the lowest rate of unemployment and numerous high-tech enterprises.

For local actors, traditional factors ranked higher as they considered that the other factors derived from them.

A comparison between the determinant factors for local development listed in scientific literature and in local actors' responses showed a significant difference: local actors considered technology and quality of life not basic factors for development, but consequences of it.

The research is useful especially because it singles out a situation which many regions may experience, namely industrial decline and a high unemployment rate following soon after. Furthermore, in understanding the views of local actors in the two regions, the author is trying to discover premises for an optimal and lasting development.

The semi-structured interview proves to be a very useful research method for collecting information in a relatively short time. It also allows the interviewee to express a more comprehensive point of view, without being limited by a number of questions or answers.

The method proves useful because it involves contact with people for collecting data and it can be used alongside other methods.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "Supporting Ethnic Community Businesses: Lessons from a West Midlands Asian Business Support Agency" (Fallon and Berman Brown, 2004)

The study conducted by Grahame Fallon from Northampton Business School, University College Northampton, along with Reva Berman Brown at Oxford Brookes University, Business School, Wheatley, Oxford, shows the efficiency of the aid received by Asian business communities from an ethnic business support agency.

The authors conclude that business support agencies play an important role in the emergence and development of ethnic minority business. Therefore, they analyse the activity of an agency (called 'the Agency') specialised in offering help to Asian entrepreneurs who want to establish businesses in the West Midlands.

The aim of this study is to see what type of support the Agency offers and how efficient this support is for the development and growth of ethnic community businesses.

The main objectives are to overcome the stereotype that ethnic communities occupy bottom ranks in social and economic sectors, to investigate the importance of business support agencies in business development and to find solutions for overcoming the problems faced by ethnic communities (demographic, environmental, social, etc.).

The research method used is the semi-structured interview. Interviews were carried out in 1998, with the aim of finding out the reasons that led to the formation of the Agency, its purpose, size, turnover, ethnic composition and market relevance. The Agency was formed with the aim of helping Asian entrepreneurs to settle in the cities of West Midlands.

A first step was to interview senior officers of the Agency. Initially, the officers were contacted by telephone to give their consent to the interview. All the questions referred to the purpose and activities of the Agency, the reasons for its formation, its turnover, and interaction with other agencies.

The results confirmed the fact that business support agencies have a vital role in the development of ethnic minority businesses. By analysing the information collected, the authors list a series of strengths and weaknesses of the Agency specialised in the support of Asian communities, particularly Hindi and Indian Sikhs.

As strengths, the authors identify, among others, the special attention given to Asian businesses as a major part of the local economy, the training of the staff, the security of

funding, the links with economic structures (Chamber of Commerce), the pro-business nature, and the co-operation with other agencies which support Asian businesses.

Among the weaknesses, there are aspects such as the multiplication of agencies in the area, imbalances in terms of ethnic composition, low relevance on the market, the lack of involvement when it comes to start-ups, political tensions, and lack of co-operation with the rival agency.

This research is useful because it tackles both economic and social aspects of the studied issue. Secondly, it highlights the difficulties faced by a foreign contractor when attempting to infiltrate a new market. The activity of the Agency is impressive and many developed countries should follow this example when it comes to lower-ranking countries in the world economy, because we are in the process of globalization.

When it comes to the utility of the method, the semi-structured interview proved useful in finding out the point of view of the agency offering help. The interview served for obtaining information on the activities undertaken by the agency and the questions offered enough freedom for the interviewees to make additional comments. Besides specific answers to the questions, the interview comprised comments on the topic of discussion and on other related topics as well.

3.3. Review of case study 3: "Investigating Difficulties and Failure in Early-stage Rural Cooperatives through a Social Capital Lens" (Kasabov, 2015)

This article was written by Professor Edward Kasabov from University of Exeter, U.K. and from ESRC/EPSRC Advanced Institute of Management Research, U.K. The paper makes reference to a very common subject, especially nowadays, the

problems of setting up early-stage rural cooperatives, the hardships they face and the consequences of their breakdown.

The research focused on the Welsh cooperatives, choosing four different years of reference (2006, 2009, 2010, and 2011), and accounting for 48 cases of failure.

Causes which supressed rural cooperative growth and continuity were the ineffective processes of management and marketing and the lack of regional and national policies.

The aim of this study was to identify the difficulties that led to the imbalance of early-stage rural cooperatives and how it could be solved using social capital.

The main objectives of this analysis were to find the struggles which early-stage rural cooperatives were dealing with, to keep apart the causes and effects of an unbalanced cooperative performance, and to avoid failure. Another objective was to determine the importance and contribution of social capital to difficulties and failure.

The method used by the author was that of the semi-structured interview, using interview guides, together with the method of observation, focused on developments in four cooperatives in the Wales (2008-2010).

These methods were complemented by press reports and internal documentation which provided an overview of the early-stage failure of rural cooperatives. In their interviews, they used codes as “mistrust”, “loyalty”, “control and power” to see what was the relationship between farmers and rural communities. 27 interviews were conducted and results showed that mistrust and low bonding among cooperative members were the causes of failure.

The results of this paper showed, on the one hand, a separation between rural communities and the farmers for reasons of mistrust, inappropriate communication and, on the other hand, a big difference between farmers concerning the process of marketing and management, these being

distinguished by many skills and policies that were missing in rural cooperatives.

In conclusion, the entire process of marketing and management, together with the supermarkets and the barriers imposed by them led slowly, but surely, to the decay of early-stage rural cooperatives.

The mixture of methods used in this paper pictured the details regarding the problems that rural cooperatives dealt with. Working with people can be very hard, but it is necessary because researchers can gather solid information and find solutions to people's problems.

3.4. Review of case study 4: "Same Game but More Players? Sub-national Lobbying in an Enlarged Union" (Tatham, 2014)

This research was realised by Michaël Tatham from the Department of Comparative Politics, SAMPOL, University of Bergen, Norway. The purpose of the study was to analyse the effect of the 2004-2007 enlargements of the EU in terms of sub-national mobilisation: to see if anything had changed in terms of mobilisation of regional and local bodies of member states.

In this respect, the study tried to answer two questions: whether the enlargement had caused a division at territorial level between "new" and "old" (how much did post-2004 regions differ from those of the old EU-15?) and whether that differentiation was also reflected in regional mobilisation, in Brussels, in the way regions lobby.

The study was based on two data sources: a survey of more than 100 regional offices in Brussels and 29 semi-structured interviews with Commission officials.

In a first phase, existing literature on the subject was revised and, based on it, the author highlighted differences between EU-10 and EU-15 regions and focused on three aspects where literature had shown division between these regions. He enunciated them as expectations intended to be checked throughout the study:

1. EU-10 and EU-15 regional offices differed in terms of structure: EU-10 offices in Brussels were lower-staffed and they belonged to regions with lower devolution levels (regions from states with less decentralisation).

2. The mobilisation objectives of EU-10 and EU-15 regional offices differed: EU-10 offices, smaller and with fewer resources, were more likely to focus on fund-chasing and promoting awareness (trying to make their region visible) than to influence policy-making in their favour, which was more common for Eu-15 offices.

These differences in objectives might disappear when the level of devolution and staffing are controlled.

3. EU-10 and EU-15 offices had different state-region behaviours when it came to their Brussels-based activity: EU-10 offices were likely to spend less time lobbying and were less likely to collaborate, bypass or be in conflict with their member state.

4. The 2004-2007 rounds of enlargements might have changed “how regions play the Brussels game” (Tatham, 2014, p. 346), leading sub-national governments to have less solo activities and more of a “state-centric” approach, that was to focus more on representing intra-state interests.

The data used to evaluate the above expectations came from an online survey of Brussels-based regional office, which was done 18 months after Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU. The survey stayed open for 13 months and was available to Heads of Offices. It contained questions on the level of staff, mobilisation objectives, collaboration and interest representation (e.g. if the regional office worked with or without the member state). The questions were quantified using different scales, either for measuring frequency (“never”

to “always” scale) or importance (1 – not at all important, 5 – very important).

The author used the results of the survey, but also adapted some of the questions by changing the means of answering. For example, for some questions, he asked respondents to do a hierarchy of the choices instead of grading them from 1 to 5, in order to obtain a more accurate view of office priorities which could have otherwise all be marked as very important (5). Thus, the method was adapted depending on the research purposes.

In order to process the data, logistic regression was used because it allowed the author to control staffing levels and devolution (i.e. level of decentralisation of the member state), two structural attributes of regional offices which proved to influence behavioural attributes (mobilisation objectives, ways of interaction and relationship with their member state).

In previous research, their importance had not been taken into account, focusing more on results based on behavioural attributes and, thus, the differences that emerged between EU-10 and EU-15 regions might not have been accurate.

The validity of the results obtained with analysis was verified through 29 semi-structured interviews with Commission officials, who worked in areas where regional mobilisation was usual. They were chosen over regional officials because they could offer pre and post-enlargement views (while EU-10 newcomers did not have the pre-enlargement experience), because they usually worked on a permanent contract in Brussels, while regional officials changed after a few years and also because it allowed for a more compact work: interviewing regional offices would have required a lot more interviews in order to discern a trend. The results of the interviews were used to draw conclusions on the changes of regional strategies offices in Brussels after the

enlargement, and trends were exemplified by using testimonies from interviews.

The study revealed several aspects where EU-10 and EU-15 offices differed. The first expectation was confirmed, meaning that staffing levels and devolution were two structural attributes that differentiated indeed the two types of offices. EU-10 regions proved to be lower staffed (an average of 7 full-time employees for EU-15 compared to one and a half for EU-10) and to have a lower devolution level back home (i.e. less regional authority).

For the second expectation, however, results turned to be surprising. Most literature noted that regions that tended to be involved in policy-making were those with more resources, thus making EU-10 regions which were understaffed and had less authority to be more prone to go after fund-chasing.

However, the studies did not take into consideration the two structural variables mentioned before: devolution and staff levels. When these were controlled in the logistic regression, the data showed that EU-10 regions were more intent to influence decision making than to seek for funding opportunities, a conclusion reached by some other authors as well.

When it came to state-region interaction styles, notable differences were found at the 'conflict' chapter. In the case of the EU-10 regions, there was a lack of conflict between representations of state and/or regional interests. Other authors' qualitative analyses suggested that might have been a characteristic of new regions, which perceived greater gains from keeping a united front with their member state. This "accession effect" (Tatham, 2014, p. 354) might fade in time, but, meanwhile, the beginner's enthusiasm was what led EU-10 regions to work for raising awareness, avoiding conflict and trying to influence policies compared to EU-15 regions, which were more "blasé" (Tatham, 2014, p. 354).

Based on previous literature, as well as on the analysis of research results, the author concluded that what

differentiated regions had little to do with their accession date or political past, but more with their legislative power (if they came from unitary centralized of federal decentralized systems). It seemed that newer EU-10 regions tended to follow their older EU-15 counterparts' patterns and, in time, behavioural attributes of regions that came from the same type of system became similar. Thus, regional mobilisation convergence patterns depended on devolution levels. It was there that the dividing line was crossed and not between 'new' and 'old' states.

As to the enlargements' effect on regional strategies, the semi-structured interviews revealed the reinforcement of an old trend: the need for involvement as early as possible in the policy process, because, given the big increase in the number of member states, the Commission had less time to spend on region-specific issues. Also, intra-state interest representation was not so effective, given that, after the Lisbon Treaty, member states had less and less authority on the policy making process, having to share power with other institutions. Hence, it was not a safe bet that regions would achieve their interests by following this approach.

The use of quantitative and qualitative methods in this study proved useful because it allowed for more nuanced results, revealing aspects that might have otherwise been missed. The qualitative methods also served as a backing for the analytical findings, giving certainty to the interpretation of regression models. The combination of methods helped the study gain robustness and it was a useful approach in Regional Geography, where, often, studies rely both on hard data and on people's opinions.

4. Conclusions

To sum up, the semi-structured interview is a very efficient qualitative research method in Regional Geography. It can bring a consistent contribution to place identities, regional development, policy, and so on.

It is a great way of interacting with the people from the researched area, in a familiar way, and it is one of the best ways to get as close as possible to the community one wants to study. All the collected data, the respondents' experiences, opinions and emotions help very much in developing new explanations about geographical processes and phenomena.

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Chapter 3. Focus Group

Emanuel-Cristian Adorean

Contents

1. Definitions

Extensively used nowadays, being eminently an important and efficient qualitative research method, the focus group presents a wide variety of definitions and interpretations, depending on the period in which these emerged, on the field of study, or rather on the authors. Even though the method itself appeared earlier, it was scientifically defined for the very first time during the last decade of the twentieth century. Thus, in 1994, Krueger affirms that the focus group is "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment, the group members influencing each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion" (p. 6, *apud* Freeman, 2006, p. 493).

On the other hand, the focus group is "a qualitative technique allowing for the explicit use of group interaction to

produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Morgan, 1990, *apud* Threlfall, 1999, p. 102). The same author (Morgan, 1996, p. 130, *apud* Morgan, 2001, p. 142) defines the focus group as being "a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic suggested by the researcher". He also adds "the fact that focus group interviewing is such a flexible data gathering technique is undoubtedly one of the reasons for its popularity" (Morgan, 1996, p. 130, *apud* Morgan, 2001, p. 142).

In addition, the focus groups are "unstructured interviews with small groups of people who interact with each other and the group leader. They have the advantage of making use of group dynamics to stimulate discussion, gain insights and generate ideas in order to pursue a topic in greater depth" (Bowling, 2002, p. 394, *apud* Freeman, 2006, p. 493).

Breen (2006, p. 468) outlines that "focus-group research is often seen as a way of getting people to 'buy into' new ideas before they are implemented. Participants are usually aware that they are involved in a process that intends to stimulate some kind of change in their attitudes or their behaviour".

In concordance with Gill *et al.* (2008, p. 293), a focus group represents "a group discussion on a particular topic organised for research purposes", being at the same time the most common method of data collection used in qualitative research, along with the interview.

Moreover, the focus group, also mentioned as a discussion group, "is a technique that aims to collect data and can be used at different moments in the research process" (Silva *et al.*, 2014, p. 177), likewise combined with other methods, either qualitative or quantitative procedures, depending on context.

Resuming these interpretations, the focus group method represents a reunion between homogeneous participants, with the intention of sharing similar experiences,

and having scientific results. As a technique, it occupies an intermediate position between participant observation and in-depth interviews. It can also be characterized as a resource to understand the process of constructing the perceptions, attitudes, and social representations of human groups.

2. Theoretical background

The earliest use of the focus group method appeared in 1926, when E.S. Bogardus tested his *social distance scale model* with a string of schoolboy groups, in the University of Southern California, USA (Millward, 2012, p. 413).

Yet, a more scientific articulation of the method occurred in the 1940s, when the focus groups were used as an investigation method in marketing research, developed by the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University, USA (Gill *et al.*, 2008, p. 293), whereas the father of the focus group was Robert K. Merton (Bosco, Herman, 2010, p. 196, *apud* Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014, p. 24), sociologist and professor at the above-mentioned university.

During the decades that followed, the research based on focus groups had an evolution centred on the marketing side instead of the social one and, at the end of the 20th century, it was considered by many researchers one of the most effective, quickest, and low-cost methods of data collection.

After a long period of oscillations, in 1998, Morgan affirms that “the contribution of focus groups to social science research is more potential than real” (p. 75, *apud* Millward, 2012, p. 413). Therefore, in the next roughly ten years, there was an exponential rise in the number of scientific publications empowering the focus group method (e.g. Krueger, 1994; Morgan and Krueger, 1997; Barbour and Kitzinger, 1998; Greenbaum, 1998; *apud* Millward, 2012, p. 414; Threlfall, 1999).

During the new century's beginning, the focus group research gained a well-recognised, steady and fixed status in the qualitative research based on the strength of a substantial succession of scientific writings (e.g. Smith, 2003; Breakwell, 2004; Silverman, 2004; Wilkinson, 2003, 2004b; *apud* Millward, 2012, p. 414; Morgan, 2001; Gondim, 2003; Breen, 2006; Freeman, 2006; Tong *et al.*, 2007; Hopkins, 2007; Gill *et al.*, 2008; Ilovan and Mihalca, 2013, 2014; Silva *et al.*, 2014). The number of papers using or investigating the focus group method expanded considerably from seven papers, recorded between 1974 and 1984, to 138 publications between 1985 and 1994, 2,367 scientific articles between 1994 and 2004, while in 2010, the total number reached 13,191 scientific papers (Millward, 2012, pp. 414-415).

During the late 1980s and 1990s, the method became popular and the geographers started to use focus groups (Hopkins, 2007, p. 528) as a reliable and genuine method for the collection of qualitative data (see Burgess, 1996, 1999; Goss, 1996; Holbrook and Jackson, 1996; Longhurst, 1996; Kong, 1998; Burgess *et al.* 1998, 1999, *apud* Hopkins, 2007, p. 528). Focus groups are now intensively used by other sciences, Geography playing an essential role, the method being distinctly recognised as an established investigation method within the discipline (Hopkins, 2007, p. 528).

As defined previously, the focus groups enable social interactions or semi-structured discussions, including people grouped into two fundamental classes – the participants (ordinary people - different regarding their own characteristics and mentality in general, but at the same time having at least one feature in common, for example residence or age group) and the researcher(s) (who normally is/are trained and even licensed). The gathering aims to explore a specific set of issues, helping in this way the researcher in the process of data collection and, additionally, in the process of problem-solving strategies from a certain territory and domain.

Most of the time, as mentioned before, the discussion resulted is guided, monitored and recorded by a moderator/facilitator (the researcher) that has the role to ask broad questions about the topic of interest (Gill *et al.*, 2008, p. 293) and to foster the partakers to talk and interact with each other. The data obtained through the focus group discussion should firstly be recorded, secondly transcribed, thirdly analysed (Breen, 2006, p. 466) and, finally, either exposed and presented to the public or even combined with other data sets.

Moreover, a focus group discussion involves different sorts of questions, divided into two foremost categories. The first category includes questions related to the topic established before, beginning with general experiences and progressing to specific problems, whilst the second category enables the researcher to obtain background information, such as gender, age, education, residence, etc.

As determined by Kruger (2000, *apud* Breen, 2006, p. 471), a basic focus group should include at least the following types of questions: opening question, introductory question, transition question, key question, and ending question.

This method requires an adequate technical equipment (Breen, 2006, p. 465), supposed to simplify the development of interactions between participants (e.g. tape recorder, microphone, paper, quiet room, round table, etc.).

Furthermore, the focus group size is a vital consideration in the research process (Breen, 2006, p. 467). Generally, a small focus group risks the occurrence of limited discussion and a large focus group can be chaotic and hard to be managed. Tong *et al.* (2007, p. 351) underline that, usually, a focus group should include between four and 12 people. Longhurst (2012, p. 103, *apud* Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014, p. 25) considers that its dimension might vary from six to 12 persons, while Gill *et al.* (2008, p. 293) point out the optimum size of a focus group as being from six to eight participants (excluding moderators). But, normally, focus groups “can work

successfully with as few as three and as many as 14 participants" (Gill *et al.*, 2008, p. 293).

Paradoxically, the use of focus groups as a research method brings a mixture of advantages and disadvantages (Threlfall, 1999, p. 102).

According to Breen (2006, p. 467), there are advantages of using focus groups in comparison with other methods. Firstly, stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions are socially formed, this method providing a social environment which can be more articulated during its own development. Secondly, it gives us a deeper understanding of the circumstances or simply on the topic. On the other hand, it also offers us new perspectives of comprehension; the partakers will tend to participate in the focus groups considering that they will achieve new skills or will have interesting discussions, especially if the focus group has topics from their area of interest or when those topics are directly related to the community.

In addition, there are other advantages, such as the fact that the process does not take into consideration participants' education level, because it is still possible to meet people which are illiterates and they are able to provide relevant information.

Moreover, it can also foster participation from those who do not accept to be interviewed on their daily own environment or do not like the individual interview. Complementary, this method can encourage contributions from people who usually do not use to argue, reaching the point where they become interested in the topic and are even actively involved in the discussions.

On the contrary, the same author also stipulates the prominent disadvantages resulted from using the focus group technique (Breen, 2006, p. 467). For instance, the method regularly produces poor data and might be more expensive and time consuming than others procedures or methods. Usually,

it involves much more time – for example, each hour of audio takes between five and eight hours to write down the entire discussion and will produce dozens of pages of text (Gill *et al.*, 2008, p. 294).

In certain contexts, it is quite difficult to get all the partakers in the same point of meeting, at the same hour. Plus, there could appear the problem of resulting a biased sample, or even the uncertainty of the accuracy of thematic analysis and the authenticity of perceptions, which are not always trustworthy. Finally, data obtained can be very typical in some cases and therefore cannot be adjustable to other territories, institutions, and specific contexts.

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "Rural Change and Individual Well-Being: The Case of Ireland and Rural Quality of Life" (Brereton *et al.*, 2011)

The first case study is provided by F. Brereton, C. Bullock, J.P. Clinch, and M. Scott, from the Urban Institute of Ireland, University College Dublin.

The aim of research was to assess how the rural changes that occurred in the last two decades affected the rural welfare and the quality of life in Ireland, while the main objectives were to assess the rural quality of life in Ireland, to analyse the determinants of the quality of life, as well as to compare residents' attitudes regarding the provision of services and facilities, underlining the main advantages and disadvantages of the rural areas.

For this purpose, the researchers combined qualitative and quantitative investigation methods, as well as subjective and objective indicators of welfare, counting focus group

discussions and postal surveys, carried out in 2004, and, in addition, two representative surveys of individuals, realized both in 2001 and 2007 (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 203).

The qualitative approach included a set of three focus group discussions, in three different locations, each of them having approximately seven to ten elements. The intention was understanding the circumstances that determined and defined the inhabitants' quality of life in the rural areas.

The first two locations were chosen taking into account their characteristics, particularly a rural settlement in the north-west affected by the immigration process and by its own development tension, plus another rural location in the south, with a more stable population. In addition, a focus group was also organized in the suburban area of Dublin.

The recruitment process was based firstly on the age criterion. They selected people from the age range of 20-65. Secondly, they recruited long-standing inhabitants along with immigrants. The participants were asked about how the infrastructure, services, and the environmental components had an impact on their quality of life (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 208).

The focus group discussions were complemented by a set of quantitative data, resulted from a postal survey of 300 persons, in three different areas, especially Dublin City, the Dublin commuter belt, and County Leitrim (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 209). The goal of this method was to assess the residents' awareness of welfare, considering economic, social, environmental, and community issues. More exactly, the variables examined had a total number of 42 attributes and were grouped into three essential classes (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 210): environmental attributes (e.g. pollution level, quality of river and lakes, landscape attractiveness, quality of drinking-water, air quality, noise level, traffic level, etc.), community attributes (e.g. family nearby, friends nearby, social networks, participation in the community, schools, religious facilities, etc.), plus features of infrastructure and

services (e.g. leisure centre, childcare facilities, cultural facilities, sports facilities, healthcare facilities, etc.).

The third research method of the study was based on two "omnibus-style" surveys realised in 2001 and in 2007 (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 209), using a substantial variety of aspects correlated with the welfare topics in Ireland. The questionnaires involved a diverse number of issues used with the intention to gather socio-economic, socio-demographic, and geographical data, among which were used as variables the perception of well-being, the gender, the marital status, the number of children, the employment status, education, health, tenure, attendance at religious services, and social capital.

For both periods, they used a random selection method supposing to cover all rural administrative-territorial units of the country. Particularly, if in 2001 was not selected a method that ensures only the participation of rural people, on the contrary, in 2007, the selection process was based on terms of demographic size, and only those localities that, according to the 2002 Census, had maximum 1,500 residents, were chosen. As a result, a total number of 812 individuals were surveyed in 2007 (Clinch *et al.*, 2007; Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 209), while, in 2001, 565 people were polled (Urban Institute Ireland, 2001; Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 209). All the surveys were administered in the respondents' homes, in collaboration with a professional survey company (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 224).

The results of the three methods were ultimately interconnected, compared, and interpreted. The analysis of the results was conducted in two distinct ways. Firstly, they used a regression analysis rule to examine the determinants of the quality of life in both years – 2001 and 2007 –, underlining the differences from one year to another, and, secondly, they compared the descriptive statistics of each of the three studies, focusing on subjective opinions and attitudes which reflected objective changes that had occurred in the rural areas.

In this direction, the study reveals a relative high general life satisfaction in the rural administrative-units of

Ireland. The intersection data highlights the lack of effective correlations between life satisfaction and income, age, or gender. Generally, people with disabilities and the unemployed are less satisfied with life (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 214), while between other classes of active population there is no obvious correlation (e.g. between the self-employed and the part-time employed).

Another attribute proves that the education level influences life satisfaction, meaning that respondents with secondary education level or higher education are more satisfied with their living standard. Furthermore, the size of the space owned by individuals is closely correlated with life satisfaction. People who live in individual households, if possible spread or isolated, are more satisfied with their condition, in contrast to individuals living in collective households (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 216).

Moreover, the authors grouped the major determinants of life quality in the following basic classes (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, p. 2017): the environment (clean environment, healthy lifestyle, clean air, and low traffic), access to services (a large percentage of the rural areas are exposed to the risk of social exclusion), housing (the importance given to housing costs decreased considerably from 2001 to 2007), and social networks (number of volunteers increased in 2007; 65% of the respondents regularly participate in religious activities, etc.).

The conclusions of this research led to a brief description of rural living in Ireland. In consonance with the information obtained, the main benefits for rural areas are features such as: “peaceful”, “clean, fresh air”, “space”, “freedom”, “privacy” (for the year 2001) and “peaceful”, “privacy”, “space” and “clean and fresh air” (for the year 2007).

However, the major limitations of rural living are the access to public transport, the distance to facilities and services, the isolation, and the lack of shops and social activities (both in 2001 and in 2007). Ultimately, the most important problems in rural areas are: the access to public

transport, access to health services, access to social facilities, access to commercial spaces, and the high cost of housing (Brereton *et al.*, 2011, pp. 218-219).

This paper points out that an approach based solely on income measures is flawed and that an approach that includes multiple components of life quality would be more appropriate. In each study process, the most relevant indicators are those that better define the characteristics of the community as an individual member. Particularly, the, regional policy should aim to advance the life quality, rather than simply seeking to equalize incomes.

This mixture of investigation methods can be considered adequate for measuring the life quality and well-being in rural Ireland, whereas it involves the population's subjective perceptions and attitudes. This is generally true because the human behaviour has become much more complex nowadays. The methods chosen by authors are complementary as qualitative data allow for a better interpretation of the quantitative data, while the latter is suitable for statistical analysis.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "The Future of Belgian Federalism through the Eyes of the Citizens" (Reuchamps, 2013)

This case study was developed by M. Reuchamps, from Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.

Belgian citizens had no implications in their own country's decisions regarding its own progress so far, although they are directly involved in this matter. The only method of involvement occurred through voting (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 353). The study aimed to capture the Belgian citizens' perceptions of the two main language groups - French and Dutch languages - in terms of the future of federalism in

Belgium. Sectorial objectives provided a brief overview of quantitative research on this topic (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 354).

In this perspective, the author of this research used a mixture of research methods, namely focus groups, deliberative experiments and mental maps, aiming to emphasize citizens' perceptions and not necessarily to produce and interpret statistical data.

The focus groups were conducted in Wallonia and Flanders and had identified different profiles of citizens, taking into consideration their aspiration and political preferences. The deliberative experiments demonstrated that the ordinary citizens of both language groups were able to speak with each other on controversial future subjects of Belgium, while the mental maps captured the Belgians' perceptions through drawings (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 354).

The first investigation method was defined by eight focus groups. These were realized in 2007 and 2008, being constituted two main panels, one of them in Liége, for French speakers, and another one in Antwerp, for Dutch speakers. Each panel contained four focus groups consisting of about six to nine people. For more than four hours, participants from different backgrounds and with different political beliefs, discussed the future of Belgian federalism with other citizens as well as politicians and experts (Reuchamps, 2011; Reuchamps, 2013, p. 356).

The group discussions were recorded and transcribed. With that material, five different types of citizens were defined. They are based on participants' different perceptions and preferences about the importance of federalism in Belgium. However, as the construction of analytical data, they can shed light on survey data. The five profiles are the unitarist, the unionist, the federalist, the regionalist, and the independentist (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 357).

These types are similar in both linguistic regions, however they present intimate differences. The first profile, the

unitarist, believes that since the Belgians are united, Belgium should be united too, also that the federalism normally produces a significant number of conflicts. He or she ideally wants to return to a unitary state. The concentration of this profile was around 25-33% in Flanders, while in Wallonia less than 10% (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 357).

The unionist has the same principles as the unitarist, but with minor differences. In agreement with his or her perception, there is a definite difference between French and Dutch speakers, but there should be peaceful coexistence among them. The federalist model is the best solution for this time, but not the optimal option. It provides possible greater regional autonomy, particularly in the case of Flanders. Aiming at preventing a possible collapse in Belgium, the unionist wants to consolidate the federal state – approximately 10-20% of both language groups. The federalist is obviously totally in agreement with the federal system, considering that it recognizes the differences between the two groups and tries to implement policies for each of them (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 358).

Otherwise, the regionalist wants to remain in a federal state, but with greater regional and local autonomy. The regionalist from Flanders identifies more with the region than with the country - according to polls, the proportions are 50% of the speakers of Dutch (most of them from Flanders) and 25% of the speakers of French (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 359).

Finally, the independentist profile is the fifth and the last one. It is found mainly in Flanders, even if it is not the most common profile, as demonstrated by surveys (Swyngedouw and Rink, 2008; Deschouwer and Sinardet, 2010; Reuchamps, 2013, p. 359). The independentist wants the independence of Flanders or Wallonia, in other words, the separation of Belgium. On the one hand, the independentist anchors his or her identity in a Flemish or Walloon nation, distinct from Belgium. He or she believes that the actual system of decision-making brings more problems than solutions. On the other hand, the independentist sees no future

for the Belgian federalism because, as he or she says, it will not work properly.

However, on short term, it could accept reforms that would give more autonomy for regions and communities. These five profiles are quite different from each other, even though some of them share similar characteristics, representing the relationship between citizens' identity and federal perceptions and preferences (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 359).

The second investigation method contained nine deliberative experiments - three between Dutch speakers, three between French speakers, and three mixed ones. A total number of 83 people took part in these discussions. All the groups were asked to make a decision about how they see the future of Belgium, but the decision-making rule varied among the groups. Three groups were asked to make a decision with a simple majority proportion, other three groups with a two-thirds majority proportion, and the last three groups had to use the unanimity rule. The findings were important to highlight the relationship between citizens and federalism, but without a formal consequence (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 360). The mixed groups' responses were more qualitative than those organized in only one language, in 32 out of all of the cases.

Another deliberative experiment was held on the 11th of November 2011, called G1000, and involved 704 participants selected randomly (Caluwaerts and Reuchamps, 2012; Reuchamps, 2013, p. 361), and the purpose was to allow citizens to deliberate regarding the important issues for Belgium's future. Three main topics were discussed - social security, welfare, and immigration - plus a subject chosen by each group (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 361), with groups of 10 members each, benefiting by a trained moderator.

The last investigation method of the study was applied in October and November 2010. More than 5,000 students from the first year of study in social and human sciences, from both language groups, were challenged to represent Belgium on paper, in 5 minutes. Most of the images (90%) were actually

mental maps. The method took into account two main elements, the language barrier and the position of the capital Brussels. The study looked at both homogeneity and heterogeneity in preferences for the future of Belgium. The mental maps could then be grouped into three main categories, depending on the position of Brussels (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 363): in the north of the language border (geographically, the correct answer), positioned on the border (geographically incorrect, but reflected that Brussels is seen as politically positioned at the contact between the two main linguistic areas), and, thirdly, at the contact of the language border (geographically incorrect, but politically sensitive, whereas the distance between Brussels and Wallonia is very short).

Generally, the French speakers are more willing to place the capital geographically correct, while the Dutch speakers are prone to position the capital on a line between the two linguistic regions, as demonstrated in the pilot study conducted on a sample of 200 students (Reuchamps *et al.*, 2009; Reuchamps, 2013, p. 364). In other words, the mental maps are closely correlated with the residents' ethnic and territorial identity.

Belgium has always been a divided country in terms of religion, social classes and, above all, the language divided the population. The research results confirmed that, within its boundaries, there is an increased possibility of dialogue between the two main linguistic groups. The focus groups showed a high degree of frustration among citizens regarding the federal system functionality, requiring citizens' higher involvement into the future decisions of their country. However, the exploration of citizens' perceptions and preferences through the techniques chosen from the start, showed that there are probably even more differences among the members of a language group than between the language groups.

Moreover, the deliberative experiments showed that citizens, regardless of their native language, are able to

communicate peacefully and constructively, if the institutional conditions are favourable (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 366).

Furthermore, the results could be interpreted as messages to the country's elite (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 355), and used pursuing to develop territorial and social policies. The federal system has very positive features, but the complexity and the conflicts that it generates reduce its effectiveness. The future of federalism in Belgium is not merely the product of individual preferences, but of collective attitudes.

The methodology used and the results reached might differentiate this study from others. Its originality is provided by the mixture of research methods, rarely found in this type of format.

Accurately, the mental maps obtained gave an important degree of originality, while the deliberative experiments offered determined examples of political decisions made by the citizens. The focus group discussions displayed the citizens' profiles and their perceptions, these results representing valuable scientific data. The combination of the three named methods can be easily adjusted to other sorts of studies, with few exceptions, but it can also efficiently undergo changes.

3.3. Review of case study 3: "Measuring Community Strength and Social Capital" (Western *et al.*, 2005)

The last research of this category was conducted by the authors J. Western, R. Stimson, S. Baum, and Y. Van Gellecum, from the Centre for Research into Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (CR-SURF) and The UQ Centre for Social Research, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, in 2005.

The overall objective of this research was the development of measures to assess the social capital and the communities' strength and resilience (Western *et al.*, 2005, p. 1095).

The specific objectives of the study were to evaluate the effects produced by the social capital for the anomie and for the perceptions of quality of life and well-being in five different Australian communities (Western *et al.*, 2005, p. 1103).

The study areas were selected both in suburban metropolitan areas and in urban areas in Australia, and tested analysis measures in four distinct domains of the community life: natural capital, economic capital items, human capital and social and institutional capital. This paper focused especially on the fourth area, namely the social and institutional capital.

The five communities in which was applied the questionnaire were (1) Auburn, located in the Sydney metropolitan area, New South Wales, with a population of about 51,000 at the 1996 Census, 51.5% were born abroad; (2) Richmond, located in the suburbs of inner Melbourne, Victoria, had a population of about 23,000 people in 1996, 37.7% were born abroad; (3) Zillmere is located in the northern suburbs of Brisbane, Queensland, with a population of 7,651 in 1996, of which only 17.7% were born abroad; (4) Boonah - located in the metropolitan area of Brisbane, Queensland, is a rural community with a population of 6,879 in 1996, only 7.5% of the population was born abroad and (5) Eaglehawk - a community located in the regional centre of Bendigo, Victoria, having in 1996 a population of 8,054 inhabitants, only 3.8% were born outside the country (Western *et al.*, 2005, pp. 1098-1099).

The methodology consisted of a combination of quantitative methods (statistically interpreted) and qualitative methods (beneficial to facilitate and validate the statistical information). The qualitative methods were based on focus groups and semi-structured interviews realized by telephone, and included representative members of the community, community associations, local councils, chambers of commerce, development agencies, parents, etc., while the quantitative method consisted of a questionnaire survey, this time also conducted through telephone calls, the responses

being instantly saved on the computer, and measured four main aspects of the social capital: formal norms, informal norms, formal structures, and informal structures - involving concepts of trust, reciprocity, bonds, bridges, links, and networks in the individuals' interaction with their community.

The first phase of the research was based on an exploratory approach. It employed focus groups and interview techniques, used to provide a background for the quantitative investigation methods in the interest of developing indicators to measure social capital. The focus groups involved the assessment of the following issues: the awareness of community events, the community general perceptions, the community activities and the individual perceptions of the residents regarding the affinity for certain community aspects.

The results of qualitative research led to the development of a questionnaire that contained 95 items. Besides these, the questionnaire also used other two measures (Western *et al.*, 2005, p. 1100): the anomie scale (Western, 1995; Atteslander *et al.*, 1999; Western and Lanyon, 1999) and the perceived quality-of-life and well-being scale (Western *et al.*, 2004; McCrea *et al.*, 2005).

During the second stage of investigation, the questionnaire was tested on a random sample of 100 persons from three of the five communities chosen for the study, namely Boonah, Eaglehawk, and Zillmere. The results were analysed based on their main components and subsequently the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to validate the results. In this way, a set of irrelevant items has been removed from the study frame. Thus, for the final phase, other 100 interviews were applied in the other two remaining communities – more exactly Auburn and Richmond - and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used again for validation of the results (Western *et al.*, 2005, p. 1100).

Finally, using a simple method by which each question has received a score from 1 to 4, in the case of the scales with four subscales, respectively 1 or 2, in the case of scales with

only 2 subscales, depending on their contribution to the definition of the social capital. In this way, the values could vary between 11 and 140. To facilitate the interpretation and the comparison, a new reclassification was made with values from 10 (which means a huge contribution to defining the social capital) to 1 (meaning a very small contribution or even no contribution).

Moreover, the anomie measure (first developed by Travis, 1993) contained a set of seven indicators covering various aspects of social exclusion, while the quality of life and well-being scales were applied exclusively in South East Queensland and contained six parts defining the residents' satisfaction with their own well-being and quality of life. For both methods was used a Likert scale format to evaluate and order the answers. In the last phase of the study, it was used an analysis of one-way variance to highlight the five principal sections or characteristics of the Australian community, and also the similarities and differences between its members (Western *et al.*, 2005, p. 1106).

As endpoint of the study, from both exploratory and final phase, were chosen according to the coefficients, the first four scales and 14 subscales related to the determination of the social capital. In this way, the primary scales are (Western *et al.*, 2005, p. 1106): the community divisions (informal structures), the generalized agency (formal structures), particularized trust, reciprocity and informal exchange (informal norms), and the formal reciprocity (formal norms).

The results showed that in communities with strong networks of formal and informal structures the anomie is lower than in communities with vulnerable and fragile formal and informal structures. In addition, in communities where formal and informal norms are more powerful, quality of life and well-being will be higher (Western *et al.*, 2005, p. 1106).

This study involved a chain of existing investigation measures, but also introduced a sum of parameters that did not exist before. This combination of quantitative and

qualitative methods proved to be useful for the general objective and sectorial objectives of the study. The results and their reliability showed once again the effectiveness and the complementarity of the interrelationship between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The only downside would be that this approach path may not consider all the elements that would evaluate the quality of life and the well-being level. In addition, the correlation of the methods used in the case study presented implies a significant degree of subjective opinions, which are largely blamed on current qualitative approach.

4. Conclusions

The focus group is a discussion group which offers helpful information in various fields of study. It implies a meeting between a group of people chosen wisely – participants and moderator(s).

This research method is a qualitative approach increasingly used nowadays. It is the most known and used qualitative research method, in conjunction with the interview.

Forasmuch as the use of focus group method enlarged significantly since the beginning of the 21st century, it became thus a method scientifically and theoretically rooted.

Focus groups can be applied in any category of sciences, from Medicine to Sociology and to Regional Geography. It also can be applied to any type of territory and for any kind of population and sample size.

Essentially, the focus group scheme is an efficient means of investigation that brings the possibility of collecting qualitative data rapidly, easily, and with satisfactory costs.

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Chapter 4. Questionnaire Survey

Zoltan Maroşi & David Bauer

Contents

1. Definitions

Planning effective research should always start with good knowledge of the theoretical and methodological concepts by which the students or the debutant researchers can express themselves correctly and academically. In social sciences, the questionnaires, as survey research instruments, are widely used and, in the easiest way, we may define the questionnaire as "a list of questions sent to specific individuals, who then, if you are lucky, respond" (Grix, 2001, p. 77).

The literature offers a wide variety of definitions and theoretical backgrounds, but, put together, one can observe the authors' insistence on certain concepts such as: data collection, list of questions, individuals, respondents, investigation, representative sample, population of interest, etc.

A deep analysis of definitions has led over time to the synthesis known as *The Cornerstones of Survey Research* described by Edith de Leeuw, Joop Hox and Don Dillman (2008, pp. 2-4) as "a foundation on which the whole structure (of the survey research) must rest". The cornerstones are: *coverage, sampling, response,* and *measurement*. Such approaches highlight once again the importance of understanding the concepts which are not always easy. Yet, the structure and the research itself will collapse without the proper conceptual basis, that is why, "when designing and constructing a survey, one should also lay a well thought-out foundation" (de Leeuw *et al.*, 2008, p. 3).

Even though constructing successful questionnaires raises certain difficulties, derived mainly from the personalization of the research instrument (each survey research involves constructing an instrument adapted to its objectives), yet it remains "one of the most commonly used in the social sciences" (Julien, 2008, p. 846) and also in Regional Geography, in the last 20 years (Ilovan and Mihalca, 2013, 2014, p. 19, 23).

The primary goal is always the same in Social Sciences, gathering factual data in a given population, about how people live. As Paul Nichols (2000, p. 11) mentions, from this general question, many specific questions can be derived "on such things as income distribution or water use. Other major issues will be people's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes." Of course, after gathering the data, follows their processing into information which in itself represents another important and complex stage of the survey research.

Considering that most of the definitions are deceptively simple, students and debutant researchers are encouraged to realise an in-depth reading of the methodology, which often consists of descriptions, components of surveys and errors, placing the definitions in the background. It is more important for students to know the difference between the used methodological concepts than their definitions, in this case, to

differentiate survey research, questionnaires, and other subordinate notions.

According to Julien (2008, p. 846), survey research "refers to the set of methods used to gather data in a systematic way from a range of individuals, organizations, or other units of interest." The survey research includes questionnaires, focus groups, or other direct observations (techniques of collecting information). Questionnaires, as instruments, are defined by Pierce (2008, p. 140) as "pre-designed lists of closed questions with predesignated, alternative answers. [...] used to collect data from a sample of individual subjects."

2. Theoretical background

Focusing on questionnaires, a good start in writing effective questions, should gravitate around the fact that "unlike in a face-to-face interview, you will not be at hand to explain anything to the respondents, who must rely on the information in front of them" (Grix, 2001, p. 78). The superficial design of the questionnaire can compromise the whole research, considering that after sharing them (printed or online) with the respondents, there is no way back. Many failures have resulted in important lessons about how a questionnaire should be and the main issues to follow are: the research planning and understanding the purpose of the research, "does it make sense to conduct a questionnaire, rather than relying on secondary data [...]?" (McLafferty, 2010, p. 77).

If it makes more sense to use the questionnaire as a tool for collecting primary data than other techniques or methods, then among the first steps should be *designing the questionnaire* (wording, sequencing, and formatting questions), which will require the ability of the researcher to anticipate the answers and also to put himself or herself in the respondents' shoes (Empathic Intelligence).

The standardized stages of the research (Figure 1) are a golden thread to follow, but, in qualitative research, especially in survey research, due to customization, "the success of the survey has more to do with the researcher's ability to think through and integrate the various stages of the process than with following a rigid set of rules" (Parfitt, 2005, p. 82). According to Sara McLafferty (2010, p. 77), the most common stages of a survey research are: *the survey design*, *strategies for conducting surveys*, and *sampling*. It was observed over time that, among students, a structured and rigid approach is more popular:

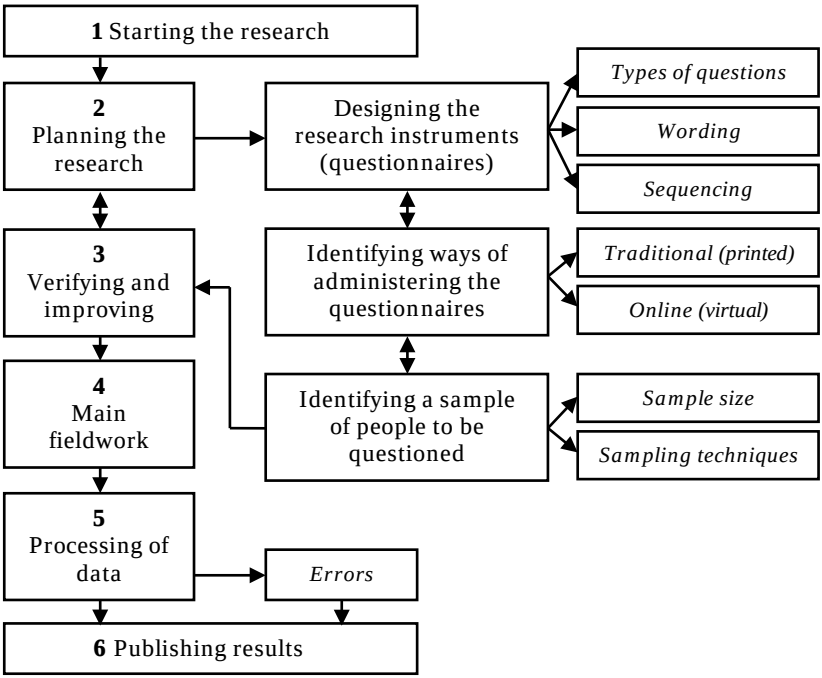

Figure 1. Graphical organization of the standard stages of a survey research

Designing the questionnaire is one of the most important and complex aspects of the survey research. There are many tested ways presented in the literature for designing questionnaires and the focus is put on different types of questions (open-ended and closed-ended, with many subtypes). Open-ended questions provide qualitative information, respondents are asked to answer each question in their own words, so it is more subjective and the sample size is small due to the difficulty of processing these unique and detailed responses (statistical analysis). Open questions are more specific to interviews and focus groups than to questionnaires, but they have several advantages which closed questions do not have (Dawson, 2009, p. 90).

Closed questions are commonly used in survey research, especially in designing questionnaires, because they are easier to understand by respondents and also easier to process in the end. A closed question involves distributing a list of predetermined responses from which the respondents can choose their answer (Dawson, 2009, p. 90). This leads to lower details and lack of personal opinions in the categorized answers. For this reason, using both types of questions in a questionnaire is recommended.

A very important aspect of the questionnaire design is given by the wording principles, which were formed on the basis of valuable lessons learned from past errors and shared by authors and researchers in the form of guidelines (e.g. Nichols, 2000, pp. 19-26; Grix, 2001, pp. 77-78; Pierce, 2008, pp. 140-161; McLafferty, 2010, pp. 77-88) or of examples of the most frequent mistakes (Parfitt, 2005, pp. 75-110). According to Sara McLafferty (2010, p. 79), “one of the most important rules in preparing questions is keep it simple” and this researcher also suggests to avoid things like: long complex questions, two or more questions in one, emotionally charged terms and negative words like ‘not’ or ‘none’ (p. 79).

Other valuable recommendations are made by Grix (2001, p. 77), showing that “questions on sensitive matters

should be preceded by a brief summary, 'explaining the relevance of the question' to the study, [...] the questions should follow each other in a logical order [...] and should be set out in a user-friendly manner."

Most authors consider that the language and the order of questions are crucial in a questionnaire, pointing out that one of the main problems for students is to adopt a plain conventional language and avoid as much as possible the academic or technical language with which respondents are not familiar (Pierce, 2008, p. 144).

The order of questions can have a direct impact on the efficiency of the questionnaire. First of all, it should introduce and accommodate the respondent with the purpose of the research and also check that the potential respondent is part of the targeted sample. Pierce (2008) suggests to "start with questions which are easy (and, if possible, enjoyable) and which will put the respondent at ease and lead to good rapport (open, friendly, communicative relationship)" (p. 145). Following the guidelines and all the suggestions and examples highlights that there is no clear method of elaborating the questions, process which relies heavily on the researcher's creativity, empathy, and professional training. As McLafferty (2010) points out, "[e]ach questionnaire is tailor made to fit a research project" (p. 78).

Identifying the way of administering the questionnaires is another important aspect, which influences the design of the entire research and also the results. Some factors have to be taken into account for the effective application of the questionnaires, among which the access to potential respondents, their motivation, the research subject, and available resources (Mathers *et al.*, 2009, p. 8). Questionnaires can be sent through mail (in printed form) or email (cheaper, virtual forms), and, more recently, they can be shared online on social media and networking services, web pages and personal blogs. For the traditional way of conducting questionnaires by mail, it is important to include a covering

letter and a stamped, addressed envelope for the response (Mathers *et al.*, 2009, p. 9; McLafferty, 2010, p. 83). Each way of conducting the survey has advantages and disadvantages and the choice should be made according to the research objective, taking into account the time and cost restrictions. The researcher should always combine different possibilities to design and conduct survey research in a way that the existing disadvantages are minimized.

Identifying a sample of people to be questioned is the third stage of the survey design and the sample represents a part of the target population, a smaller group which is similar to the total population. How representative this smaller group is for the target population "depends on two things: the size of the sample, and how you select it" (Nichols, 2000, p. 50). Sampling is an important step, because accurate estimates of a population's characteristics can be obtained by surveying a small group of that population. According to McLafferty (2010), "[p]recision always increases with sample size, but improvements in precision decrease at larger sample sizes" (p. 85).

There are two major categories of population sampling: probability sampling (random sampling) and non-probability sampling (non-random sampling), each with many subcategories which must be chosen according to the purpose of the research.

Random sampling is a selection by chance but "does not mean haphazard, casual, or careless" (Nichols, 2000, p. 56). Actually, the choices of the respondents are made carefully, following some probabilistic rules in a way that each individual has equal chances of being selected. Random sampling can be simple (if selections are made purely by chance) or systematic (if selections are made on regular intervals, following a rule). A more complex but very useful type of sampling is the stratified random sampling: this way, one can ensure that particular groups or categories of individuals are represented in the sampling process (Mathers *et al.*, 2009, p. 11).

For example, the target population is a mix of ethnic groups which compose a multicultural mosaic (with a majority and several minorities). For the different groups to be represented equally, it is necessary to separate them from the target population (in homogeneous ethnic groups) and then choose samples randomly or systematically from these groups. Other random sampling selections are: disproportionate sampling, applied when the objective is to compare the results of different subgroups of different sizes (majority and minority) and area (cluster) sampling, when the selection is made within cluster units, making this sampling technique more geographic (Trochim, 2006).

Non-random sampling "is any form of selection based completely or partly on the judgement of the fieldworker or researcher" (Nichols, 2000, p. 67). The most known subtypes are: quota sampling, convenience or opportunistic sampling (Mathers *et al.*, 2009, p. 13), genealogy-based sampling, chain sampling, and matched samples (Nichols, 2000, p. 70).

Applying any sampling technique requires theoretical and methodological deepening, many books and articles (including open-access) being dedicated exclusively to this purpose, introducing the researcher in statistics and other related fields. A successful completion of the questionnaire design is followed by pilot testing, revision, improvement, fieldwork, and, finally, the office work of processing data and analysing results. The entire survey research is carried out over a period of several months and, in special cases, even over several years.

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "A Method of Analyzing Patterns of Tourist Activity in a Large Rural Area" (Carter, 1971)

This study reflects the impact of tourism on the main routes of Northern Scotland, the so-called "Highlands" and Islands of

Scotland. It was realized by M.R. Carter, during the late 1960s, and published in *Regional Studies,* vol. 5.

This research took place in the southern part of the Highlands, with the plan of handing questionnaires to tourists on their way home. Five of the checkpoints, where the questionnaires were handed to the potential subjects, were arranged on arterial roads, using cordons with assistance from the police, and the last checkpoint was at the Dunoon car – ferry terminal. Although it was determined that the high – season was between the 20th of July – the 11th of September, due to lack of funds, the whole action took place only eight days, each day between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. The best solution was to provide a "business-reply" envelope to the tourists in order for them to send back the documents via mail after they had filled them in at home. This idea was taken into consideration, because of the time needed to complete the questionnaires, and not to create traffic jams.

The main aim of the research was to find out the preferred routes by the tourists in this area, to be able to create regional studies for further touristic development of the area. It was taken into consideration that the tourists who visited each year the Highlands needed developed infrastructure (i.e. for the big number of visitors), as they approach this area mainly on land and by car.

The objective of this study was to create cartograms with the most frequented places and also with the most agglomerated roads in this area. The illustration of the survey results through these thematic maps was also proof that questionnaires can be used in Regional Studies, for spatial development purposes. Also the idea of building up a general image regarding the touristic activity in this area was a crucial cause for realizing this project.

The main method used in this study was that of questionnaire survey. The main reason for using this type of research method was the lack of funds, and, related to this issue, it seemed to be the most viable solution to generate

results. The fact that from quantitative results, in this case, they could generate qualitative results (i.e. in the perspective of taking many opinions in consideration to form a general perception of a phenomenon from a specific group of people), was also a major factor took into consideration.

It was a good idea to arrange checkpoints where tourists could be asked to fill in the questionnaires. This way, it was sure that the documents arrive in the proper hands. From that point on, it only depended on the tourists' benevolence to send the documents back by post. As it was mentioned earlier, they received a reply envelope, so it only took them little time to complete the forms at home, specifically after the trip, while their memories were still fresh, and to send back the answers to the relevant address, to be processed. At that time, when the survey took place, sending documents by post seemed to be the fastest way to get the results as soon as possible.

Regarding the results of this survey, almost half of the tourists asked to fill in the forms did it and sent them back. The overnight stops and the road traffic flows were analysed separately (Carter, 1971, p. 33).

It was reported that the most frequented places during this period were in Oban, Fort William, and Inverness, and that "the traffic was of two main feeder routes (each with over 20,000 tourist vehicle journeys per week) to Inverness – the A9 through Speyside and A82 through Glencoe and the Great Glen;... - to Oban there were two routes (A85 and A828 from the A82 forming a loop which gives an alternative to the section of the A82 through Glencoe" (Carter, 1971, p. 35).

The usefulness of this survey was reflected in the results which were illustrated by thematic maps. This way, it was possible to create a general image of the touristic activity in this northern part of Scotland, which had not been done before. Because they received a sufficient number of questionnaires, it was possible to create a realistic image of the whole activity and the margin of error was reduced to a minor scale. Although the lack of funds denied the possibility to

research this issue with various methods, the generated results were beneficial both for regional development and for proving the usefulness of this method in such studies.

Using this method in Regional Geography research can be very beneficial to a process of generating quick results. The only thing which takes time is the procession of the results. We also consider that quantitative results, although they seem to be less flexible, can generate qualitative results: despite the fact that sometimes there is no possibility to explain briefly the personal opinion regarding an issue, it can be deduced from the option which was chosen from the given ones, because it can reflect very well that sample of people's needs and expectations.

It is also important that the questionnaire survey is one of the cheapest ways to get research results (e.g. in this study, related to the touristic activity in Northern Scotland). Taking into consideration the fact that one does not need too much time to prepare such a survey, this also enables the rapidity of the whole process.

Maybe one of the main shortcomings is that the results cannot be reflected to the individual level. But regarding this fact, sometimes it is better to have a general view related to an issue than to analyse each point of view, when we have thousands of them.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "Discourses of Europeanness in the Reception of the European Capital of Culture Events: The Case of Pécs 2010" (Lähdesmäki, 2012)

This article, written by the Finnish researcher Tuuli Lähdesmäki (2012), aims at finding out how the concept of Europeanness, which is very common in the current policies and leads the major initiatives in the European Union, is perceived on a lower

level of the community, which treats the feeling of belonging to the same group from different points of view.

The whole aim of the research is to find out how being part of the European community is reflected, in the case study, by the locals and the visitors of Pécs, one of the cultural capitals of Europe during 2010, together with Istanbul and Essen. It was sure, even before the research took place, that this phenomenon should be analysed from the cultural point of view, as it is commonly accepted that belonging to Europe and the European culture is based mostly on the common cultural heritage of the region.

The researcher wanted to find out what is the Hungarian point of view about this issue, as the majority of the interviewed persons were belonging to this nation. It was really interesting to find out what were the priorities for them: firstly being European, or Hungarian, and only after that European. What was the common perception of this programme of cultural capitals? Should the European capital of culture only represent the common European values, or should it better focus on the characteristic Hungarian, and local traditions and aspects, of the southern region of Hungary?

The author used as main research methodology the questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was available both in printed and digital form, and it was completed by people of very different ages, while the majority who completed it were women. The digital platform was preferred by young persons, who were used to navigate on the internet, and being familiarised of using computers.

The research results reflected that most of the Hungarians considered that these events were very useful especially for promoting local values, and sharing the local values with other citizens of the E.U., who visited Pécs and Hungary to take part in these events. They also considered that sharing the common European values was important, but the vast majority considered that belonging to a nation was more important that the common European values.

The respondents also reflected on the importance of the national values from the point of view that they should have been promoted among the other European nations, as it was important to dismiss any types of stereotypes about a specific nation or about its members. They considered that, from an economic perspective, being the Cultural Capital of Europe was very beneficial both for local and for regional actors, as the crafted goods created in the region could get into the spotlight during certain events, and their promotion was much easier than under regular circumstances.

Regarding the conclusions, it should be highlighted that such events are very useful, and can provide a very wide range of local values, by presenting the specificity of the region, and the questionnaire survey was successful, resulting in many interesting conclusions. The main issue was resolved as the author found out that for the Hungarians the national belonging was more important than the common European values. The reflection of promoting local values and trying to find a solution to make local products and cultural values popular, clearly reflects the locals' strong national belonging and their love of the country and of the region.

3.3. Review of case study 3: "Testing the Hypothesis of Higher Social Capital in Rural Areas: The Case of Denmark" (Sørensen, 2012)

This research was written by Jens F. L. Sørensen, member of the Danish Centre for Rural Research, University of Southern Denmark. The main objective of the research was to find out the differences and the similarities between rural and urban areas, according to social capital, as one of the most important indicators, showing us the main differences between people living in rural and urban environments.

Initially, it was thought that in rural areas, where the number of inhabitants is less than 5,001, the cohesion and the

interpersonal relationships were stronger than in the urban areas. It was perceived that in such small communities, because people knew each other, they tended to be more helpful, being more ready to organise volunteer activities for common interests. Thefore, social capital in such areas was considred to be more powerful than in the urban areas, especially in the cities and in the metropolitan areas surrounding them.

The research took place between 1981 and 2008, while four questionnaire surveys were conducted in the following years: 1981, 1990, 1999, and 2008. The surveys took place approximately during the same periods. Most of the questions remained the same. “The following variables were used: four social capital variables, one urbanization variable (based on town size) and seven socio-economic control variables: Social trust, Institutional trust, Association membership, Voluntary work in associations” (Sørensen, 2012, p. 879). Researchers wanted to find out how the same aspects varied in time.

The main conclusions and results were that only one aspect, the proportion of volunteering was higher in the rural areas, than in the urban ones, the rest of the indicators which were analysed were nearly the same, and the trend did not change significantly during the period in which the surveys took place.

The social capital, as a key aspect of this survey, reflected people’s values in a certain region (inhabited by people having the same nationality, religion, being different only according to the area they lived in). If they belonged to the rural areas of Denmark, initially, it was believed that they would be more helpful, generous, as the social spirit was more powerful in such areas. It was true that in traditional rural communities, the need of collaboration, and helping out each other was a key factor of development and sustainability. It also strengthened the feeling of belonging to a certain group.

As time went by, the main profile of the rural areas, which had been agriculture for centuries, especially in

economically developed countries (i.e. Denmark), changed into a shelter place for the ones who had decided to give up their lives in the big cities and preferred to move to the countryside, maybe for retirement or choosing a less stressful lifestyle.

Taking into consideration the results of the surveys and combining them with the initial perceptions regarding the rural and urban areas, according to social capital, we consider that the main reason for which the results did not fulfil the expectations were the following: first of all, because of the many people moving to the country side and vice-versa, the initial perception of social life, which was common in the Danish countryside for decades, had changed significantly.

During the last century, the economically developed countries tended to be more and more urbanized, not only from the point of view of the infrastructure, and facilities, but regarding the perceptions also, which had a strong impact on the social capital in the rural areas.

Another fact, which we consider important, was that by losing the agricultural aspect of the countryside, people had more time to get busy with other activities (many of them moved into urban areas, industrial activities increased, services developed, etc.) and they did not feel the need to help out each other in daily activities. That was why they were not so different from the ones who lived in urban areas, from the social capital point of view.

The usefulness of the questionnaire surveys can be easily deducted from the fact that by analysing a longer period of time (between 25-30 years), it was possible to follow up the general perception about the aspects which were intended to be studied. Repeating the same questions for a longer period of time it creates a general image of the researched indicators. In addition, it was useful to use this method, because it permitted to focus on a narrower field of the problem. Using the same method repeatedly to study a phenomenon is the most efficient way of researching, because the evolution can be followed up.

4. Conclusions

Through this approach, we outlined some of the most important aspects of designing and conducting a questionnaire within a survey research, providing three relevant case studies for a better comprehension and assimilation of the theory. The language and style has been adapted so that students and early stage researchers can find this approach reliable and useful.

During recent decades, qualitative research has developed strong roots in Social Sciences and especially in Geography, offering smart solutions to a great range of issues. In our case, the questionnaire a tool through which primary data can be collected and whose efficiency depends on several aspects, techniques, and methods.

Having an overview of the questionnaire survey, about what it means and implies, advantages, disadvantages, limitations and other methodological details can be decisive in conducting research, and, in the case of geographers, it opens up new research opportunities, as it was demonstrated through the presented case studies.

In Geography, while searching for the most efficient and appropriate methodology, qualitative and quantitative methods are often mixed and, through questionnaires, this is not only possible, but it is also facilitated. Therefore, as long as the research is to the benefit of mankind, the questionnaires will continue to provide a large amount of necessary data.

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Chapter 5. Participant Observation

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Contents

1. Definitions

"Participant observation is a method of data collection in which the researcher takes part in everyday activities related to an area of social life in order to study an aspect of that life through the observation of events in their natural contexts" (McKechnie, 2008, p. 598).

Participant observation is regarded as "the craft of experiencing and recording events in social setting" (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 135). The investigator "immerses him or herself in a group for an extended period of time, observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and with the fieldworker, and asking questions" (Bryman, 2004, p. 292).

The term of *participant observation* refers to specific practices of investigations (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 135). These practices signify the long-lasting presence of the investigator in the setting, having some status for the observed community as a witness and a co-participant in a significant part of their lives (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 135). The basis of this research approach is to be as close to the spatial phenomenon being studied as possible and this makes it quite distinct from methodologies that emphasize distance and objectivity.

2. Theoretical background

The term *participant observation* was first used by social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s. The Chicago School – under the leadership of Robert Park and Howard Becker – contributed decisively to its further development (McKechnie, 2008, pp. 598-599). In the 1970s, a change of terminology occurred and writers about research methods preferred to address to this method as e*thnography*. The wish to overcome the apparent emphasis on *observation* in the term *participative observation* and to apply a more inclusive term might be the explanation for the change of terminology (Bryman, 2004).

The purpose of participant observation is "to gain a deep understanding of a particular topic or situation through the meanings ascribed to it by the individuals who live and experience it" (McKechnie, 2008, p. 598). Through its emphasis on immediate access to the real world and its meanings, it effectively facilitates insight in and understanding for the others' way of life. Participant observation is mainly regarded as being suitable for the study of unknown social phenomena and where the behaviour of interest is not available to the public (McKechnie, 2008, pp. 598-599), yet

others (Laurier, 2010, pp. 116-130) consider it useful to explore also familiar places and practices.

Writers about research methods (such as Bryman, 2004; Laurier, 2010) emphasize the strong participative aspect of the method, which is done by developing an intense interaction with members of a group or "living" in the situation which is being studied (Ranjat, 2011, pp. 128-129).

A long-lasting engagement in the field allows gathering more detailed and accurate information (McKechnie, 2008, pp. 598-599). Beside the data generated by direct observation of human behaviour and the physical features of settings, the method actually applies a wide range of methods of data collection and sources: interviews, collection and analysis of documents, oral history, and group discussions (Ranjat, 2011, pp. 128-129; Laurier, 2010, pp. 116-130; McKechnie, 2008, pp. 598-599; Bryman, 2004, pp. 291-311).

Laurier (2010, pp. 116-117) considers participant observation the easiest method for its ubiquity, its use in various everyday situations, its minimal social science requirements and due to the fact that it doesn't require complicated skills. Yet, participant observation has no step-by-step design description, the stages which a participative observant has to go through depend on the investigated phenomenon and setting (Laurier, 2010, pp. 116-117).

However, Bryman (2004, p. 293) distinguishes a rough template with the following characteristics: the researcher is immersed in a social setting for a certain (shorter or longer) period of time, he/she makes regular observations of the behaviour of the group members or individuals, he/she listens to and engages in conversations, interviews informants, collects documents about the observed group/individual/phenomena/community/organization, develops an understanding of the surveyed culture within the context of the culture, and writes a detailed report on his/her observations.

The settings can be relatively open/public (e.g. various communities) or relatively closed/not public (e.g. various organizations, firms, schools, cults, and social movements) (Bryman, 2004, p. 294).

During the observation, researchers adopt roles classified by Gold according to degrees of involvement and detachment, with variations along a continuum of participation ranging from complete observer (no participation), through participant-as-observer (more observer than participant) and observer-as-participant (more participant than observer) to complete participant (Gold, in Bryman, 2004, p. 301).

In connection with the status assumed by the researcher, it can be an overt participative observation, where the researcher is known as such, or it can be a covert observation, where the researcher immerses in the observed setting without disclosing his/her identity as a researcher. Both situations bear advantages and disadvantages, yet the researchers rather prefer an overt status mainly due to practical and ethical considerations (Bryman, 2004, p. 296).

Key of a successful participant observation is to observe carefully and patiently (Laurier, 2010, pp. 116-117), to notice things that otherwise escape attention and to notice them as evidence of something (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, pp. 133-169). For an accurate data collection, it is important to record the observations in the form of field notes, with straightforward and detailed descriptions and/or as audio-visual records. Taking notes hidden or openly depends on the situation and the status of the observant. However, several of the writers about research methods recommend the investigator to remain as unobtrusive as possible (McKechnie, 2008, pp. 598-599; Bryman, 2004, pp. 291-311).

The simple research design allows a keen observation and record of data in the most suitable way. In qualitative research, the observation is recorded in a descriptive format, where, as in a quantitative research, the information is

recorded either in categories or in scales. A combination of both is also possible (Ranjat, 2011, pp. 128-129). The data collected – notes, records, visual material – needs to be analysed like any other empirical material, being the ground to draw conclusions.

At the end of a successful participant observation, the investigator should possess at least basic specific know-how, appropriate conduct and common knowledge of the place and/or people he/she has chosen to study. Competence in the selected study field enables a more adequate understanding and interpretation of the data and conclusions of the survey (Laurier, 2010, pp. 116-130).

The main advantage of the approach is in gaining much deeper, richer, and accurate information. It is rather easy to conduct and it provides a more direct access to phenomena than some of the more complex methodologies of social science. It enables descriptions rich in details and brings into view certain types of phenomena that are too complex for methodologies that detect and address general features.

However, several methodological problems are associated with participant observation. Even though the research design is not difficult, nor obscure, the topics, places, people, subjects to which it is applied may be (Laurier, 2010, pp. 116-130). Thus, gaining access to social contexts of interest—obtaining permission to collect data, establishing credibility, and earning the trust of those being observed—can be challenging (McKechnie, 2008, pp. 598-599).

If not careful, the bias (gender, age, and ethnicity) of the investigator can interfere with access to the settings, investigation, analysis, and interpretation of the data (Laurier, 2010, pp. 116-130; McKechnie, 2008, pp. 598-599). Above all, the presence of an observer can change to at least some extent the context being studied and could influence the trustworthiness of the acquired data.

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "Negotiating Belonging following Migration: Exploring the Relationship between Place and Identity in Francophone Minority Communities" (Huot *et al.*, 2014)

This study was realised by Suzanne Huot, School of Occupational Therapy, University of Western Ontario, Belinda Dodson, Department of Geography, University of Western Ontario, and Debbie Laliberte Rudman, School of Occupational Therapy, University of Western Ontario. The study was realised within The Francophone Minority Community (FMC) from London, Ontario, to explore the immigration's integration experiences from visible minority French-speaking groups.

The aim of this study was to explore how minority communities integrated in the host community. Drawing on the work of geographers and others, authors addressed the relationship between place, identity, and mobility in critical ways, underlining the significance of place in understanding how Francophone immigrants experienced and negotiated processes of belonging.

An ethnographic approach was used (Carspecken, 1996; Jamal, 2005, quoted by Huot *et al.*, 2014, p. 330) to explore French-speaking immigrants' experiences, who identified themselves as members of visible minority groups.

The objective of this study follows the specific characteristics of in site modelling experience, to reflect Kobayashi's request (1993, quoted by Huot *et al.*, 2014, p. 332) for cultural geographers "to initiate small-scale analyses of special places". After receiving ethics' approval from the University of Western Ontario, participants were purposefully recruited with the assistance of a guide who sent study information to the clients of an organization which offered settlement and employment services.

Printed forms were also left at this organization and at a Francophone centre for the victims of sexual assault. Eight immigrants have been selected, four men and four women, all French-speaking. They had immigrated through different ways, as skilled, asylum seekers, or for family reunification. They arrived between 2000 and 2009 in London, each with at least one child and all had spoken French, before arriving in Canada, while none of them spoke English fluently.

Between April 2009 and January 2010, the main author conducted three stages of data collection which she divided into 37 sessions. The first stage was a narrative interview of participants as immigrants (8 sessions). Stage two involved creating a mental map of London, serving to identify the places participants regularly frequented and to discuss what they did there (13 sessions). This stage determined the elaboration of an observation record, consisting of descriptions and additional field notes, when audio-recording was not possible. The third stage was divided into two separated in-depth and follow-up interviews, enabling the co-construction of knowledge (16 sessions).

It was noticed that all participants perceived their integration experiences as a continuous sense of place process, and this “place-belongingness” alters with migration, and, if not redeveloped in the host society, migrants may feel displaced (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Antonsich, 2010, quoted by Huot *et al.*, 2014, p. 330).

The participants’ development of a personal sense of place-belongingness over time was influenced by the politics of belonging, occurring within the socio-geographic contexts in which they were embedded. Social constructions of place were an exercise in social power, while struggles for place were, in essence, struggles for spatialized social power (Massey 1994, quoted by Huot *et al.*, 2014, p. 331).

It has also been found that Francophones living in cities like London are marginalized within the Anglophone environment to the point that they are compelled to live

linguistically segmented lives, thus underlining the importance of language in relation to place-belongingness (Korazemo and Stebbins 2001, quoted by Huot *et al.*, 2014, p. 333). Some tried to maintain certain aspects which defined their identity, while others were adapting themselves in order to integrate.

The research examined how the politics of place and identity, as a result of international migration, has influenced the immigrants' (from Canada) French language affiliation. Newly arrived French-speakers from visible minority groups had not only to face the challenges associated with being in a context of a minority language, they had to negotiate also their identity in terms of race, gender, etc. in those communities.

Some migrants, after they had lived in other towns, because of racism and the difficulty of finding a job, settled in London, Ontario. Participants stressed particularly subtle and structural forms of discrimination, based on aspects of their identity that marks them as being from "elsewhere" for employers, whether be it race, name, accent, and work experience.

The methodology used in the realization of this study is a complex one which gave real results because three stages of research were programmed, the first where a narrative interview was conducted, the second which consisted in creation of a mental map through which the immigrants had to show the places where they used to go frequently and to say what they did there. The mental maps analysis consisted of a detailed description of each and then, comparisons between maps were realized. The third stage had two steps, in which were conducted in-depth interviews.

The methodology used throughout the study is relevant, because it highlights ethnic problems between the host community and the immigrant community. The interviews facilitated the definition of issues and challenges related to race, integration, and employment. It was possible, also, to gather findings and assessments of the situation of

these communities and prognosis was made in order to improve their situation.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "Gender Relations and Cross-Border Small Trading in the Ukrainian–Romanian Borderlands" (Cassidy, 2012)

This study was realized by Kathryn L. Cassidy, from Queen Mary University of London, UK. The territory of research was situated in the border region of Ukraine and Romania, the research being realized in Chernivets'ka region, Chernivtsi and Diyalivtsi, from Ukraine, and in Gorbanita, from Romania.

The aim of this research was to observe the impact frontier traffic on gender relations and on economic activities in these border communities. Gender inequality was ascertained, so women were more exploited than men in the performance of economic activities in this border area. Women had rarely been considered equal to men in business circles.

The research objectives focus on the impact of frontier traffic with trade purposes associated with the growth of remittance and cross-border economies since 1989 on gender relations and the gendering of economic activity in rural western Ukraine, on the exploitation of women by men, and on the informal trade activities performed in the border region.

The methodology used in this study was based on some observations in the border area of Ukraine and Romania, for 17 months (i.e. from September 2007 to January 2009). The observations were made in different places and for different periods. Nine months were spent in the Chernivets'ka region of Ukraine, three months living in the regional administrative capital, Chernivtsi, and then six months in the village of Diyalivtsi. Also, on-site interviews were realised with people who were involved in cross-border business between Ukraine and Romania.

Findings pointed out the necessity to combine the abilities of both sexes for the better management of economic processes. It was ascertained that Ukrainian women shopkeepers were concerned about themselves, because they were at risk of being attacked by men traders. Unable to pay a bribe at the border, women were carrying smaller quantities of cigarettes than men and had weaker business relationships with service providers and intermediaries in local communities in Romania, which were essential to their trade.

Because they had no means of transport, female traders began to buy scooters, even if scooters were less effective than a car at concealing contraband cigarettes; they had storage space under the seat, allowing the concealment of larger quantities of cigarettes than on their body.

Female gender exploitation is a profitability means for male traders. Men used often the women in order to get into contact with customs officers from Romania, even if their companions were their wives or daughters. It was noticed that male hegemony dominates the borders.

In this study, the researcher paid attention to the interaction between genders, in the border region of Ukraine and Romania, to the economic activities between these border communities, and to gender relationships that appeared in the performance of economic activities.

Research results showed that women had limited opportunities to establish relationships with customs officers, that they were exploited by men and represented a way to increase profitability, while the fact that they were considered workforce (Fodor, 2006, quoted by Cassidy, 2012, p. 105), reflected the condition of women as disadvantaged in terms of paid work, because it was more likely to find them working low paid jobs and not being required many skills, compared to men.

The analysis of the social context of these movements at the border, of the way genders related to each other, of the local communities as a whole, and of the role played by

Romanian customs officers in observing European Union laws and regulations, were relevant.

The methodology used in this study consisted of performing observation activities at the border between Ukraine and Romania, for 17 months. Observation was realised in different places, because, in order to analyse in detail cross-border activities in the region, it is required to get up to date information. This updated information was obtained through face to face interviews with women and men involved in cross-border activities. Relevant information was collected from the citizens which illustrate the aspects of cross-border activities and the gender defined relations between these actors.

3.3. Review of case study 3: "Partnership for Healthy Neighbourhoods. City Networking in Multilevel Context" (Froding *et al.*, 2008)

This paper was written by several researchers from the multidisciplinary Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CUReS) and Public Health Science at Orebro University. They conducted the research, between 2001 and 2003, on four cities from Sweden, having as target area for local development efforts one neighbourhood from each city: Helsingborg (Dalhem), Norrkoping (Hageby), Vasteras (Pettersberg), and Orebro (Baronbackarna).

The research aims to analyse the possibilities and the obstacles for creating an urban development programme with a pronounced area-based orientation in four Swedish cities, under the label *Partnership for Sustainable Welfare Development*, with a focus on the public health of the citizens.

The objectives of the research are to give an important aid to sustainable welfare development in deprived areas, and to develop strategic efforts for participation, and health,

through co-operation between a broad range of interests and actors within and around the neighbourhood. Also, efforts have been done to promote collaboration between the local, the municipal and the national government levels, to promote learning and knowledge development through joint research and development, and to disseminate experiences and knowledge about sustainable welfare development.

The methods the authors used were the semi-structured interview and participant observation.

During a period of seven months, between June and December 2003, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight key players in the project, from each of the cities. The questions the interviews contained were linked to municipal public health strategies, community development, goals and objectives, obstacles and activities, and were developed as common agreement by the researchers from Orebro University. For the analysis process, they also used political documents, planning documents, reports, etc.

Furthermore, the authors combined this method with the participant observation. Many meetings took place in various contexts, with local politicians, private employees, civil servants or citizens, since the year of 2001. By using these methods, the authors received some clues about the political support and formal structures of the municipalities.

After the research, the authors came to some important findings which support the relevance of this study. Firstly, after the implementation of the public health objectives, a lot of public servants were strongly communicating public health questions to the coordinators of the project, so they really became interested in how they will work in the future. Secondly, a new agreement has been signed for three years, by the four cities and a public election was held in 2006. Also, they found out that some of the respondents felt that public health is not considered as important as infrastructural issues (which had priority for the local administration). Lastly, at a city level, they discovered that citizen participation varied from

one city to another, even though the interest for the programme was the same in all the four cities.

This research programme was an important bridge for co-operation between the Swedish cities. The relevance lies in the fact that this research is a solid model for other cities in Sweden and for other European cities. This research with the *Partnership for Sustainable Welfare Development* programme may easily spread horizontally among other cities, as well as vertically, to national governments.

More than that, this research may contribute to other future studies. There are a lot of characteristics which are more than useful to other research programmes.

For this research, the authors used an efficient mixture of qualitative methods (the semi-structured interview and participant observation), which are often used during research nowadays.

We consider that the researchers wisely used semi-structured interviews for community development managers and coordinators, because these people had great experience related to the research topic. In addition, the semi-structured interviews had a significant impact for the study, because the questions covered various topics of interest for the programme (the more varied the questions of the interview, the more relevant it is).

Moreover, the participant observation is a plus for the research. The researchers came to some conclusions about the political support and formal structures of the municipalities for the programme, by observing these actors' interest in the development of the programme.

Because the researchers from Orebro University were directly involved into the actions they were observing, their observations were complex and of quality. We also consider that being Swedish (thus being previously acquainted with the Swedish reality) and directly involved into the research, the authors made adequate observations.

3.4. Review of case study 4: "Tourism, Place Identities and Social Relations in the European Rural Periphery" (Kneafsey, 2000)

The research was realised by Moya Kneafsey, from the University of Coventry, in United Kingdom, between 1994 and 1995 (with further short return visits in the research area). There were two locations for the study. First, the French commune of Commana, located in the department of Finistere, in Brittany. The second location was an Irish town, Foxford, situated in County Mayo, in Western Ireland.

The research aimed to find out, through two case studies on tourism, why there were still variations in the European rural periphery in the matter of tourism as an alternative for development in the rural areas, which had undergone changes in the agricultural food production system.

There were a series of objectives, which were supposed to support the final aim of this particular research. One of them was to prove that even in homogenous communities, such as the commune of Commana and the town of Foxford, small conflicts existed. Another objective was to demonstrate in which way the social relations from a certain place, or between two places, influenced the impact of the tourism activities upon the population. The author also demonstrated that social relations could be created or influenced more or less by tourism activities.

Lastly, for the final objective, the research approached the culture economy concept. The author wanted to find out whether the culture economy was adopted by the communities of Commana and Foxford, at what level it was adopted and, more than that, to determine the impact of that concept upon place identities.

The author used qualitative methods: the semi-structured interview and participant observation. Both were conducted with individuals from various spheres of activity,

such as business, tourism, politics, and management. The analysis process was a flexible one, the questions and the research itself were adapted to the social diversity of Comanna and Foxford, as well as to the unexpected situations that took place during the research. Even though the methodology for this article was much more detailed in a later paper of this author, the importance of ethnographic techniques for this research was highlighted.

Attending local events (e.g. festivals, dances, tours, heritage days), a consistent amount of qualitative data was collected. Moreover, important observations were made during and after the participation at meetings about local development problems and political meetings.

More than that, this research considered photographs, important paragraphs cut from newspapers, postcards, policy documents, development documents, and tourism advertising. The entire fieldwork had been conducted for a long period of time: for eight months in Brittany (Commana), during 1994, and for four months in Western Ireland (the town of Foxford), during 1995. The fieldwork itself did not stop in 1995, because it was supplemented with other visits in both places next years.

Conducting semi-structured interviews and doing participant observation in the field led to interesting research results. First of all, there was an obvious contrast between the two case studies regarding the manner in which these communities from Commana and Foxford embraced the idea of tourism as a beneficial alternative of functional reconversion for both places. In contrast to Commana, the community from Foxford was more open to tourism and its potential economic and social benefits.

In addition, a few people from Commana had a different view about the priorities of the commune. For this category of people, ideas like the construction of a local small factory, of farms or the modernization of the main roads and other infrastructure issues were situated on a higher level than the revitalization through tourism. Other individuals, who

answered during interviews had different views about the revitalization of the commune. An interesting fact was that some people said that the commune was literally obstructed by the older locals who were more traditional, because they were farmers and they were refusing the idea of tourism as a development alternative.

On the other side, the employees from the tertiary sector (i.e. business, architects) were completely embracing the idea of tourism in order to stop the young's emigration. There were also some findings about who and how do people of Commana actually invest and promote the place identities. There were a lot of new incomers who are moving to Commana from other cities and regions. These people were in fact the ones who were welcoming visitors and promoting that part of Brittany. They bought old properties in Commana, renovated them and were inviting visitors to taste the local food, attend story telling, and music nights. The ones who invested in Commana were not farmers, but they were the ones who recently arrived there.

In the case of Foxford, maybe because agriculture was not as intensive as in Commana, the people were more interested in tourism than the ones from the French commune. The community from Foxford understood the importance of their local identity reflected in such local stories such as the one about the nun, called Agnes, who founded the wool mill, or the story about the native William Brown, an Admiral, and the founder of the Argentinean navy.

Some negative aspects and findings about the case of Foxford referred to the fact that there were newcomers who were hired to the detriment of the locals (the workers at the mill, managers, or hotel owners). This practice had really negative effects on the local population, such as social and economic exclusion.

A general conclusion was that in both case studies, the interactions between the historically layered and newer social relations had significant impact of how tourism was embraced

by local communities. Some of the local identities of Commana were ignored or even contested by the community (e.g. the discussion about the Breton language), while in Foxford, the community was more aware about their local identities (people were proud of speaking Irish and they respected the local history of the town).

In the case of Foxford, there were a lot of influences and interesting aspects (a well-developed diaspora, the story about the mill) which encouraged the commodification of local knowledge by the communities.

This research was relevant because it demonstrated some of the interactions which took place between the social relations and the idea of tourism as an alternative for local development in European peripheral rural areas. Moreover, this research was very useful because it highlighted several barriers against the defining process and valorising of local identities.

The methods were very efficient for this type of research. The semi-structured interview and the participant observation helped the researcher to have a good understanding of the communities, to follow the local actors of Commana and Foxford and to identify more easily the social relations, the meanings of the local identities, culture and of traditions for the communities, and the locals' different views about tourism as an economic mechanism.

Conducting semi-structured interviews with businessmen, architects, tourism officers, managers, workers and farmers (the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of activity), the researcher could find the answers and points of view of various categories of people about if and how they understood the role of tourism in their communities. Furthermore, we consider significant that this research was adapted to the variety of old and new social relations among the inhabitants of Commana and Foxford.

Taking into account that participant observation was done by attending local development meetings, music nights, dances, and political debates, etc., these events enabled the researcher to observe the relations within the community, the social bonds that existed or their absence, and, eventually, also certain things that otherwise would have escaped her attention. Her observations were written down in a field diary.

3.5. Review of case study 5: "'That Neighbourhood Is an Ethnic Bomb!' The Emergence of an Urban Governance Apparatus in Western Europe" (Picker, 2016)

This paper belongs to Giovanni Picker, a researcher from the Centre for Advanced Studies, Faculty of Sociology, Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia. The research took place between august 2008 and July 2011, in the marginalized neighbourhood of Rancitelli, in Pescara (Southern Italy).

It aims to investigate and analyse the urban governance of the neighbourhood of Rancitelli and to prove that in the absence of authorities' official discourses on Roma minority, there are instead unofficial complex and dynamic discourses that maintain the social order in the neighbourhood.

The researcher has set some objectives in order to support the main aim of his study. Firstly, it was necessary to find out and identify the ways in which social order is maintained in Rancitelli. Also, the objective was to outline the formation of the urban governance apparatus in the neighbourhood, throughout history.

Secondly, it was necessary to identify and highlight the main opinions of the local actors about Rancitelli, and, particularly, about the local Roma minority. In this regard, it was essential to have the representations of the local

politicians, police, local media, and locals of the Roma minority.

The author used for the research both semi-structured interviews and participant observation, as a combination of qualitative methods.

During four years, between August 2008 and July 2011, participant observation was carried out in the city, intermittently. More than that, the author supplemented the observation with 27 open-ended semi-structured interviews with local politicians, social workers, and locals. There was also media analysis realised, considering the three most widely read local newspapers.

The main findings are linked to the opinions of local politicians, police, social workers, residents, and expressed in the local media (newspapers).

It was found that the residents' main complaints are the lack of community life, services, street public lighting, signposting, and inadequate public transport. They mentioned also a high level of air pollution, sound pollution from the airport and buildings made of dangerous and health-threating materials, such as asbestos. More than that, the Roma population is seen as a nomadic one, which has large families and frequently illegal behaviour.

The opinions of the police about the marginalization of the Roma minority from Rancitelli were linked to the fact that Roma were frequently directly involved in the drug trafficking. Policemen revealed that the Roma did not embrace the idea of working and they did not send their children to school. Also, the general opinion of the Police about Roma social behaviour was that they really did not want to be integrated, but thought they were the ones who ruled the neighbourhood.

Regarding the politicians' view about the problem of the Roma minority, the most common was that they were people living outside the society rules. The Roma minority had problems with personal care, dirtiness and they were listening

to loud music, they were arrogant and involved into criminal activities, as the policemen said.

Despite their previous opinion, politicians explained that the real problem was that Roma's behaviour was not accepted by the population. The Roma individuals' social characteristics had become an identity mark for the whole minority, so the population associated all the Roma with crimes and dirt.

After analysing the three main local newspapers, the researcher found out that Rancitelli had a discouraging image of decay, poverty, and social involution. The most common themes in the newspapers were phrases about drug dealing, arrests, robberies, and police raids in the neighbourhood. There was an obvious similitude between the local politicians and local media representations and opinions about the Roma population in Rancitelli.

Finally, the research enabled the author to draw some important conclusions about the entire urban governance apparatus in Rancitelli.

The urban governance apparatus in Rancitelli had a circular dynamic and it was composed by three main components: Public Policy, urban Roma stigma in Pescara, and surreptitious groups in Rancitelli. This mechanism was a very dynamic one, especially because these three main components were powered and supplemented by three more components: police support, the representations of local politicians and the local media discourse on Rancitelli and on its Roma. These components were continuously interacting with each other. One of the most suggestive examples of such interacting directly involved the police. According to that, the local politicians, by describing the neighbourhood and the minority under the sign of crime they, however, agreed with the local social media, which basically did the same thing through newspapers. So both politicians (directly) and local social media (indirectly, by using words as *drugs*, *crime*, and *raids*) highlighted that police support was a must.

The relevance of this research lied in the fact that it presented, through a study on a particular neighbourhood, the 'urban governance apparatus' as a useful and dynamic analytical tool that could enable other researchers to analyse much more detailed and unofficial governance dynamics for other places from Europe and from other continents. It also presented the situation of a marginalized minority in the heart of Europe with its social problems, bad reputation, and the obstacles for a social and cultural integration.

Regarding the relevance of the semi-structured interview and participant observation for the research, we considered that both methods were extremely useful and also sufficiently detailed by the author to be replicated in another study.

For the semi-structured interview, the researcher chose a familiar environment for the responders – in their neighbourhood, sometimes on the streets –, where they felt comfortable and relaxed. The researcher had to deal with a marginalized minority, but he also chose non Roma individuals.

Very important was that the researcher gave the last names of some respondents (social workers, residents, policemen), proof that he created a bond between himself and the individuals he had interviewed. The auhor did not do the same thing when interviewing the politicians, suggesting that the respective category of respondents were less communicative or perhaps the author was asked not to give any name.

For the field observations, the researcher chose the central area of the neighbourhood, parks and the main streets to write down his field notes. He chose the best places, because it was where he could observe the residents' behaviour, how they really acted in the society and part of their social life. Also, by talking with different people, he was able to get an insight into the problematic life of Rancitelli in general.

4. Conclusions

The presented case studies endorse the strengths of the participative observation approach in investigating various complex social phenomena (see also Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014). The chosen case studies illustrate situations with investigators having different statuses (covert/overt observant) and also various levels of participation. The best participant observations are generated by those who have been involved in and tried to do and/or be part of the things they were observing.

The investigators, being researchers with different scientific backgrounds, promoted also cooperation and interdisciplinary approaches which facilitate deeper insight from different perspectives. The long-lasting participative observations were complemented with further data collection methods.

The dominant element of this method should be rather the participation, which can produce commentaries on the society, culture and geography of various spaces and places (Laurier, 2010, pp. 116-130).

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Chapter 6. Visual Methodologies

Iulia Doroftei

Contents

1. Definitions

The last decades have brought about an inflation of visual materials and the occupying of a central place of the visual in contemporary Western culture. Many theorists claim that "Westerners now interact with the world mainly through how we see it" (Rose, 2012, p. 3) and that seeing has become our main source of knowledge and comprehension of the world (Rose, 2012, p. 3). This has led to the formation of a *visual culture*; that is, a multitude of ways in which the visual is integrated into social life (Rose, 2012, p. 4).

Images are the result of particular means of understanding and attributing meaning to the world, they are interpretations of the world. Realising this made the term 'visuality' become increasingly important in visual culture theory.

Visuality refers "to the ways in which both what is seen and how it is seen are culturally constructed" (Rose, 2012, p. 2), an image never being fully objective and candid.

The ways in which the world is viewed and made to be seen by a certain discipline are called by Gillian Rose (2003) '*disciplinary visualities*'. In geography, there is a great variety of such ways and they are created by the relationships between the geographers, the images and the audience (Rose, 2003, p. 213). For example, a certain choice in the presentation of images can lead to the revealing and emphasising of some aspects and the concealing of others and to particular interpretations by the audience. As Rose (2003) underlines, visualities create power relations and can influence the way information is critically thought about or not.

Visual materials also referred to as '*visual imagery*' (Bartram, 2010) comprise a multitude of manifestations: from photography and film to computer games and advertising posters (Bartram, 2010, p. 131).

Rose (2012, p. 10) identifies two means of conducting research with visual materials: visual culture studies go about interpreting images while social studies try to answer questions by producing them. The latter approach, in its various forms, constitutes what social sciences call *visual research methods* (Rose, 2012, p. 10).

Visual methodologies comprise procedures by which research is conducted with visual materials.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Geography and the visual

Geography is considered to be a subject dominated by the visual, even referred to as a "visual discipline" (Maroşi, 2015; Gregory, 1994, quoted by Oldrup and Carstensen, 2012). However, its attitude towards visual materials and notably how they convey knowledge has been called into question and, as

some authors remark (for instance, Crang, 2010; Oldrup and Carstensen, 2012), has generated reluctance in using visual methods nowadays.

The fact that Geography is a discipline based on observational practices and usage of image to gain and illustrate knowledge has had several implications for it throughout time:

- knowledge has been mostly associated with the visual, meaning that what *is known is what is seen*. This became a dominant way in which an understanding of the world was built (Oldrup and Carstensen, 2012);

- the focus has been on what is represented and very little on the effects of visual imagery and how it is produced (Oldrup and Carstensen, 2012);

- this focus generated a lack of critical stance towards visual imagery and a tendency to consider it as a frank portrayal of reality (Bartram, 2010) rather than analysing how it can be a source of knowledge and what kind of knowledge it can generate;

- the observant many times assumed a detached viewpoint, considered objective, and this implicitly caused an "objectification of the known" (Crang, 2010). The attitude has its roots in 19th century inquiries into colonised lands in which people and landscapes were objectified through a "colonial, colonizing gaze" (Gregory, 2003 quoted by Crang, 2010) that reinforced the power relationships between the conqueror and the conquered.

In the twentieth century, different theorists' philosophical debates about visual culture diversified. New ways of relating to visual material appeared with the introduction of the notion of affect. The affective or nonrepresentational work is interested in how interactions with image generate perceptual, sensorial experiences (Rose, 2012, pp. 7-8). Also, Bartram (2010) notes that "it has become more fashionable to think of visual imagery as not so much

representing the world that we live in, as intervening in it and perhaps destabilizing it" (p. 134).

Therefore, it is important to reflect on the different attitudes in respect to visual materials because the theoretical position we adopt in our research will influence the methods and methodologies we use.

2.2. Critical approaches to visual material

Images are not straightforward and innocent, they contain meaning and produce meaning. Individuals that create and/or view them have cultural backgrounds and societal norms that they bring into the process.

What images have

This means that images have "signs and significations" embedded and they are decoded and interpreted (Bartram, 2010). To give a brief example, when interpreting the photography of a family from the interwar period, Maroși (2015) explains that the position of the man and the woman in the photograph shows (and is explained by) the condition of women in that time. Namely, the fact that the woman is standing and the man sitting is due to man being considered the head of the household.

What images do

But we can also wonder, for instance, what view upon the family was intended to be transmitted through the photograph. That is, we can inquire into what images do.

Images have effects, they create visualities, and they establish relationships (as in the 'colonial gaze'). From this point of view, Rose (2012) identifies five important aspects to consider when thinking about visual material:

- social difference can be constructed through images. By including or excluding elements, by suggesting hierarchies and differences, particular visions of social groups (based on gender, class, etc.), might be created;

- images invite to 'ways of seeing', they influence our relationship to them by alluring us to look at them from a certain position;

- the wider cultural contexts in which the image was created and presented is important: how, where, why and to whom;

- the individual role: viewers have their own interpretations, which influence the meaning and the effect the picture has;

- images in themselves carry meanings and produce effects, they do not only reflect the meaning of elements they accompany, like magazines or catalogues.

2.3. Methodology for working with visual material?

There is no clear, single recipe for approaching visual materials but, as seen above, several authors have signalled useful things to consider when interpreting images. Having them in mind can serve as a guide either when working with the existent material, or when producing personal one.

Both Bartram (2010) and Rose (2012) propose three levels to consider in an image that I have adapted below:

(1) The process of production

At this point, it is important to note things such as:

- the technology used in producing the material and the implication it has on the results;

- the genre of the image and which of the genre (or genres) influenced the overall material;

- the social, cultural and economic factors that might have constrained the production process;

- information about the author, his cultural background, preferences and affiliations to social groups;

- the purpose of the material.

(2) The contents of the image

This is the aspect intuitively approached when trying to interpret an image. It involves thinking about: the organisation of elements (composition), colours, focus, narrative, suggestions of time, rhythm, speed, etc.

Depending on purposes, the interpretation can limit itself to describing the composition, for example. However, a thorough approach is to go further by identifying signs and exploring what they symbolise. This can sometimes require extensive knowledge or research. Guidelines for using a semiotics method are offered by Gillian Rose, which dedicates it a chapter in her book "Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials" (2012).

(3) The viewer

As mentioned before, viewers bring their interpretations to the table, which means the same aspect can be identified as important by several viewers but can be read differently. Rose (2012) points to the role that social identities can have in this respect, as suggested by many studies. Nonetheless, the actual studying of audience involvement with the visual material requires extensive side research and Bartram suggests what we can do is to "infer how, why and where audiences engage with visual material" (2010, p. 136).

Lastly, at this stage, attention must also be paid to the context where the visual material is received: where and how it is displayed and what influence it can have on how it is viewed.

Having all this in mind, we should remember, when striving to understand or create visual material, our responsibility in the process. The way we choose to see (or not) determines our relationship with the others and the world and thus it must be carefully considered.

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "Investing Urban Transformations: GIS, Map-elicitation and the Role of the State in Regeneration" (Moore-Cherry *et al.*, 2014)

This case study presents the research realised by Niamh Moore-Cherry and Geraldine O'Donnell from the University College Dublin, in Ireland, and by Veronica Crossa, from El Colegio de México, Mexico.

Their work was conducted on Dublin City over a period of five years (2008 to 2013) and its aim was to explore what role the state could have in urban change.

The study was inductive and open-ended, therefore some of the inquiries and objectives arose during the research and were not foreseen from the beginning. The research question was explored through the analysis of land-use change and Dublin City was chosen as case study due to its rapid transformation in the last three decades. The city had been subject to several government initiatives aimed at dealing with urban environment affected by long economic recession and associated issues. Through the Urban Renewal Act of 1986 area-based initiatives (ABIs) had been established to tackle physical regeneration of urban tissue and, in a second phase, for more integrated approaches to urban renewal.

The initial intention of the study was to see how these ABIs had influenced physical changes of the city. However, the results led to further questioning and two final objectives arose: clarifying the process that led to focusing interventions

in one particular area and exploring the role GIS could have as a visual method in qualitative research.

The authors employed a mixed-method research: quantitative analysis using GIS served as a base for generating questions that were further explored through a qualitative method: the map-elicitation interview. In a first phase, data was gathered from field work and from Dublin City Council. Two land use data sets from 1993 and 2000 were obtained and a third one was produced in 2008/2009, based on fieldwork to record the changes that occurred since the year 2000. The three sets were compared and maps were produced to analyse change and variations in form and function over time. Afterwards, locations and boundaries of ABIs were determined, marked and overlapped to illustrate the spatial extent of state intervention.

Two areas which underwent repeated intervention were identified: the docklands and an area corresponding broadly to the historic city. The nature and scale of the latter were a surprise because it did not seem to be an intentionally delineated area but rather a focus area resulted through individual interventions layered over time. Thus, the research moved to finding out why this area had been such a focus of policies and what successive interventions had generated in terms of urban transformation.

In this phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key policy makers. The photo-elicitation technique was adjusted to incorporate GIS material, that is, to develop a map-elicitation technique. The researchers created maps stripped down of information, where the footprints of buildings were kept and each intervention was drawn as a separate layer, then overlapped to show the footprint of state interventions. They used the resulting maps as a base for their interview questions and tried to present a visual material that did not confine responses and to address the questions broadly enough so that different meanings could be created by respondents accordingly.

The maps were a key piece in conducting the interviews and helped support researchers' findings, adding credibility to their claims. This was important because some interviewees tried to dismiss questions raised by researchers and which became clearly visible when confronted with the maps. Also, the material was used to clarify points in the discussion and to help interviewees visualise and reflect upon the results of state intervention.

The use of visual outputs into discussion revealed lack of coordination between actors and between implemented policies. Firstly, it opened discussion about the delineation of physical boundaries for policy implementation which appeared to be arbitrary and subject to the interest of different actors. During interviews, the GIS analyses brought to light tensions between different stakeholders and between different local authority members who privileged either private or public interest. Also, they generated answers that gave insights into existent institutional boundaries: on the one hand, lack of coordination of priorities and resources between central and local level, on the other, disparate interests at the local level.

The research served to explain the success or failure of certain policies and to gain insight into the process of urban governance, into the relationships and tensions that occur between different state institutions. It was also a proof of the utility of photo-elicitation interviews in researching the views of authorities and of the success of using GIS in this qualitative method.

The map-elicitation technique proved useful because it allowed authorities to have a spatial understanding of the effects of their actions and, most importantly, to visualize the results of conflicting priorities, needs, concerns of different state institutions and how they influenced policy development and implementation. Also, it led to and served as a base for the discussion of these inconsistencies. In terms of the quality of the research, it helped obtain better outcomes because it conveyed credibility to the interviewers and balanced the

power relationships in the discussion. The stakeholders proved more engaged and reflections on the visual material revealed personal thoughts and previously unspoken knowledge throughout the discussion.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "'Where Is the Global City?' Visual Narratives of London among East European Migrants" (Datta, 2012)

The second case study we reviewed was conducted by Ayona Datta, from the Department of Sociology of London School of Economics. It is part of a wider project entitled "Home, migration and the city" and it aims to examine different discourses on the global city – London in this case – through the narratives of migrants coming mainly from Eastern Europe.

'Visual narratives' are said to provide an alternative to the 'disembodied gaze'. The methodology – consisting of photographies taken by participants and semi-structured interviews – allows for the contestation of traditional, urban pictorials which present the city as an "aesthetic product" (Datta, 2012, p. 1727) and focus on "museumified visions of urban spaces" (Crang, 1996, quoted by Datta, 2012). These representations claim objectivity through their distanced, detached gaze, which lacks presence of the observer-photographer. By using visual narratives, participants are engaged in the research process and subjective, embodied views of everyday life in the global city are depicted.

As previously mentioned, the methodology of the study consisted of semi-structured interviews and participant-directed photography. In a first stage, interviews were conducted with 24 participants, just after their arrival in London, in the period after EU's 2004 expansion, which for some represented an occasion to return as legal workers after previously having worked illegally (in the 1996-2004 period).

The participants, single men aged between 24 and 47, were contacted through snowball sampling, a technique where "a non-probability sample [is] obtained by recruiting one or more individuals who each recruit one or more individuals, and so on, in the manner of pyramid selling" (Colman, 2009). In a first informative meeting, they were told about the focus of the research but instructions regarding the photographic process were intentionally vague: ''pictures of any aspect of living in London that they wanted to talk about'' (Datta, 2012, p. 1730).

The participants were then given disposable cameras to carry with them for a month and a second meeting was organised after the photographs were developed. This involved more thorough interviews about the aspects the participants had seized in their photographs. The interviews were conducted mostly in English and, in the case of newly arrived Polish migrants, with the help of an interpreter, and they took place either in participants' houses or community centres and pubs, after work. The study reviewed in this chapter involves only photographs "on the move" (Datta, 2012, p. 1731), taken by participants during their daily routines of moving through the city and also across regional and national borders.

The in-depth discussions provided narrative material in which three important aspects of migrants' experiences came up: the disappointment caused by the confrontation of the physical landscapes of the city with its imagined version, the construction of a city of everyday, ordinary life, and the "'moving on' from the city" (Datta, 2012, p. 1731) in order to ease the return back home.

The participants came from eastern countries which had been, until 1989, under socialism. This implied a restriction of movement and the construction of an iconic image of 'the West' back home, London being one of its main symbols. All of the real-life experiences of migration have been confronted to the imagined, expected version of the global city. The confrontation with the eastern suburbs of London, their ordinary landscapes and even filthiness, created for migrants

an image of a mundane, typical city, opposed to the spectacular, grandiose one, which they had expected. The interviews revealed a distancing of participants from the global city which became unimportant and irrelevant in their day to day lives. Their migration experience is one of marginalisation and separation from the global city as most migrants work in low-skilled jobs and have temporary accommodation in peripheral neighbourhoods.

However, visual narratives also revealed a story of reterritorialization and rediscovery of the sense of belonging in certain localities in the city. Shops with products from their homeland create for migrants a sense of familiarity and attachment to certain neighbourhoods. In addition, the return home is prepared not trough a distancing from the city, but through an acquaintance with places that can provide useful material for the return. For example, one participant was fond of the car boot sales organised in different parts of the city, where he could find objects to decorate his future home in Poland.

To sum up, the experience of migration in a global city is related to a sense of deception. The feeling is caused by the clash between the imagined city and the ordinary, day to day city that migrants experience, especially in peripheral neighbourhoods and on their home-work routes. This causes an alienation from the global city. However, the sense of belonging is rapidly acquired through the discovery of meaningful localities and migrants succeed in finding, in the neighbourhoods of London, ties to their return in the homeland.

The study allowed for a different portrayal of the global city than the traditional, iconic, aestheticized one. The replacement of the distant, detached gaze, with that of an observer-subject revealed banal, ordinary but relevant places which, for migrants, constituted the global city and which shaped their experience of intra-city and transnational mobility.

The methodology used, that of visual narratives, served to gain access into migrants' spaces of everyday life, where the researcher would have normally not been allowed. Thus, it helped in better understanding migrants' experience in the global city. Also, it helped participants reflect on their mobility, on the effects and meanings their movements produced and that, in turn, gave the researcher deeper insight into highly subjective experiences, creating different ways of reading and narrating the city.

4. Conclusions

Visual methodologies can provide useful insights during the research process and generate information that otherwise might not have been possible to obtain. They are especially relevant in inclusive, participatory studies, as they allow knowledge of subjective, embodied experiences.

In geography, the detached gaze and the claim that visual material offers objective knowledge (what is known is what is seen) have been criticised, leading to a need to rethink the way it is used in research. When using visual methodologies, it is important to take into account the type of knowledge the visual imagery can generate and what effects it produces.

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Chapter 7. Diary

Alexandra-Maria Colcer

Contents

1. Definitions

"The research diary can conceptually and physically resemble other data collection methods such as the questionnaire, the interview, or observation. Likewise, research diary instruments may resemble instruments employed in these methods. What distinguishes diary methods from other methods is that diary protocols require participants to make self-reports repeatedly over time (Bolger *et al.*, 2003). Thus, diaries range from highly structured logs to unstructured narratives. More commonly, they fall somewhere in between" (Sheble and Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1).

"Diaries are pieces of autobiographic writing describing in a more or less systematic way a period of an individual's life" (Latham, 2010, p. 189). "Rather than being a single, easily definable, method or technique, respondent diaries in fact

represent a quite broad set of research techniques" (Latham, 2010, p. 192).

"A diary study is a research method used to collect qualitative data about user behaviours, activities, and experiences over time. In a diary study, data is self-reported by participants longitudinally — that is, over an extended period of time that can range from a few days to even a month or longer. During the defined reporting period, study participants are asked to keep a diary and log specific information about activities being studied" (Walter, 2008, p. 387).

The research method of the diary is a subjective one. We are underlining the fact that the person who is in charge of completing the diary (named below "diarist") is able to write down all the information (s)he considers relevant enough or the information which is closer to her/his beliefs. All these collected pieces of information may be relevant or not for the researcher.

In order to clarify this, it is necessary to point out that there are two types of diaries: the ones that the researchers keep for themselves, as a way to register their comments, and the second type – *the solicitated diary*. This one is kept by a diarist at the researchers' request (Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014, p. 32). Researchers should have transdisciplinary skills, because that would help them understand the information in the diary, filter and analyse it in accordance with the rules of research.

It is well known the fact that each and every researcher makes a complete analysis – from his/her own point of view, even if we are talking about a book or small magazine news. All the information is being carefully thought and analysed, the researcher giving that certain topic a personal touch and a personal interpretation.

Moreover, we think it is necessary to explain the differences between "diary" and "journal" because these terms are often confused. A *journal* is more personal than a *diary* and there are some distinctive features mentioned by Hart and

Carroll (2008). For instance, it includes daily activities, a lot of information about how the author felt during the day, the emotions he or she felt, how he or she reacted, and so on.

A journal is quite emotional and private. It is something that you will keep for yourself and you do not want anyone else to know or read it. It has no writing restrictions. It is a way of expressing feelings. Journals may have new items, such as pictures, quotes, drawings, etc. One may keep a journal on paper or on a computer. Nowadays, some people express their feelings online, on a blog. It is not a must to complete it every day. One may complete it when one feels he or she has something to write.

In addition, it is common in psychological practice, to ask participants to keep a journal as a method of analysis and treatment. The journal is seen as a self-help tool. It also helps to keep a regular surveillance over thoughts and emotions (Hart and Carroll, 2008). More than this, a journal has a cathartic function.

A *diary* is not as explicit and personal as a journal and the writer (the person who keeps a diary) is limited to some given topics. The main objective of a diary is the description of the day, the activities done during the day and the routine. Description of the feelings the person had during the day is not as important as the activities he/she made. One can complete it at the end of the day and there are no specific skills necessary to maintain a diary.

According to *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Walter, 2008), a *diary* is "a book with a separate space or page for each day, in which you write down your future arrangements, meetings, etc., or one used to record your thoughts and feelings or what has happened on that day" (p. 387).

The word "diary" comes from the Latin "diarium" which means "a daily record of events" (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=diarium).

Diaries are designed to capture the "little experiences of everyday life that fill most of our working time and occupy the vast majority of our conscious attention" (Wheeler and Reis, 1991, p. 340). In other words, the diary is a written self-story, which collects additional background information.

2. Theoretical background

We focus our attention on the *solicited diary*, where the diarist has an extremely important role. It is more complex and more difficult to analyse. The complexity of this kind of diary is given by the way people relate to the diary. Some of them write only the basic things, the major activities, and others offer detailed information about their day (Sheble and Wildemuth, 2009). As a researcher, you have to extract only the parts of the information you are interested in.

The diary has a long history. It is believed that the first diary came from East Asian culture and it is easy to explain this because paper was invented in the area and it came quickly in the Mediterranean basin. This kind of diary can be named "autobiographical diary" (Sheble and Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1), because people, by nature, tend to be egocentric. It can be better understood if we think about that period, when only the richest people had access to such a luxury as paper. They tended to boast about their actions and they felt it was their duty to write all those things to keep their memory alive for their descendants.

After that, people used to write travel diaries and this was the case in the period of great geographical discoveries. Later on, psychoanalyst "Carl Jung extolled the diary as a unique tool for recording dreams and exploring the unconscious" (Hart and Carroll, 2008, p. 213).

Diaries have been used in academic research for a long time, because they help collect data on diverse activities:

"television viewing, social activities, food consumption, educational pursuits, eating behaviours, work interactions, internet habits, leisure activities, cell phone use, travel routines, menstrual and fertility cycles, and a wide range of physical and mental health events" (Hart and Carroll, 2008, p. 213).

Latham (2010, pp. 192-194) lists many types of diaries used in geographical research: diary logs, written diaries, photographic diaries, video diaries, and diary-interviews:

- *diary-logs* are used for generating quantifiable data, because the respondents are asked to note down detailed activities, as detailed as they can remember (Latham, 2010, p. 192);

- *written diaries* are the most common type of diary. In some cases, diarists are asked to note down only the basic activities, their daily routine. In other cases, diarists are asked to focus only on certain kinds of activities, or activities that take place in particular places (Latham, 2010, p. 193).

- *photographic diaries* differ from the last two types, because they use photographs taken by the diarist. The researcher gives a camera to respondents and asks them to photograph what the respondents feel is most relevant. This method has advantages and disadvantages. Some advantages of photographic diaries are that they do not require any degree of literacy and they do not require spending much time on doing this. The disadvantages can be the high cost and the fact that not everybody knows how to handle a camera (Latham, 2010, p. 193).

- *video diaries* are a new method. They may involve the diarist simply talking to a static video, recounting the events of a day. Or, the video might be used as a device to record key elements of a person's day. It has advantages and disadvantages, similarly to the photographic diaries (Latham, 2010, p. 193).

- *diary-interview* is a mixed method. It combines the classic version of the diary with an interview. The interview

allows diarists to explain ambiguities in their written account (Latham, 2010, p. 194).

To sum up, the diary method is very useful and important in geographical research. Firstly, it is useful because of the many pieces of information it collects. Secondly, it shows the way some basic activities become habits/transform into routine.

Other research methods, as the interview, the focus group, and the questionnaire survey enable finding out a limited set of information about people's daily routine. This limitation can be explained in many ways: the interviewee may feel constrained by the presence of a stranger (the interviewer) and then the answers are not in conformity with reality or they are not his or her beliefs. While interviewing, some feelings, like fear, uncertainty and inhibition could occur.

Similar situations could appear during a focus group. The moderator should pay more attention to nonverbal language, and this is rather hard to do when there is a group of more than two people. Another risk is that one person monopolizes the discussion. Moreover, security concerns may appear – subjects in a focus group do not know each other.

In addition, questionnaires can be tricky. For instance, we must pay attention to the questions we ask – the questions have to be short, concise, to contain known words, not regionalisms or neologisms, no negations and double questions are allowed.

All research methods which involve researcher's direct interaction (face to face) with the subjects present certain aspects that may cause distortion of the information received: operators' appearance, behaviour, language (verbal and non-verbal), accent, and, last but not least, the researcher's training. Researchers must control their tone, how they ask questions, the period they wait for answers, and so on.

The diary method does not have these minuses. Still, it has some disadvantages: low relevance, discontinuity, and

vagueness of some information. All these problems can be fixed by using the diary-interview mixed method.

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "'I Can't Eat That, It's Purple': a Geography Field Course in Vanuatu and Fiji" (Connell, 2006)

The article was written by John Connell, professor at the School of Geosciences, University of Sydney, Australia, and reveals a research based on daily diaries written by students.

A group of students from Sydney were taken to the Vanuatu and Fiji Islands. There, they attended lectures given by professors from the University of the South Pacific. This university was a partner, it offered accommodation for students in one of its campuses. Besides attending classes, students had to complete a daily diary. They were encouraged to make contact with local people and to discover the things that the islands offered.

The purpose of the article was to present the life of the people of the Vanuatu and Fiji Islands as seen by these students.

The main purpose of the students' diaries was to help achieve the research aim. Writing diaries had to take into account these important aspects: detailed description of daily activities, everything students saw, heard, and felt. They had to interpret the events that took place during each day of their stay, the impressions that the locals left, and to comment the information received. Those aspects turned into the objectives of this paper.

The structure of the paper was based on 6 main themes: *1. Discovery, 2. A world of difference, 3. Getting into*

it, 4. Us and them, 5. Skills and autonomy, 6. Relating readings to observations ...or not: the nature of development (Connel, 2006, pp. 19-23).

The first theme (*Discovery)* presents the students' arrival in the studied areas. In each of the themes was highlighted the manner in which students felt, the novelties present in the respective areas, the differences compared to Australia, and what impressed them.

In the present case, we are speaking of the Vanuatu airport, which students perceived as a small, quiet airport, though a string band was playing and singing songs mainly in the local lingua franca, Bislama, and singers were dressed up in traditional clothes.

When getting in touch with the external environment, students noticed that nights in Vanuatu were hot and humid, even after midnight. The study was realised in January, the month characterized by cyclones. The cultural differences were felt even in the air, literally speaking, "the night smells different; fragrant tropical blossoms are blooming and smoke is in the air, from the many wood-fuelled cooking stoves and open fires" (Connell, 2006, p. 19).

The second theme (*A world of difference*) exhibited several rhetorical questions, most of them asked by the guide, who had left his former job to become guide. Afterwards, some other questions were related to the fact that the people there work too hard and might have no time to rest, question that resulted after the warm welcoming they had.

The third theme (*Getting into it*) marked the transition from the theoretical section – the lectures – to the practical one, concerning the interaction with the inhabitants. It highlighted the discrepancies encountered in that place:

> "The people of Seaside were so incredibly hospitable even though they are incredibly poor. They provided for us even though they are struggling economically. They are rich at heart" (Connell, 2006, p. 20).

Most diaries mentioned that the inhabitants were hospitable, open to foreigners, spoke diverse languages, but were still struggling with poverty.

The fourth theme (*Us and them*) underlined the idea mentioned above, about inhabitants' hospitability, openness, politeness, and interest in newly arrived people. As a novelty, students noticed the strong difference concerning gender. Local men did not answer questions that female students asked.

The fifth theme (*Skills and autonomy*) focused on the skills students acquired during that experience. For one of them, the simple action of taking the bus was considered an accomplishment, whilst for others the fact that they spent a night out with the other students and residents. All of them acquired social skills. The study helped them increase their self-esteem and self-trust, and also their socialising skills with new people.

The sixth theme (*Relating readings to observations ... or not: the nature of development*) referred to the political issues the islands coped with and their causes: the constant governmental change, the great gender difference, the low importance granted to the environment and high level of traditionalism.

This research proved to be one of students' most beautiful experiences and amongst the most meaningful conclusions they drew was this: 'I've gained so much from seeing these activities first hand. It's much better than a 30-year old Anthropology reading' (Connell, 2006, p. 25).

In the case of the present article, one can easily notice the merging of the diary method with cross-cultural research, put on the second place, due to the fact that the researcher obtained the relevant information from the students, not from the inhabitants.

The use of the solicitated diary, as a research method, can be accounted as risky, because the reality was filtered in two stages: firstly, through the perspective of those who wrote

the diary, and, secondly, through the perspective of those who read it. One of the advantages was that the diary encompassed quite effectively the emotions and circumstances students faced with on a daily basis. The largest and undisputed advantage was the presentation of the frequency of activities students carried out.

Compared to interviews and focus groups, diaries enable the obtaining of more detailed information.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "Home Sounds: Experiential Practices and Performativities of Hearing and Listening" (Duffy and Waitt, 2013)

This article was written by Michelle Duffy and Gordon Waitt and explores how sounds influence us, which ones make us feel at home and which sounds we associate with the idea of home. In this paper, the authors argued that "a closer attention to the everyday visceral experiences of sound offers new insights into geographies of home" (Duffy and Waitt, 2013, p. 466).

The research took place in Bermagui, New South Wales, Australia and was realised with the help of 10 persons who showed interest and who had recently moved in the neighbourhood or with the help of the local people.

The method used for this study was called "the sound diary". Each participant at the study had to record a sound diary composed of their everyday sounds.

The aim of the article was to provide "the capacity of individuals to use the affordances of sounds in helping making sense of self and reassembling connections to place" (Duffy and Waitt, 2013, p. 472).

The analysis of the diaries was realised thoughtfully. The researchers paid close attention. Firstly, they listened carefully to all the diaries. Secondly, they transcribed the

diaries and “read and reread a number of times, paying attention to how sounds provoked a biological response” (Duffy and Waitt, 2013, p. 466).

In order to encourage the participants to record the sounds which they considered special, but also to give them an example, the researchers recorded themselves a diary.

It was discovered that the sounds which the participants perceived as new or which caught their attention differed from person to person, depending on the place where their home was, the distance to the ocean, the vegetation around, etc. Some of them noticed the sound of the waves, others the ones made by bellbirds, and also the sounds made by raindrops when hitting the rooftop.

Those sounds not only attracted their attention, but, at the same time, they helped them doing an activity or the opposite. One of the participants said “I can’t stand the noise of bellbird” (Duffy and Waitt, 2013, p. 477). That person moved in the area in the 1970s.

The novelty brought by this study was that the persons who kept diaries were not aware of all those sounds and the effects which they had. Keeping a diary helped not only the researchers, but also the participants to realize the myriad of sounds which surrounded them and the way in which they reacted particularly.

In the conclusions, the authors discussed “the importance of the sonic rhythms in establishing and making home spaces. The rhythm of sounds has an influence on daily routine and helps people to feel like home”, “That rhythms and sounds are the supreme mode of relation between bodies once the screens of the symbolic, usage and exchange are shattered” (Duffy and Waitt, 2013, p. 478).

As it was shown, the method of research picked for the article was not so common one in the field of Geography. It was mostly used in Anthropology.

Only during the last decades, geographers started to give more attention to the importance of sounds, this method (the sounds diary) being quite new.

This research combined geographical and anthropological ideas, to better understand the relationship between people and the environment: "Within a geographical context, sounds diaries offer a tool to access the aural aspects of social settings" (Duffy and Waitt, 2011, p. 133).

Researchers acknowledged that the sounds diary was an intimate way of research. We have found out two reasons why geographers should pay attention to listening: "listening to sounds and music renders place quite differently than does vision (...) it occurs around and through our bodies" (Duffy and Waitt, 2011, p. 121) and listening is "dislocating the frontal and the conceptual associations of the vision with an all-round corporeality and spatiality" (Duffy and Waitt, 2011, p. 121).

3.3. Review of case study 3: "Sense and the City: Exploring the Embodied Geographies of Urban Walking" (Middleton, 2010)

This article was written by Jennie Middleton, from the Department of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Plymouth, Devon, U.K.

"This study had three principal aims: first, to explore the relationship between walking and the built environment; second, to examine the many different types, forms and characters of walking; finally, to engage with the social dimensions of urban pedestrian movement" (Middleton, 2010, p. 579).

The study was carried out using a mixed-methodology: postal survey, experiential walking photo diaries, and in-depth interviews (Middleton, 2010, p. 580). To reach its goal, the research consisted of diaries of and interviews with thirty-five participants. Writing diaries had to take into account the

following: describing every walk they took, date, time, the purpose of walking, what they felt, how long and where they walked. They had to write in their diaries for a week. In addition, participants received a disposable camera to take photographs of anything they thought was significant or interesting.

Space was found to be supplemented perceptually by cues based on auditory (sense of hearing), kinesthetic (sense of bodily movement), olfactory (sense of smell), and gustatory (sense of taste) experiences. Everyone perceived space differently: "'sense of place' emerges from pedestrian activities and the multitude of 'senses which pick up on [the] atmosphere' of that place" (Middleton, 2010, p. 582).

Walking, such a common activity, was being influenced by a variety of factors, starting with our clothing and ending with the purpose of the journey, the area in question, etc. Then, the using of iPads when the subjects were alone. One could notice the rhythm and the habits people had, when people were rushing to work, went faster or chose a transportation means. When they wanted to relax, they took long slow walks in less crowded areas. That was the moment and the place where they used iPads because they did not need to pay attention to what was around them.

Shoes were also extremely important and that was why there were so many types of shoes on the market. Women put more emphasis on the form than on the usefulness of a pair of shoes: "The shoes I'm wearing today are a little too small for me. Which is a shame because I saw them in the shop, loved them; bought them. Boys don't do that" (Middleton, 2010, p. 587).

The researcher also noticed that the subjects spent little time walking. At the time of conducting that research there were numerous legislative projects meant to increase the rate of pedestrian movement, which turned out to be an issue the entire England was confronted with. Public transport was heavily used daily for short distances, mainly because it was more comfortable.

Respondents' diaries were carefully written and then attentively analysed and interpreted by specialists (e.g. starting with the actual text and ending with the theme and used punctuation).

However, to analyse a diary, one must have certain psychological and linguistic knowledge. Writing can highlight as many aspects about ourselves as oral expression, that is why text analysis must be made by individuals with a particular training.

A disadvantage this method has is that the lack of time or forgetting to complete the diary in a certain day can deprive the researcher of information. Another disadvantage is that cheating may occur in the cases of solicitated diaries.

Moreover, the risk of finding out a partial 'truth' can also be encountered in the case of interviews or focus groups, but, in such situations, the individual is having conversations with the participants, the risk being diminished because of the dynamic of the relationships established. A question is required to have a short, concrete answer.

4. Conclusions

All in all, the diary method can be used to find out social, anthropological information. For a geographer, especially for a regionalist, knowing people's practices and their basic activities is a must. These practices and activities contribute to regional identity, for instance, or to understanding the use of public and private space, and we, as regionalists, are interested in "exploring the rhythms and textures of people's day-to-day lives" (Latham, 2010, p. 194).

In conclusion, we think it is very important to remember that, during research, we never use only one isolated method. There will always be a mixture between

methods, because research methods are flexible and help us in collecting diverse types of information.

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Chapter 8. Participatory Research

Kinga Xénia Havadi-Nagy & Dan-Ovidiu Muntean

Contents

1. Definitions

Participatory research aims to democratise and demystify research "by studying an issue or phenomenon with the full engagement of those affected by it. It involves working collaboratively to develop a research agenda, collect data, engage in critical analysis, and design actions to improve people's lives or effect social change" (Breitbart, 2012, p. 141).

Participatory research (PR), more commonly known as participatory action research (PAR) is "a kind of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social relationship with one another" (Berg, 2012, p. 259), committed to use the results to improve the lives of the community and induce a positive social change (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156; Berg, 2012, pp. 258-277).

As most definitions combine data collection, critical inquiry and action, there is no definitive or pure model of PAR, the level of implication and participation of the community and individuals varying from case to case, but a "participation where individuals or groups have maximum control over all aspects of the research, from conception, design, implementation, data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings" (Jordan, 2008, pp. 601-603) is the ideal to strive for.

2. Theoretical background

PAR emerged partially as a critique to exploitative research and as an element of a larger radical social agenda. Many participatory researchers situate their approach within a broader movement of liberation and critiques of international development work that questions the purposes, ethics, and outcomes of social research (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156).

Critics of orthodox research methods stress out that "studied communities are often treated as laboratories, provided no role in the research process and benefit little from the results of studies conducted within their borders" (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156). In contrast with these research approaches, the PAR advocates for the active involvement of research participants in the research process, and increased community involvement and participation to enhance the relevance of the research findings to their needs (Ranjit, 2011, pp. 132-133; Jordan, 2008, pp. 601-603).

Participatory action research has its origins in the second half of the 20th century. The cornerstone of the approach and its initial development are accredited to the social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s and the 1950s. Lewin's influential work and the contemporary approaches to PAR have been significantly shaped by several socio-political movements and further intellectual traditions, including Marxism, feminism, postpositivism, and adult education

(Jordan, 2008, pp. 601-603; Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156; Berg, 2012, pp. 258-276).

PAR is committed to a politics of equity and social transformation, expressed in its work with subordinate, marginalized, and oppressed groups to improve and empower their position within society (Jordan, 2008, pp. 601-603). It focuses on effecting a positive social change by embracing "principles of participation, reflections, empowerment and emancipation of people and groups interested in their social situation and condition" (Berg, 2012, p. 259).

First implementations of participatory data collection within the field of Geography were conducted by William Bunge for his "Geographical Expeditions" in Detroit at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156). Since then, the approach gained popularity among geographers, regional developers, and environmental educators.

PAR can be used as a toll to build knowledge of community assets and strengths, as well as to identify or address problems. Operators of PAR speculate on increasing the possibility of the affected community to accept the research findings, and reckon with their willingness and involvement in solving the problems and issues they confront with (Ranjit, 2011, pp. 132-133).

One of the defining characteristics of PAR from its beginnings has been the centrality of the dialogical relationship between theory and practice (Jordan, 2008, pp. 601-603). The history of PAR is marked by a reliance on forms of knowledge, experience, and understanding, generated within the everyday world that have all too often been dismissed as common sense by mainstream social sciences.

The core values have made PAR a particularly flexible methodology, adaptable across a broad range of issues and contexts, where every participatory research project differs in the methods that it employs (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156).

PAR can be either a qualitative or a quantitative study; the main emphasis is on people's engagement, collaboration and participation in the research process. The design of a PAR approach is based on a community development model, where engagement of a community by way of consultation and participation in planning and execution of research tasks (Ranjit, 2011, pp. 132-133) and evaluation of results are inseparable. University researchers and their collaborators share knowledge, power and a decision-making role and the collaborative means by which data is co-generated, interpreted and used to design actions play a key role in social transformation (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156).

PAR is not a specific methodology with exact procedures, nor is it about data collection alone. Participatory research relies on less formal data collection method and seeks to foster a community's capacity to problem solve and design actions without having to rely solely on outside experts (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156). Distinguishing features of a participative research approach are (1) a sustained dialogue between external and community researchers, an exchange of information, feelings and values; (2) power sharing expressed as a commitment that the outcomes benefit the community in measurable ways and as research partners they have the power to define research objectives and design; (3) approach often initiated by community with academics, assuming the role of consultant or collaborator (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156; Jordan, 2008, pp. 601-603).

The basic action research procedural routine involves the following stages (see Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156; Berg, 2012, pp. 258-277):

- Identifying the research question – it involves the researcher assisting the stakeholders/the affected community to examine their situation, identify their problems and assets. Some common tools (brainstorming, focus groups, neighbourhood walks, social mapping, model construction and photography story boards) can help in deciding upon the

research questions and prioritize them. It is also the stage, where the collaborators' lived experiences can serve as basis for further data collection, and the outside researchers acquire basic knowledge about the neighbourhood or geographic entity under study. These initial meetings between researchers and community can be also important for building trust.

- Research design and data collection – decisions about what further information should be collected and how. Data collection methodologies can enable a process of personal and social change, enhancing the critical and creative capacities of participants. So, PAR requires consideration on how the chosen methods encourage maximum involvement and contribution to the increased equalization of power among participants. Utilizing a variety of research methods and a division of labour that consciously seek to make use of each collaborator's particular strengths is one way to assure widespread participation in the collection of information and its exchange. On-going evaluation and critique can generate new questions, issues and strategies that build upon a deepening understanding of an issue or topic.

- Analyzing and interpreting the information – involves examination of data in relation to potential solutions for the researched issues.

- Sharing the results – to inform and to empower people to work collectively to produce beneficial change. Meetings and presentations designed and conducted by the involved stakeholders, accompanied by the full report are best suited.

The commitment of PAR to its political aims of liberalization, democratization, dialogue, and equal partnership grants a great transparency to the approach (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156; Jordan, 2008, pp. 601-603). The collected data and its products are more likely to be useful, accurate, and lead to actions that address people's real needs and desires (Ranjit, 2011, pp. 132-133).

Through the participative approach and strong involvement, the affected community may assume ownership of the assets and challenges, of the projects and measures

designed together and shall contribute to a sustainable long-lasting development strategy.

The principles of PAR present also several challenges. The coordination activities, of the research partners, of the different skills and levels of participation and personal commitment that each partner brings to the process can be difficult. Being committed to greater social justice and social change, it compels the coordinators to move the research project from research alone to social action (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156; Jordan, 2008, pp. 601-603). The procedure is time consuming and conditioned by trust relationships and a commitment during the duration of the project.

Further on, PAR tries to simultaneously meet various goals. Demands from the surveyed community can constrain the parameters of a project or redirect its focus. PAR almost always involves more projects, so to address the most needs articulated by stakeholders. Emergent practical obstacles to engage in long-lasting PAR are the unpredictable aspects in addressing community defined priorities: preferences frequently change due to political, personal, or socio-economic circumstances that induce a focus shift (Breitbart, 2012, pp. 141-156; Jordan, 2008, pp. 601-603).

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "Telling Stories: Exploring Research Storytelling as a Meaningful Approach to Knowledge Mobilization with Indigenous Research Collaborators and Diverse Audiences in Community-based Participatory Research" (Christensen, 2012)

In 2012, Julia Christensen, from the Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, published an article on the geographies of homelessness and housing insecurity in Yellowknife and Inuvik, of the Northwest

Territories, by applying the community-based participatory research method.

The author speaks about the importance of a study about the homeless people's status, because only by knowing the situation of these people, we can take steps to develop and improve aspects of these individuals' lives. Knowing the reality can be done through participatory research and observation, which gives a much clearer vision upon the needs and problems faced by these people. In addition, this study allows creating new programmes to help people in this situation and enable the development of new strategies for integrating the homeless in the community.

The objectives of the study have a social character, because they make a connection between the indigenous and the homeless people, while focusing on the social and economic structure of the population. These objectives include: the importance of studying the life of the homeless, how they live, and the contact between a fictional story and the reality among people. Other research objectives are: to explore the reflection of origin in the homeless status, how can the community help to improve the livelihood of homeless people, to find out which is the real story behind these people's miserable life, but also the way in which local authorities hamper their integration (Christensen, 2012, pp. 231-234).

To achieve the objectives mentioned above, the researcher applied the method based on participatory research, during two years (2007-2009). While using the unstructured interview method or the storytelling method, researcher Julia Christensen led numerous discussions with homeless people in Yellowknife and Inuvik areas.

These methods were the basis of all the research conducted and that allowed creating an overview on the bond between the people's origin and homeless status. At the end of the research, different feedback workshops were conducted, which were aimed at informing the population of the existing situation and of the ways in which problems can be solved.

Another method successfully applied was the narration or the oral storytelling, which had a remarkable effect in determining the current situation and illustrate it (Christensen, 2012, pp. 234-236).

The final research results identified the importance of this type of social phenomenology, such as the homeless people's situation, using the community-based participatory research method. It highlighted the real situations of homelessness, without forgetting the details of the homeless people's lifestyle, of their status in society, the story behind their low living standards and, of course, how the authorities and the associations could help integrating them.

This research enjoyed a positive response from the homeless communities and not only. On the other hand, the authorities and various associations made the necessary steps to alter and improve the living situation of these locals.

Julia Christensen applied successfully three methods in her research, each method contributing to the final results. The first approach was with the storytelling method, which brought remarkable results in determining the subjects' exact situation, by having discussions with the community under study. Secondly, efficient use of the participatory research method or the collaboration method brought to the study diverse views on how the world sees the life of homeless people, correlated with the real life of these people and the fictional narrative work done by the author.

Thirdly, the author illustrated the difference between the oral and the written rendering of a story, showing how the oral transmission had a much stronger emotional impact than the latter. Thus, the importance of using appropriate methods for each study is imperative, because only using the best methods can determine accurate and consistent results (Christensen, 2012, pp. 236-240).

Finally, Julia Christensen discussed how impressive was the combination between scientific research in Geography

and the literary art of storytelling. This relationship enabled understanding social situations in a deeper way, in terms of emotional state. As conclusion, the author emphasized the importance of using the method based on participatory research on a global scale, in any field of research (Christensen, 2012, p. 240).

To conclude this case study, it is necessary to point out some of the arguments for using the participatory research method: this method helps to understand thoroughly the real situations and the collaboration between individuals enable to create multiple views on social reality, which help improve aid programmes and the correct application of these services.

A strong argument is the fact that this method combines the subjective nature of research with objective stories of the subject, leading to a research based on empathy and detailed representation of the social phenomenology. Therefore, the participatory method, applied to the study of the lives of homeless people in Northern Canada, allowed to study in depth their situation and prompted the possibility of creating outreach and charity programmes for the communities in those situations.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "Revamping Community-based Conservation through Participatory Research" (Mulrennan *et al.*, 2012)

In 2012, a group of Canadian researchers, including *Monica E. Mulrennan*, from the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment of Concordia University, *Rodney Mark*, Chief of James Bay Cree Nation of Wemindji, Wemindji, Quebec, and *Colin H. Scott*, from the Department of Anthropology of McGill University published a paper presenting the necessity of conserving and protecting the Cree community from Wemindji, Quebec and for protecting the ecological

environment, while applying the community-based participatory research method.

The purpose of the research was to use methods based on human interaction, for developing, protecting, and preserving the natural environment and the culture of Wemindji area, particularly of the Cree community. Another goal was to declare the area studied in a protected area on local, regional, and national levels, by improving the programmes implemented there and by creating new conservation programmes and policies.

The main objectives of the study conducted in the Wemindji area could be listed as follows: first, using diverse methods in drawing the synthesis of the territory, which means applying various research methods, so that the results are clear and concrete; secondly, determining the processes for the development and conservation of the nature and cultural contribution of the Wemindji area. Another goal was to use the community-based participatory research method, so that at the end of the project all parties achieved their own aims related to this area.

Another objective consisted of involving local people in the project, because they were the main beneficiaries of the study. Other goals were to inform the population and the authorities about the existing resources in the study area, about the development and conservation of the natural and cultural patrimony, and to use the methodological mosaic for underlining the existing problems, creating new protection strategies for regional and local development (Mulrennan *et al.*, 2012, pp. 243-249).

Regarding the methodology for this study, the researchers used many methods that enabled them to illustrate the best results. One method was the semi-structured interview method used for discussions with local experts about the harvesting activities, the management of resources, the ecological condition of the area, and the cultural contribution of the Cree community.

Another method used was the discussion groups or workshops, which took place with representatives of the Cree elders, community leaders, senior hunters, and others. The discussion had in the foreground the environment and cultural issues of the area. The participant observation method was used especially in the field to monitor the efficiency of approved an implemented policies.

In addition, the researchers used the analysis of the environment, focusing on issues of relief, flora, fauna, and biodiversity of the area. To represent the results, the researchers used the mapping method, thus using GIS modelling and mapping, to expose the environmental issues. The GIS analyses were applied during various workshops and conferences to express more clearly the situation in the field.

To attract many researchers, the authors used various methods of marketing. First, they created an official web page of the Cree community from Wemindji. This website presented details about each phase of the project and a general view about the community and the environment.

Secondly, they conducted biannual meetings with all parties involved in the project, so as to ensure the fairness and transparency of the projects, and to inform the people about the future steps. Thirdly, the researchers conducted workshops and symposia, to attract more researchers from other research fields.

To facilitate the application of the participatory research method ten scientific collaborators from different fields were chosen, as well as students, who, over time, became the main partners of the project, and many others, such as: local government representatives, authorities, academic and research centres, and, of course, the Cree community from Wemindji.

Applying the method itself consisted of workshops and discussions based on interviews with the Cree community, about the need for the conservation and protection of the natural and cultural environment (Mulrennan *et al.*, 2012, pp. 249-253).

The research results consisted of factual material: determining the opportunities and the possibilities for local development, mapping the different aspects of the study area, progressing in the delineation of the protected area, which the local and regional authorities took into account. Other results were: creating the biodiversity reservation, promoting the culture and heritage of the Cree community, creating new jobs in ecotourism, environmental protection, and resource management.

One of the most important ideals achieved was strengthening, in the population of Wemindji, the sense of belonging to the Cree community, and thus preserving and promoting its culture. In addition, the project had a significant impact on local tourism, by developing the ecotourism and the correct exploitation of existing resources through various development strategies.

Another positive outcome of the project was the implementation and improvement of hydropower, of transportation, and of the mining industry, which led to the economic development of the area. In addition, in the framework of this project, they initiated numerous relationships with other populations, which boosted ties and promoted the exchange of traditions and cultures at the regional level (Mulrennan *et al.*, 2012, pp. 253-256).

In the conclusions section, the authors discussed the importance of preserving and promoting the traditional culture and the natural environment in order to develop a community at the local and regional levels. Moreover, they brought into discussion the efficiency of using the community-based participatory research method, which, used properly, could produce great results within a socio-cultural and environmental research project. And, finally, the authors pointed out that for development and for the proper management of resources, the cooperation of all parties involved was required: professionals, researchers, local and

regional authorities, and, of course, the affected population (Mulrennan *et al.*, 2012, pp. 256-257).

To support the importance and efficiency of using the participatory research method in the study described above, we highlight some arguments. First, using the method in conjunction with other methods allows a much clearer vision on aspects of the natural and anthropic features of the study area, because each method comes with extra information about the territory, which extends the area of understanding the environment.

Secondly, the method of community-based participatory research allowed better collaboration between indigenous peoples and researchers, which brought a new perspective on how the scientist saw the reality in terms of the population being directly involved into planning issues. On the other hand, this method enables the development of programmes with a high degree of efficiency, because they are built on the needs of the populations and of its environment.

Finally, the participatory research method was applied successfully in the case of the development and conservation of the Cree community, from Wemindji, Quebec, due to positive results from research, which led to the promotion, protection, and conservation of the environment, and of the culture from the researched community. Thus, one may realise that this method has a high degree of effectiveness in studies based on human communities, biodiversity, and on the environment.

3.3. Review of case study 3: "A Social Capital Approach for Network Policy Learning: The Case of an Established Cluster Initiative" (Aragon *et al.*, 2014)

In 2014, a group of Spanish researchers (Cristina Aragon and Cristina Iturrioz, both from Deusto Business School of Deusto University, Mari Jose Aranguren and James R. Wilson, both

from Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness, Deusto Business School of Deusto University), conducted research aiming to highlight the importance of collaboration and clustering in achieving innovative and competitive regional development policies (social, economic, political, and demographic). In addition, they underlined the need for innovation in local and regional development, and, more specifically, the purpose of the proposed project was to highlight the role of collaboration in an aeronautical cluster.

The objectives proposed by the authors were, first, to broadly describe the importance of regional competitiveness policies and to illustrate the relevance of policy learning. Secondly, to determine the role of social capital in the learning policy networks, and, thirdly, to analyse the cooperation phenomenon in the aeronautical cluster (Aragon *et al.*, 2014, pp. 128-130).

As research method, the authors, primarily used the analysis, for example, they used this method to determine the assumptions of social capital development. Thus, they determined that social capital is directly influenced by the degree of competitiveness and innovation of the learning policy, plus by the behaviour of and relationships among the members of the working group. Therefore, social capital increased the effectiveness of actions undertaken by the staff and increased the dissemination of information in the cluster network.

The researchers identified three characteristic dimensions. The first was the relational dimension (it promoted trust, reciprocity, and the commitment of each member of the cluster). The second was the structural dimension: it had a special role, because it involved the actual and desired network connection, and, of course, the network configuration. And the third was the cognitive dimension, which shared the vision of the policy and network in the cluster. To indicate the situation of the three dimensions presented above, the researchers used the structured

questionnaire method, which was applied to all members of the cluster.

In this study, the authors applied the methodology for social capital development policies on the Hegan, a private association from the Basque Country in northern Spain. There, the policy based on social capital in clusters had been in continuous development since 1990. The purpose of this organization was to maintain competitiveness in the development and the efficiency of all aeronautics entrepreneurs.

The study of this cluster consisted in using indirectly the participatory research method, which was implemented by using two other methods: the semi-structured interview and the statistical analysis. The entire process was conducted in three phases: first, design and planning of research, by realising the interviews, secondly, conducting research, and, finally, reflection on the research results.

The participatory research method was implemented through workshops with local authorities, researchers, and entrepreneurs. These workshops aimed at informing, debating, and solving the possible issues that could occur during project development (Aragon *et al.*, 2014, pp. 130-136).

The authors identified two types of results: general and specific. The general results highlighted, in particular, the level of associative maturity, it has an important role in deepening collaboration across the cluster, on medium and long term. Another general result was to illustrate the role of the learning policy in determining collaboration among entrepreneurs, for local and regional development.

Moreover, researchers underlined the ties and the strong concordance between the associative maturity and the three dimensions of social capital and the early connection between the three dimensions of social capital and the project incorporations. Thus, overall, the researchers found that the relationships among entrepreneurs have a particular relevance

in economic and social development at all levels (i.e. local, regional and national) (Aragon *et al.*, 2014, pp. 136-137).

At the level of specific results, researchers focused on the importance of heterogeneous learning, realised by the members of the cluster network. The research pointed out that this type of learning offered various opportunities: creating new strategic projects, improving the adaptability of groups, streamlining interrelations between the members of the cluster network, improving the network functionality, decreasing the impact of risks created on the network, and increasing the attractiveness of the cluster network.

Another specific outcome identified in the study was that the social capital was distributed unevenly in the territory occupied by the cluster network, existing members of the cluster with a development level much higher than the other members of the same cluster, which illustrated the heterogeneity of a cluster network. Thus, at the level of the cluster network, a level of equal development could be achieved through different strategic projects to increase competitiveness and production efficiency and, of course, to strengthen the interactions between members (Aragon *et al.*, 2014, pp. 137-142).

In the conclusions section, the authors presented the importance of social capital for cluster development, adding, of course, the relevance of applying the learning policy, in order to increase the network efficiency and functionality. The researchers emphasized the importance of creating the new strategic development projects, which helped improve the collaboration and interrelation between all members of the cluster network, in order to increase the social and economic efficiency of the cluster.

In addition, it illustrates the importance of using a methodology focused on the integration of members of a network in research, because this enables improving the proposed strategies; in this case, the participatory research method was used indirectly (Aragon *et al.*, 2014, p. 142).

In the study presented above, using the participatory research method in combination with analysis and interview methods allowed an outline of the main features that a cluster network owned. Moreover, it allowed determining quantitative indicators, which highlighted the importance of social capital and of the learning policy in the socio-economic development of a territory.

The participatory research method determined the role of collaboration and interrelation between the members of a cluster for the social balancing of the respective network. Finally, we could see the role the participatory research method has and its significance in the socio-economic development of a cluster network.

4. Conclusions

Used properly, a community-based participatory research method can achieve great results in a socio-cultural and environmental research (see also Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014). The presented case studies are examples of a successful transfer of the research into social action with on-site social, environmental, and economic achievements. They also endorse the effectiveness of multi-level dialogue of communicating not only knowledge, but also values and feelings, which result in remarkable positive impact on various involved stakeholders, not only on the affected community, but also on the academics.

The political commitment (i.e. transparency, community involvement, and social justice) of the participatory research approach enables the application of the subsidiarity principle, making it suitable for the construction and design of local and regional development strategies.

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Chapter 9. Internet Mediated Research

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Contents

1. Definitions

We will not delve into elaborate definitions or descriptions on what constitutes Regional Geography, as the matter has been extensively covered in innumerable works and for a considerable amount of time. The only major issue we would like to bring forward is that Regional Geography lost ground a long time ago and was gradually replaced by other geographic approaches.

Nonetheless, some still keep the flame alive. P. Claval (2007) makes a case for the concept of *region* and states that this, along with Regional Geography, changed dramatically, becoming more than a stage, sandwiched between other geographies, a construct to be used from the get-go of any geographic endeavour. Others, like Johnston, Hauer and

Hoekved (2014) concur, presenting the case for reinstating Regional Geography as a contemporary and relevant discipline, claiming that it is not yet dead and it can still pack a powerful scientific punch. They also present three types of essays, going from origins, where they assess traditional Regional Geography and its relevance to the study of contemporary situations, to changes and alternatives, concluding with the potential of Regional Geography to interpret the structures of society.

The second concept we would like to present, crucial for this chapter, is internet mediated research, which represents "a research that is conducted through the medium of the internet. It is one of the newer methodological approaches adopted by geographers and holds great potential for collecting data in an innovative manner" (Madge, 2012, p. 173).

We can affirm that, nowadays, we live in an era when we spend a lot of time using social media, and mostly the internet, and we rely on it on a daily basis. Using this, researchers can collect plenty of multivariate data from across the world with low costs. Online research approaches must be conducted carefully, because faster and cheaper does not mean necessarily a better method than the traditional ones.

Data is raw and chaotic at its very core and, therefore, we must be cautious when using this new found source (internet data), without losing focus and, of course, ourselves in the data quagmire (Mennis and Guo, 2009).

This being said, "the term internet originally described a network of computers that made possible the decentralized transmission of information" (Markham, 2008, p. 454). Moreover, "in popular use the internet is an ambiguous term referencing or encompassing innumerable technologies, uses, and social spaces" (Markham, 2008, p. 454).

The terminology is not yet set, not definitive, as this field of study is rather young, according to Hughes (2012). In this general umbrella of e-research, new subfields emerged

such as internet and virtual ethnographies (Hine, 2000), digital ethnography (Murthy, 2008), and even netnography (Kozinets, 2002, 2009).

E-research implies the development and the support for information and computing technology to facilitate the entire research process (www.jisc.ac.uk, 2012). Derivations of the concept include e-science, cyber-research and cyber infrastructure. J. Taylor coined the term e-science, defining it as "... global collaboration in key areas of science, and the next infrastructure that will enable it" (Taylor, http://www.e-science.clrc.ac.uk).

At the *IEE International Conference on eScience* (2014), the participants agreed upon the following interpretation: "eScience promotes innovation in collaborative, computationally- or data-intensive research across all disciplines, throughout the research lifecycle" (https://escience-conference.org/). It is, basically, a universal fusion between information technology and science, easily and competently applicable to all fields of study.

As one can clearly see, despite its novel status, the field of internet mediated research has gathered plenty of definitions and concepts, although many are variations on the same theme.

By collecting data from different sources which are located all over the world, internet media research can be used to gather and analyse information through the internet and it helps researchers study different types of phenomena, either economic or social, as well as spatial constructs like regions (Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014). Minshull (2017) identifies nine essential definitions for the concept of *region* among the many found in the worldwide scientific literature, each one viewing it as an *area*, and not only that, but an area that is held together by something of its own.

We must be more than careful here as one should never diminish or make less intellectually demanding such a

construct. This puts researchers in front of a difficult up-hill battle with complexity, since the very diversity of the term and the method it implies make for a monumental downside, as Minshull emphasizes himself (2017). He states that the region and the regional geographic method are usually hit or miss endeavours as there is "... no rule for dividing continents into units convenient for *accurate* description" and "...a convenient basis for division in one continent may be useless in another" (Minshull, 2017, p. 15).

In this case, applying internet driven research or mediated research may be doomed from the very start. However, to divide is, in a certain way, in every geographer's blood and if one applies the correct means, something useful and easy to comprehend by Geography old-timers and neophytes alike may arise. It can be a genuine life line for the aging and somewhat struggling regional method, maybe even enabling it to regain its footing in the scientific world.

2. Theoretical background

Historically, academics and researchers (countless and diverse, from geographers – see Ciascai *et al.*, 2007, pp. 67-73 – to medical doctors) have shown, as Hughes (2012) puts it, a great willingness to exploit new technology, to enhance, facilitate, and support their endeavours. However, arguably no other technological breakthrough has influenced the landscape of social research as swiftly and fundamentally as the internet. In his book, Hughes shows not only that conventional research went online in a short amount of time, but also new techniques were created specifically for the online environment.

Continuing in his scientific journey, Hughes views the internet as 'a resource for research' (2012, p. 22), which eventually led to citizen research or lay research, such as searching for one's family tree, both in temporal and spatial terms (i.e. when and where one's ancestors lived) or reading

smartphone reviews and comparing specifications and prices before purchasing such a device.

Internet is also a 'medium for research' (Hughes, 2012, p. 25), or researching with and within the internet, this including online interviewing, internet based surveys, like the ones on Google Forms, online focus groups, social network analysis, etc. Here, the author makes a distinction between the old and the new, or web 1.0 versus web 2.0 internet research, or consumption versus participation and generation of context. For instance, the classic 1.0 internet takes an existing book, dictionary, scientific paper or even newspaper and puts it online, posting something that already exists. Think about the works of the renowned Paul Vidal de la Blache on Regional Geography, one can read them and use them as they are since one cannot, in any form, add or change the content.

The shift from 1.0 to 2.0 internet and internet research can be seen for example in Wikipedia, one of the largest and probably the most important online encyclopaedias. Here one can create an account and effortlessly edit any of the hundreds of thousands of subjects there or create a brand new one.

Given et al. (2008) led an effort to create something with the intention of helping students and teachers/professors alike by providing a comprehensive glossary of terms and explanations from qualitative research. Naturally, internet based methods and approaches were given a special spot on the exhaustive list created by the editors, which recognized its importance in the world of science. Internet can be a way to communicate. It is sometimes geographically dispersed, enabling those who make research happen to connect with others from all over the world. It can also disregard the traditional use of time (e.g. the moment of asking a question online and the moment in which someone answers it). All of these characteristics enable for a more fluent scientific process.

Another idea worthy of mentioning, also found in the glossary and interestingly tackled, is the place/space duo and its place in qualitative research. Methods are discussed,

examples of researchers and their work on Human and Regional Geography laid before the viewer. Among all of these, the internet is now a faithful servant to a new Geography, since the world we live in and study changes radically each day. The now dated notion of cyberspace is presented as an almost geographical place: it is a place of study and one to study at the same time.

There are "three main types of the internet mediated research: online questionnaires, virtual interviews and virtual ethnographies and it also reminds us of some ethical issues that we may encounter using this kind of approach" (Madge, 2012, p. 173).

Online questionnaires point out to a method that can replace the traditional telephone and face-to-face surveys. The online questionnaire consists of a variety of questions, under different designs, and it is spread on the internet in a multitude of languages. The purpose of this is to cover different users and is cheaper than door-to-door surveys. Also it needs careful attention to how it is built and it is recommended that it should not take more than 15 minutes to complete it, so that the researchers can benefit of an effectiveness of the study. There are some principles that one should observe when it comes to applying the online questionnaires (Madge, 2012, p. 175).

First of all, it should contain background information about the purpose of the research, how long it takes to complete the survey and also how the researcher can be contacted. It also requires special attention to confidentiality of data and respondents' anonymity. Secondly, the researchers need to be careful about the type of questions that are presented in the survey. They should be clear and precise and it is recommended to avoid the technical terms or jargon and questions that the respondents do not have knowledge about, while it should be written in non-sexist, non-racist, non-homophobic language (Madge, 2012, pp. 175-176).

Even if this method seems to be more adequate than a traditional face-to-face survey, it should be taken into consideration also on what type of study it is used and also we should not forget about the time that the researcher spends preparing the online survey, and the sensitivity of the subject that is brought into the discussion (Madge, 2012, p. 176).

The second method of the internet mediated research is virtual interviews. These are divided into two categories. One is the asynchronous type and the other is the synchronous type. The first one refers to email, internet forums, and discussion groups. Basically, using this type of interview, the researcher and the respondent do not have to be online at the same time, but also the discussion can be live, for example using skype or other types of video calling, like a conference (Madge, 2012, p. 177). The other type, which is the synchronous way, consists of everything taking place in real-time, like the chat rooms or online conferencing (Madge, 2012, pp. 177-178).

The advantage of these methods, in comparison to the traditional ones, is that they can cover a geographically dispersed population and they reduce the costs of transportation and hired staff. Internet mediated research also reaches to different types of groups and individuals that live in dangerous places or are socially isolated. Using this method, the researcher also has to be careful about how this is going to take place, such as having a procedure that will explain the respondents what is the purpose of the study and how important it is for them to give honest answers (Madge, 2012, pp. 177-178).

One should also pay attention to the confidentiality of the information that respondents give and the errors of the system that may take place while passing on the data (e.g. internet interruptions). It is recommended that a date and time are established for virtual interviews, either by telephone or by email (Madge, 2012, p. 178).

Unlike the online questionnaires, here one can use a so called "netlingo", which refers to emoticons, short abbreviations of expressions. This may, on one hand, replace the body language from face-to-face surveys, but also it should not be exaggerate, because it can suggest a form of puerility (Madge, 2012, p. 179).

The last method is the virtual ethnographies, which include online communities and it is applied to a larger scale. It can refer to a particular online community or to a series of communities, by observing cultures based on online social interactions. It is based on observation of how links are made between individuals on different subjects, without face-to-face interactions. In this type of approach, researchers may have a passive attitude, in which they only observe or they may participate at discussions.

Delving deeper in this matter, we will now focus on another process that enables Geography, among other disciplines, to evolve, this time digitally. This process, labelled data mining, data archaeology, information harvesting, information discovery, knowledge extraction, data fishing or data dredging constitutes a "family" of equivalent concepts that refer to the process of searching for patterns among the massive amounts of data stored online. It requires some programming skills, as well as knowledge of statistics and has applications in Geography, especially in Human and Regional Geography.

Biber-Hesse and Griffin (2012) discuss mixed methods of research that use internet mediated technology, present four case studies to exemplify and fortify their theoretical background (1. Studying the Dynamics of Social Capital: The Role of Social Media; 2. Building Self-identity Online; 3. Studying Online Social Support Groups, and 4. Studying Social Movements Online) and conclude by emphasizing the advantages of internet mediated methods in terms of low costs and time saving, but, at the same time, raise several questions

and look to start a debate on the implications and meanings of the new methods portrayed.

Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn generate a massive amount of valuable social data, but how can a researcher find out who is actually connecting with social media, their discussions and their locations? Trying to stay away from privacy invasion, Russell (2011) intends to show how to combine social web data, analysis techniques, and visualization to help one find what one has been looking for in the social haystack, as well as useful information many never knew existed. It is a book primarily for those individuals who are accustomed to programming, but the list of techniques and methods is broad enough for researchers from other fields to browse through them and attempt to apply to their own research.

In the following paragraphs, we will showcase several examples of geographic studies that employ internet research and data mining in particular.

The convergence of newly interactive web-based technologies with growing practices of user-generated content disseminated on the internet is creating a remarkable new form of geographic information. People are using smartphones or tablets to collect geographic information and contribute it to crowd-sourced data sets, using web-based mapping interfaces to mark and annotate geographic features, or adding geographic location to photographs, text, and other media shared online. These phenomena, which generate what we refer to collectively as volunteered geographic information (VGI), represent a shift in how geographic information is created and shared and by whom, as well as in its content and characteristics (Elwood *et al.*, 2010). This VGI can be processed and patterns can be extracted from it.

Geography is a discipline that is data-driven, but, more than that, is online data driven, as changes occur not just in the volume of data. The speed and variety that one can capture with the help of GPS, GIS and, above all, the internet, are increasing at a breakneck pace (Miller and Goodchild, 2014).

This big data (extremely large data sets on cloud, private servers, social media, etc.) can be used to tackle geographic knowledge discovery (internet mediated), as well as spatial modelling.

At the same time, several questions were raised concerning privacy, which is crucial in this endeavour, avoiding fallacy and, last, but not least, refraining from what the authors call "data dictatorship" (Miller and Goodchild, 2014, p. 61), trying to convince academics to use data driven research as mere support, and not completely replace the thinking of actual human beings. In short, help yourself with data, but think for yourself.

Again Miller, this time alongside Han (Miller and Han, 2009), provide an overview on what constitutes data mining, knowledge discovery from data bases (shortened as KDD) and data warehousing, then focus their attention on geographic data mining and knowledge discovery. Geographic processes exhibit characteristics that KDD must take into account and incorporate into their inner workings. This may enable the study of spatial clustering, spatial classification, spatial trends and their detection, spatial characterization and generalization, spatial association and, of course, geovisualisation, as Cartography is the building block of Geography.

Similarly, Kitchin (2013) concludes that big data, as it is and as it will continually develop, is influencing geographic studies, by becoming a crucial part of them. Despite the opportunities big data offers, it will have its share of risks and problems to overcome. Overhauling the existing methods, designed and suitable for an older generation of geographic thought, may prove difficult. It is Kitchin's belief that Human Geography and its subfields (Economic Geography, Cultural Geography, Urban Geography, etc.) and Regional Geography have the ability to find a way forward that is based on thinking in critical and qualitative GIS, radical statistics, and mixed-method approaches.

The multidisciplinary approach is once again brought into focus by Gianotti and Pedreschi (2008), which reunite a group of thinkers from many areas of expertise. As it should be, data mining and internet mediated research in general are not the sole domains of geographers, hence the reason for which the book and all the knowledge it contains is directed at researchers, regardless of their field: first of all, for computer science researchers, and also for researchers from other disciplines (such as Human and Physical Geography, Statistics, Social Sciences, Law, Telecommunications, Engineering, and so on), who should be willing to engage in this multidisciplinary research area. Only then can their studies have a broad social and economic impact.

Phithakkitnukoon *et al.* (2012) present the relationship between people's mobility and their social networks based on an analysis of calling and mobility traces for one year of anonymized call detail records of over one million mobile phone users in Portugal. About 80% of the places visited are within just 20 km of their nearest (geographical) social ties' locations. This figure rises to 90% at a 'geo-social radius' of 45 km. In terms of their travel scope, people are geographically closer to their weak ties than to their strong ties.

The former are just acquaintances, while the latter are "... people who are socially close to us and whose social circles overlap with our own" (Phithakkitnukoon *et al.*, 2012, p. 4). Specifically, they are 15% more likely to be at some distance away from their weak ties than from their strong ties. The likelihood of being at some distance from social ties increases with the population density, and the rates of increase are higher for shorter geo-social radii.

In addition, the area population density influences the geo-social radius - denser areas imply shorter radii. In urban areas such as Lisbon and Porto, the geosocial radius is roughly 7 km and this increases to approximately 15 km for less densely populated areas. The study sheds some light on the geography of human mobility and presents some ways to use

smartphone data to investigate the interaction between people's mobility and their social networks.

Bike sharing is used in a study conducted by Vogel, Greiser and Matteld (2012) to show the ability of data mining and internet research as a whole to dredge patterns from the online "pond". It analyses data from bike-sharing systems in the City of Vienna in order to derive bike activity patterns and finds several imbalances in bicycle distribution that need to be addressed.

The authors used geo-enabled processes which are able to apply geospatial capabilities to any process in order to establish the spatial location of business data, and enable spatial analysis, as well as exploratory and cluster analyses of the bicycle ridership data. Despite its limited size and scope, the study manages to display data mining's strength and ability to bring issues to the attention of academia and decision-makers so that they can find solutions effectively and rapidly.

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "Learning about Feminism in Digital Spaces: Online Methodologies and Participatory Mapping" (McLean *et al.*, 2016)

The first case study was written by Jessica McLean, Sophia Maalsen, and Alana Grech, from the Department of Geography and Planning, Macquarie University, Australia. The research was conducted online in July 2014, and the results were published in February 2016.

The research aims to map feminist movements in Australia and to find out the motivation behind activism in the Facebook group *Destroy the Joint* (McLean *et al.*, 2016). Also, the authors aim to identify if the movement managed to

achieve, through its campaigns, the individual feminist goals of its members and, if so, which of these achievements are more representative (McLean *et al.*, 2016).

According to their Facebook page, *Destroy the Joint* (DTJ) "stands for gender equality and civil discourse in Australia, and it was founded in September 2012 to provide a community for those who are sick of sexism in Australia" (https://www.facebook.com/DestroyTheJoint/). This online community has over 82,000 followers.

In order to achieve their goals, the authors used participatory mapping in GIS and qualitative survey as main research methods, which were applied online, with the DTJ moderators help. The survey took the form of a live discussion between the researchers, the moderators, and the members of the DTJ. Participatory mapping meant that the members could locate themselves on an online map, whilst the survey implied questions related to the participants' feminist interests (McLean *et al.*, 2016).

The survey was published on the DTJ Facebook group page, where, according to the authors, 1,179 people accessed it and 888 completed it. All members of the research collective are following this movement, either on Facebook, Twitter, or both, thus applying another internet mediated research method – *the virtual ethnography* (Madge, 2010). This method is much like real-life ethnography, but implies studying online communities either passively, by observation, or actively, by engagement and participation (Madge, 2010).

The participatory mapping used by the authors was a hybrid of Participatory GIS and volunteered geographic information methods, as one of its objectives was to *encourage community identity* amongst participants (McLean *et al.*, 2016). The tool used by the authors was Google My Maps, an online collaborative mapping platform that was user friendly and provided the best environment available for this research.

Even though some of the participants experienced technical issues with Google Maps application on their devices, almost 1,000 members accessed the survey within three hours from its release (McLean *et al.*, 2016). According to the authors, this rate of involvement reflects the DTJ members' enthusiasm and activism.

The resulting map suggests there is no particular pattern in the geographic dispersion of the participants, but rather a random one, with a more intense activity amongst bigger cities (McLean *et al.*, 2016). Another important aspect is that the DTJ reached members from outside Australia, demonstrating how social media can be more effective than classical campaign strategies (McLean *et al.*, 2016).

The qualitative survey included questions that helped authors understand better if the social media can generate significant effects in real world and vice versa, if real world problems can mobilize people on the internet, to take action and activate for a cause (McLean *et al.*, 2016). In addition, some questions from the survey invited members to give feedback on the campaigns conducted by the DTJ and come up with new ideas for future campaigns (McLean *et al.*, 2016).

Analysing the responses, authors concluded that *feminist practices in Australia are diverse, complex and reflexive* (McLean *et al.*, 2016). The final results of the survey were uploaded on a blog, www.geofeminism.org, but were not promoted on the DTJ Facebook group, so that only a small share of the participants accessed it.

The collaborative online research conducted by the authors of the paper has multiple advantages. Firstly, being conducted via Facebook, the survey was faster and cheaper than a face-to-face one and covered an impressive geographical area – from entire Australia, to Europe and to North America, in an even more impressive short period. Within the first 3 hours of the survey Call for Participation, nearly 1,000 people accessed it, a performance almost

impossible to achieve in real life. Overall, there were 888 participants who completed the survey (McLean *et al.*, 2016).

Secondly, the results could be seen in real time, by all members, especially regarding participatory mapping, thus contributing to increase the feeling of belonging to a community, with impact on its identity, and to exchange ideas. Another significant advantage of this aspect was that the DTJ members could give feedback about the survey, so that the authors could either help them, if there were any problems, or improve the survey on the go, as it actually happened with the mapping methods. Moreover, since the authors were members of the group as well, they were able to engage in conversations with the respondents.

Overall, even though there are a few disadvantages of web-bases surveys, if conducted properly, these surveys could reach people from around the world, in a very short period of time, and with minimum costs. Moreover, most of the time, the results can be seen live by the authors and, sometimes, by the participants as well. Finally, if the survey implies online conversations in real time, the researchers can improve their method, can help participants, and can engage in debates or discussions that can provide valuable information for their research.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "The Geography of Islamophobia in Sydney: Mapping the Spatial Imaginaries of Young Muslims" (Itaoui, 2016)

The second case study was written by Rhonda Itaoui from the School of Social Sciences and Psychology, Western Sydney University, Australia. The research was conducted online in July 2014, and its results were published in June 2016.

The aim of this research is to map Islamophobia across Sydney, through the eyes of young Muslim residents of the city

(Itaoui, 2016). Islamophobia is described by Oxford English Dictionary as *intense dislike or fear of Islam, especially as a political force; hostility or prejudice towards Muslims.* According to Noble and Poynting (2010), cited by the author, Islamophobia, the 'new racism', occurs in public spaces, constraining Muslims from their everyday social life, especially since the 9/11 attacks.

In order to achieve her goal, the author used a web-based survey method, adminstering a questionnaire and conducting semi-structured interviews. The paper used as a case study in here is focused solely on the qualitative aspects of the questionnaire results.

As stated before, the survey was conducted online, via the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy (ISRA) and social media. The main objective of the research was to capture young Muslims' perceptions over public space and livelihood. The survey had a first section including demographic questions such as gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, or suburb of residence (Itaoui, 2016).

The second section focused on Muslims' perceptions by using questions with Semantic Differential scale response options (Itaoui, 2016). "Semantic Differential measures people's reactions to stimulus words and concepts in terms of ratings on bipolar scales defined with contrasting adjectives at each end" (Heise, 1970, p. 253). In this study, SD questions were related to levels of multiculturalism, tolerance and feelings of safety in various regions across Sydney (Itaoui, 2016). Finally, the third section of the survey asked participants to name up to ten suburbs of Sydney, where they felt more or least accepted as Islamists (Itaoui, 2016).

Overall, there were 102 web-based surveys commenced and 74 completed, with a majority of females and high levels of education participants. SD responses were compared to a previous study on racism conducted by Forrest and Dunn in 2007. The results are quite similar, but there are some regions

which "are more or less 'Islamophobic' than there are 'racist'", according to the author (Itaoui, 2016, p. 275).

The resulting maps for the last question, suggest a defined distribution of perceived rejection or acceptance of Islamic identity across Sydney with Sutherland, Sydney's North Side/Eastern Suburbs, and the Upper North Shore being the most Islamophobic regions of the city (Itaoui, 2016). Also, the results contrast Forrest and Dunn's assertion that cultural diversity is the only reliable predictor of racism, as, in this case study, a greater number of Muslims in an area appears to generate a stronger sense of acceptance towards Islam (Itaoui, 2016).

The study conducted by Rhonda Itaoui gives an inside on the Islamic minorities' perspectives over racism and how it is spatially distributed, as Islamophobia seems to affect young Muslims' social lives, thus being an important issue in Sydney. Because of the small number of participants, 74, the author highlights the need for an extensive research in order to understand better the relationships between racism and mental maps of exclusion. Also, and the end of the paper, as a conclusion, Rhonda Itaoui emphasizes that "in order to adequately conceptualise the socio-spatial implications of racism on certain ethnic and/or religious minorities, a specialised, empirical approach should be adopted to capture the nuances of racism, across cultures, space and time" (Itaoui, 2016, p. 276).

The online questionnaire applied by the author for this survey has both advantages and disadvantages. First of all, being an online survey method, the online questionnaire is faster and cheaper than the traditional surveys, therefore the author was able to apply it on a larger scale, covering multiple suburbs of Sydney, in a shorter period of time (i.e. 18 days). However, even though there were 102 surveys commenced, only 74 were completed (Itaoui, 2016). Online questionnaires seem to have lower response rates than face-to-face ones (Madge, 2010). Finally, according to the author of the paper,

the responses were calculated with a statistical analysis computer programme, thus the accuracy of data collection and the swiftness of data processing are significantly greater than in classical methods.

4. Conclusions

The internet mediated research may be a faster and cheaper option to make a study and it helps Regional Geography in collecting a multitude of data from different regions that one can access easily in a short period of time. It has a great potential in receiving geographical information through the internet, by using social media and the three main types of mediated research. One also has to consider what the study is about and if it is better to use online research or stick to the traditional one. At this point, we cannot say that one is better than the other, because both have advantages and limitations.

Taking into consideration the case studies and the context of applying the internet mediated research, indeed it was the fastest and the cheaper way to receive significant data that led to important results like, "The Geography of Islamophobia in Sydney: Mapping the Spatial Imaginaries of Young Muslims" (Itaoui, 2016), that has reached a lot of subjects across Sydney. It is clear that, in Regional Geography, the online approach is effective especially because, in a virtual space, you can hide your identity, which gives you more courage to express freely your opinions and can give the researcher honest answers.

This type of research however is so much more than that, as it can, in many ways, reach data and information that would normally be unattainable in a world with little or no internet access. Unfortunately, not all human and regional geographers, due to their education, can undertake alone using internet mediated research and a concerted, multidisciplinary approach is required, one that would bring researchers with

programming skills into this endeavour, as well as experts in other fields.

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Chapter 10. Cross-cultural Research

Ioana Scridon & Alexandra-Maria Colcer

Contents

1. Definitions

The cross-cultural attribute is well known and used, although, in some contexts, not in its true sense. In a first instance, its definition seems to be given by the relationship (ethnic, religious, gender, etc.) between different cultures, with emphasis on an issue, but, in fact, interculturality aims at solving a problem by facing different cultures in order to identify similarities and differences (Brislin, 1976, p. 215).

"Cross-cultural research is a scientific method of comparative research which focuses on systematic comparisons that compare culture to culture and explicitly aim to answer questions about the incidence, distributions, and causes of cultural variation and complex problems across a wide domain" (Ilesanmi, 2009, p. 82).

This definition underlines the complexity of the research method, as well as its wide area of use. Although it is most often used by ethnologists, cross-cultural research has advantages for other social sciences such as anthropology, sociology or history (Temple, 2008, p. 179).

2. Theoretical background

A culture includes a multitude of values, perceptions, and interpretations. It cannot be understood by evaluating a single case, but by knowing the majority, the under layers. This does not mean knowing the whole culture, but, in order to identify basic features, a comparison is needed between common, identifiable, easy-to-follow patterns (Temple, 2008, p. 179).

Cross-cultural research has both advantages and disadvantages. The quality of the information depends on choosing the best-suited method for the subject and also on the way the method is applied. The methodology of cross-cultural research is challenging. Ilesanmi (2009) argues that this type of research is possible only in comparative situations, where a benchmark and "differences and similarities between different groups in society" (p. 179) exist.

"The application of this method requires good knowledge of the features of spontaneous non-verbal communication and supposes a very rigorous methodological system, including qualitative methods that could be used while researchers are both sensitive and reflexive in their relationship with the members of the researched community" (Scridon and Ilovan, 2016, p. 57).

Cross-cultural research uses the qualitative methodology in order to find out what aspects of the cultures confronted could be universal. In a case-study of a Ph.D. thesis, the studied culture (ethnic) was compared with the researcher's one and common points, as well as differences, were highlighted (Scridon, 2012). One of the first reactions encountered during the research was exactly pointing out the

differences by one of the respondents: “How can somebody like you, from outside our culture, understand what tradition and customs mean for us, which are the relationships with the others, which were our feelings during key moments in our history?” (Scridon and Ilovan, 2016, p. 55). This kind of difficulties encountered during the research can destructure it and lead to another kind of approach.

The results of a cross-cultural research do not give the right to deliver a verdict on a culture or to state something as a general truth, but rather they allow finding different forms of interpretation of variations (Ilesanmi, 2009, p. 82).

It should be taken into account that, when using comparisons, ethical issues which concern “values and worldviews, definitions, research design, informed consent, entry into the field, confidentiality, approaches to data collection, participant roles, ownership of data, writing, representation, and dissemination of results” (Ilesanmi, 2009, p. 92) can appear.

Another aspect of using this methodology is underlined by Ember and Ember, which focuses, not on the method, but on the way it is applied:

> “No general explanations are possible if there are no similarities across cultures. But cross-culturalists do not deny the uniqueness of each culture. Uniqueness and similarity are always present at the same time. What you see depends on how you look. If you focus on uniqueness, you may observe snowflakes and notice that each one has a unique structure; if you focus on similarity, you may observe that all snowflakes are roughly hexagonal and all melt when their temperature exceeds 32 degrees Fahrenheit at sea level” (Ember and Ember, p. 6).

Besides the fact that not all cultures can be compared, the researcher has to take into account aspects that concern the way of comparison and its equity. An important issue is the spatial demarcation; then, the data collected, be it primary (gathered by the researcher) or secondary (census, statistics, other research, etc.); lastly, the moment of comparison,

namely if the data was collected in the same period (Ember and Ember). These are considered the main guidelines in applying the cross-cultural methodology.

By summing up all the fundamental elements of a cross-cultural research, the results can lead to generalisation or emphasis on specificities depending on the purpose of the research (see also Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014).

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "Problems of Abstraction and Extraction in Cultural Geography Research: Implications for Fieldwork in Arctic North America" (Schlosser, 2014)

From the beginning, it is beneficial, or even necessary, to know that the diverse research methods are not being used individually and that the limit between them is not strongly marked, so that they are able to merge together, as a puzzle, which only when it's done can be fully admired and comprehended.

Even if we speak of the interview, the focus group, the observation, the intercultural research, all of them have as a basis the participation of specialists, of researchers that usually begin their study from a certain premise. To the researchers can be added the subjects – the persons that helped obtaining the research results. They may be regarded as being extremely valuable, or even vital to the study. By using as many participants as possible, the study also gains a higher accuracy. A third element is the method, or the manner in which the specialist gathers the necessary information from the subjects, and interprets it. The collection of data is only a first step, to which we can add its validation, filtration, comparison, analysis, and formulation of results.

As previously mentioned, the methods are not rigid, this being the reason for which they merge together. The methodology is that certain know-how through which the aim of research can be achieved.

We shall consequently speak of cross-cultural research, using a mixed, complex methodology that combines diverse domains, the psychological, social, economic, and the geographical one. Cross-cultural research implies a rigorous methodological frame, but also observing certain rules that are being learnt through the duration of the study, the new culture being discovered by the author during the research period, more specifically when he gets actively involved into the research. The language in which the collection of data occurs is the language of the researched culture, often a different one from the researcher's. It is possible that the researcher has to travel to the study area. A certain sensitivity to the cultural similarities and differences is required. Moreover, the researcher's position can influence the study results.

The first amongst this type of case studies is "Problems of Abstraction and Extraction in Cultural Geography Research: Implications for Fieldwork in Arctic North America", written by Kolson Schlosser from the Department of Geography and Urban Studies, Temple University, Philadelphia, and published in 2014. Professor Kolson Schlosser "ran a series of focus groups in the Inuit village of Kugluktuk, Nunavut, in 2011, as part of a project to triangulate the history and practices of the global diamond industry, their construction of Canadian diamonds as 'ethical' alternatives to African diamonds vis-à-vis images of polar bears, icebergs, snowy white landscapes, maple leaves, etc., and the reaction to the above by residents of Kugluktuk" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 195).

The author started research using the premise encountered in the book *After Method* by J. Law (2004), who stated that the world was a complicated and hard to understand environment. In order to get to know the world, one should breach the barriers of traditionalism and have a

multitude of new, flexible research methods that could be applied in diverse situations. The author' personal contribution to the article was given by the "experience researching the cultural politics of diamond mining in northern Canada to both illustrate and expand upon Law's observations" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 195). In addition, he used the historical approach, this being always present in specialty studies.

To reach its goal, the study was "buttressed by semi-structured interviews and archival research" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 195), besides focus groups. The author specified that the advantage of focus groups was enabling interpersonal communication. A series of disadvantages appeared too, such as subjectivism, for which he gave an example showing that a certain individual's statements could be diverse and changed in other people's presence, that the truth was not always told when using this method of data collection and that answers differed depending on the presence of other people around. There was also scepticism with which people regarded the interviewer, considering him an outsider, term used also when referring to the ones in charge of the mine.

Nevertheless, the author used this method up to a certain point, using the concept of *empiricism* with its double meaning: observation and perception (both the author and the interviewees underwent these two processes).

Moreover, semi-structured interviews allowed the respondents to tackle certain aspects the interviewer had not thought about before. Their response exemplified how and why the indigenous community members' perspective actually added value to the geographical analysis—it helped show what questions needed to be asked.

As one could have noticed by now, this research methodology was an ample one, based on the "geography of what happens" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 197) and on "Human Geography", with practices from diverse scientific fields and with a higher permissiveness when compared to other methods or practices.

Discussions with the inhabitants were fundamentally important, these people being the ones giving information about the social evolution of their village. As a social group is formed due to the fact that each society is itself a social system, highly sensitive, with entrances and exits, the pulse of changes can only be taken from the residents, who are able to detect even the most insignificant stimulus.

To the function of measuring external factors, the social system of the village also has the function of auto-organizing external stimuli. Even though going back to the original state is not possible, in this case, the most important part was represented by the inhabitants' attempts to maintain an optimal residence. This process was continuous and hard to keep under control, the human component being the most dynamic amongst all the other ones.

In addition, it was necessary to take into account, besides the opinions of the people working in the area, also those of the people newly established there. The latter were the ones who brought along the said changes to the social system, being interested in how the locals perceived them.

To all these people, researchers cannot address pre-established questions. On the contrary, free discussions are encouraged to be able to clearly perceive the inhabitants' dissatisfactions, fears, and satisfactions. Inter-culturalism could be noticed in this case study through two different camps: the Eskimos', the residents of the land of polar bears, icebergs, snowy white landscapes, and maple leaves, at 425 km from the mine, and the workers', coming from the south to work in the study area.

In this case study, speaking of a village found in the proximity of a mining area, it was self-implied that the mine represented the element around which the whole activity gravitated, and the resources (i.e. diamonds) were not to be neglected in the context in which that mineral was highly valuable. Its value was given by its rarity, diamond deposits

being discovered mostly in Africa and in certain locations in the U.S.A., Australia, and in Russia.

Before the 1940s, the Inuit had minimal contact with Europeans. The Europeans arrived there only to hunt whales or trade furs and not to stay in the area too long. But that changed with time. Permanent settlements were created in the Arctic around new airbases and radar stations built to watch out for rival nations. Mines in the area contributed to the immigration of a significant number of Europeans. Tourism also favoured the arrival of a large number of foreigners in the Arctic. Now, the Arctic is much more accessible for everyone. Being accessible, it is more humanized.

From this research, the author could conclude that the Inuks (term making reference to the inhabitants) were conservative, family-men, as they themselves stated: "we're more about family, we tend to take care of each other" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 201). For them, the safety of the family, guaranteeing food supplies and shelter represented their essential purpose. That was all, the basic needs. Consequently, they stated that "the only times we really care about money is when, say, none of us go hunting, and we need something to eat, then we'll worry about money, if we have nothing to eat, but then again if you're a skilled hunter and you go out and provide for your family" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 201).

It was also established that the impact of the mining industry was big, as the material side had become more important, the Inuks affirming "nowadays all you need is the money" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 201). In the past, due to isolation, they were not aware of money, mentioning the fact that the Inuit culture had passed from the connection with nature to the dependency on work and salaries.

It can be concluded that, in the case of the present article, the author demonstrated how cross-cultural research could reveal less known happenings, the researcher' role, and the fundamental importance that each participant had for the study, the opinions that the members of the above mentioned

culture had, the way in which they lived and how they perceived other cultures or the external influences, afterwards offering an example of how the historical context shaped the needs that the Inuks had.

Besides these, the manner in which the researcher got involved into the conversation, the questions he asked and his silences were very important. The research methods (mostly the interview) were based on the questions asked. The theory influenced the method, and a wrong question could endanger the study more than the improper use of a method (Schlosser, 2014, p. 203).

In the article, was mentioned a part of a focus group where the members were young Inuits who were shown a copy from an advertisement for "Maple Leaf Diamonds." (Schlosser, 2014, p. 195) In a focus group, the researcher acts as a moderator. He launches a topic of discussion and then the topic is debated by group members. Remarks as "laugh", "group laughter" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 201) showed the openness the young Inuits had to the researcher. The moderator must be very careful during discussions and encourage it verbally and through gestures and mimicry. "Looks at the moderator" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 202) showed us that the moderator played the most important role, but also how he was perceived by the group.

Theoretical approaches help improve methodology and the data obtained help improve research and theory as well, and thus also the future methodology. One can notice a certain cyclicity.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "The New Mimics? Cross-cultural Learning in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil" (Eisentraut, 2016)

The article was written by Jochen Eisentraut, lecturer at the School of Music, Bangor Univeristy, Wales, U.K. According to

the author, this research "examines a particular instance of 'place polygamy', involving voluntary engagement with an 'alien' culture by visiting outsiders" (Eisentraut, 2016, p. 28). He researched a place where the Europeans came into contact with the African-Brazilian culture and learnt some aspects related to their music and dance.

It is an ethnographic article that captures the way in which Westerners were in contact with the new culture. Those who participated in the study came for two reasons: to travel - as tourists – and to learn. The research for the study was conducted during a period of five weeks in 2010/2011 and five months in 2013/2014 (Eisentraut, 2016, p. 32). The author mentioned that the year 1997 was the moment he had started research work.

The study presented the interaction between the tourists and locals. Tourists were in contact with teachers or people with other different jobs, persons who taught the tourist a lot of curiosities about of their own culture. The tourist gaze was "consuming" these places (Eisentraut, 2016, p. 28).

The idea of mimics is developed and theorised by Homi K. Bhabha, one of the most important figures in contemporary post-colonial studies, in geosciences about colonial and postcolonial experiences. People in the colonies took contact (more or less deliberately) with a new culture. They were forced to assimilate that culture. It goes without saying that the process of assimilation was gradual and the new culture could not replace in whole the local culture. At the intersection of the two cultures, a new culture was created, the so called "third space". Mimicry is a process which opens up new possibilities, new relations (Eisentraut, 2016, p. 28).

The same situation was encountered in Bahia. There were many people who went to the dance school, which attracted the young ones. Initially, they were seen as tourists, because they did not move there. The researcher managed to divide them broadly into four categories according to how much knowledge they had about the Afro-Bahian culture: type

1 - dippers, type 2 – divers, type 3 - swans, type 4 - mermaids (Eisentraut, 2016, p. 36).

Dippers were the curious and the beginners. They did not know many things about dance. They went to two or three dance classes per week and there they took a few introductory lessons, they became more curious and wanted to continue these lessons.

Divers were the enthusiastic ones. They played in a band or they were a part of a dance group at home. It was possible for them to perform in the Bahian carnival.

Swans were the ones who stayed there several months and came back often. They were "specialist visitors" (Eisentraut, 2016, p. 38).

Mermaids were Afro-Brazilian people, with a polytheistic faith of Candomblé. They were divided into tribes and used the African languages. There was a small number of Westerners who managed to enter the arcane world of Candomblé ritual and hierarchy.

For doing this research, the author had meetings with dancers, musicians, and capoeiristas (capoeira is "an art form that defies description. It is a fight, it is dance, a game. It is creativity, intuition, grace, strength, history and tradition" – (http://www.capoeirabrasil.com/the-history-of-capoeira/; capoeira is a martial art – http://www.capoeira-world.com/about-capoeira/capoeira-mestres/). Also, he was involved into the process of learning and was socially active.

To reach his goal, the author carried out seven formal interviews. The aim of the interviews was to explore the visitors' depth of engagement with their chosen practice and with Afro-Brazilian culture in general, from their own point of view, and from the perspective of the Bahian teachers and group leaders (Eisentraut, 2016, p. 33).

This research was intense and may be a model for future research. The author had a lot of experience in these

cross-cultural contexts. When he was a child, he moved from Germany to England with his family (Eisentraut, 2015, p. 48). He studied there. So, he took contact with a new language, new people, and new customs. We consider it being an important detail as it proves the author's experience with understanding a different culture.

Researchers must constantly improve the ability to interact with other people. They should train their patience, devotion and sociability, thus favouring interaction. Knowing foreign languages is a must, and more than this, the locals' language.

The concept of "mimicry" was pursued in the whole article, but the author eventually concluded that it was not well outlined. The current situation of Bahia was close to the idea of mimicry, but this concept was unlikely to be entirely applicable and needed to be developed and adapted in order to further illuminate the processes in question (Eisentraut, 2016, p. 47).

This cross-cultural study revealed researcher's significant role for the final result.

3.3. Review of case study 3: "Can You Hear us Now? Voices from the Margin: Using Indigenous Methodologies in Geographic Research" (Louis, 2007)

This article was written by Renee Pualani Louis, professor at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, USA. The author confesses: "I am a Hawaiian woman by birth, a cartographer by training, and an academic by choice" (Louis, 2007, p. 130).

Each year she took part at the Annual Meetings of the Association of American Geographers and, during one of these, the importance of indigenous methods was discussed. These meetings were the source of inspiration for this article. There is a group called *Indigenous People's Specialty Group* which sponsors these meetings. The aim of the Group is presented on

their website: “To encourage approaches to research and teaching that empowers indigenous peoples, and to help build relationships of mutual trust between communities of indigenous peoples and academic geographers” (http://www.indigenousgeography.net/).

The aim of the paper was to show the importance of indigenous methods for geographical research. Indigenous methods “include sharing knowledge based in oral history and storytelling tradition” (Kovach, 2010, p. 42). These methods are based on locals' own history, “their traditional teachings, spirituality, land, family, community, spiritual leaders, medicine people” (Louis, 2007, p. 131).

Indigenous people give a special attention to birthplace, highlighting the unique characteristics of their native areas. It is certainly an advantage for the research because it shows their strong connection with their native places. This connection helps the researcher to understand their mentality, their beliefs, their traditions, to understand better who they really are.

It is well known that the object of geographical study is situated at the crossroads of several other fields and indigenous methods help highlight how people perceive cultural research and how they relate to it.

This article showed the minuses of the Western research methods, and one of them was that researchers come in areas of the indigenous and conduct their research, using local resources (including human ones) for interviews, experiments, etc., and after they conclude their investigation and the final product comes out – article, magazine, book – the respondents are not informed how they helped the study and what were the research results. Thus, interaction between Western science and indigenous people just occurs when providing information (Louis, 2007, p. 134).

In addition, the need for field research and consultation with people living in those areas was nuanced. It was recalled

how a researcher talked about the problems of an indigenous area and had proposed various solutions without being there or having consulted with the natives. Solutions do not solve the problem itself, the solutions have to be directed towards causes. This is another principle of the indigenous methods.

Westerners are sceptical about indigenous methods: "[r]esearchers truly believed academic knowledge production must be used to benefit the community ... whether they wanted it or not" (Louis, 2007, p. 135). Moreover, the ethics of research was underlined when using indigenous methods: "[i]ndigenous methodology means talking about relational accountability. As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when you are doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgments of better or worst. You should be fulfilling your relationship with the world around you. What are my obligations in this relationship? The axiology or morals need to be integral part of the methodology so that when I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfil my end of the research relationship. This becomes indigenous methodology by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to all my relations" (Wilson, 2001, p. 177).

Regarding the geographic curriculum, the author supports Kovach's idea, either to introduce indigenous methods as an integral part of the research methodology course or to introduce a separate course dedicated to these methods. To fulfil the purpose (presenting the advantages of indigenous methods and their use on a global scale), the author called 'allies' the people who were "department heads and other university administrators who play crucial roles in the recruitment, retention, mentoring, and support of existing" (Louis, 2007, p. 136). So, the author saw an "allie" in important persons from the community, persons who were well trained and had important jobs.

Indigenous people are aware of the importance of indigenous methods. Therefore, they have created their own

contractual research documents to protect, to prove, and to represent their intellectual property rights.

The article ended with the idea of Crazy Bull (1997, p. 17, quoted by Louis, 2007, p. 137), who underlined keeping traditions, native language, in other words the uniqueness of the indigenous culture. It is also said that "[o]ur research can help us maintain our sovereignty and preserve our nationhood" (Louis, 2007, p. 137). Indigenous methodologies provide a new research perspective and also help strengthen indigenous people's identity.

4. Conclusions

Cross-cultural research is one of the best methods for knowing, understanding, and accepting a new culture. However, several factors come up in this process. It is difficult to understand the practices, beliefs, and customs of a culture you were not born in. It takes a lot of time spent in a community and participation in as many activities as possible in order for the researcher to come to see certain practices with the same eyes. Natives will tell even the slightest inconsistencies.

When it comes to this type of research, generalisation is not indicated. Given the fact that it is very difficult to contact every individual belonging to a culture, inadvertences appear. Nonetheless, the persons we come in contact with become, in our study, ambassadors of that culture.

One of the major drawbacks is that data collection requires a long time. Furthermore, language barriers can appear. Another problem is the way natives perceive the researcher. Some cultures are well acquainted with foreigners, while others have never had contact with somebody outside their community. In the latter case, the collaboration is more difficult, because it takes a long time to gain locals' trust.

However, there are also multiple advantages of the methodology. Researchers can find out previously unknown details about practices and behaviour within other cultures, they can improve the relationship of that culture with the neighbouring ones. Comparisons between different cultures can be made. This type of research allows theory testing and the blending of all research methods. Information can be obtained through any method, as long as it complies with ethical standards.

The domain is rich and this might be the strongest argument for this type of research. As geographers, it is our duty to know differences between cultures, not in order to diminish them, but on the contrary, to enhance them and create connections between them. This is especially true in Regional Geography where "unity in diversity" has become a motto (at least at a European level).

Tolerance, cultural acceptance, and the promotion of cultural specificities are needed. Whether it is a small tribe or a whole continent we are researching, every group of people leaves its mark on a territory and analysing this aspect falls under the geographer's responsibility.

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Chapter 11. Analysing Historical Sources

Péter Bagoly-Simó

Contents

1. Definitions

Historical sources–also known as primary or original sources or evidence–are artefacts, documents, and any kind of recordings created over a certain or at a certain time in the past.

While making use of sources, historians developed, over the course of decades, specific understandings of what qualifies as a historical source. As part of a survey, Stieg (1981) asked historians to identify their most frequently used sources. These were books, journals, and manuscripts. 23 year later, Stieg, Dalton and Charnigo (2004) carried out another survey finding that the 16 sources, in the order of their importance, were: books, journal articles, manuscripts, archives and special collections, dissertations, newspapers, government documents, photographs, maps, publications of scholarly organizations, websites, conference proceedings, oral

interviews, statistical sources, audio-visual materials, artefacts or museum pieces, and genealogical sources.

Geographers discovered the importance of sources for research in both Physical and Human Geography. While focusing on geomorphological research in the United States, Trimble and Cooke (1991) emphasized the importance of the following historical sources: travel and exploration accounts, newspapers and journals, instrumented land surveys, topographical surveys, geological, soil, and soil erosion surveys, aerial photographs, ground-based landscape photography, land-use data, drainage and irrigation records, climatological data, and stream and sediment discharge records.

This chapter aims at exploring the importance of historical sources for research in Regional Geography. In doing so, it first offers a brief introduction to regions and Regional Geography. It then proceeds to discussing three case studies and closes with conclusions.

2. Regions

Regions are constructed entities that are rarely static over time. Conducting research in Regional Geography across decades or centuries is essential to understanding the way space changes. Such research, according to Black (2010), generally focuses on historical sources (source-oriented research) or considers historical data to solve a specific problem (problem-oriented research).

Similar to any other method, a number of challenges are inherent to historical research in Regional Geography. The following three case studies exemplify some of these challenges.

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "The Geographic Concentration of Economic Activity across the Eastern United States, 1820-2010" (Latzko, 2013)

Tracing changing spatial patterns over time

Understanding the spatial patterns of economic activity is crucial for a number of stakeholders, such as policy, urban and regional planning, education, health care, etc. In most cases, however, both researchers and government agencies seem to adopt a rather short-term perspective on the spatiality of economic activity. This might offer superficial grounds for essential decisions regarding spatial planning.

As a consequence, David A. Latzko chose for his problem-oriented historical research mid- and long-term data analysis, when it comes to analysing the (change of) spatial patterns. To exemplify both the importance and the usefulness of such research, Latzko (2013) carried out an analysis of the geographic concentration of economic activity across the Eastern United States, between 1820 and 2010.

The *sample* of the study rests on decennial census data collected by the US authorities, since 1820, for the Eastern part of the United States. Latzko (2013) draws a line along the Mississippi and defines Eastern US as the states that lie East from the stream (Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia encompassing a total of 731 to 1,638 counties).

In contrast to many other studies focusing on urban areas, regions, or even on the national scale, Latzko (2013) underlines the importance of county-level data, as urban-rural dichotomies remain undivided, hence the spatiality of local economies remains intact. Naturally, a number of challenges arise when working with data ranging over 190 years.

Two aspects seem to be of uppermost importance. On the one hand, county borders experienced a number of changes over the course of the two centuries. On the other hand, data collection was not always continuous, which leads to missing data and an overall discontinuity of time series.

In addition, data collected on economic activities always reflects the specific understanding of the economic branches, forms of production, systematics of economic activities, etc. at the time of data collecting. With the transition from agricultural to industrial and subsequently to service societies, the very understanding of what industry meant at a given time, such as 1820, 1930, 1980 or 2010 might have a huge impact on data interpretation.

Latzko (2013) selected *research methods* that are sensitive to the challenges inherent to the sample. To measure the distribution of economic activity, the author computed the Gini coefficient. This indicator is not insensitive to spatial shifts, such as changing borders of the counties. Therefore, the Gini coefficient was biased downwards. However, the author was sensitive to this aspect and considered it accordingly, during the interpretation of his results.

Latzko (2013) constructed three measures of economic activity, namely agricultural density, manufacturing density, and population density, which were all computed in density per square mile of county area. In addition, some rules had to be formulated. For example, a county was defined as agriculture dense if its agricultural density was at least three standard deviations above the mean for all counties of the study area. Similarly, a county was considered to be

manufacturing dense if its manufacturing density was greater than two standard deviations above the mean of all counties.

Latzko (2013) proceeded to represent the computed values cartographically. He first analysed and discussed the three indicators separately to subsequently proceed to calculating correlation coefficients (Spearman's rank correlation).

Results show an initial increase of inequalities in the distribution of population and manufacturing with both forms of economic activity being concentrated around New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore, which reached its peak in the early post-World War II era. Subsequently, a trend of dispersion of population and manufacturing production set in. Latzko (2013, p. 80) concludes that "[o]bserved national development patterns replicate themselves over the long run across smaller geographic areas, even with the smallest feasible spatial units of analysis.

Aggregate manufacturing concentration follows the same historical pattern of concentration-then-dispersal as the micro industry-based data reported by Krugman (1991) and Kim (1995) and the rank-ordering of county manufacturing density is persistent. The leading manufacturing counties in 2010 were the leaders over a century ago".

Agriculture, however, after an initial phase of dispersion shows a trend of increasing concentration, which is due to improved transportation infrastructure and production technologies, such as the rise of commercial canning. Overall, "[...] as exurban land is converted to industrial and residential use, agricultural production will become further concentrated in the region" (Latzko, 2013: 80).

3.2. Review of case study 2: "An Intra-imperial Conflict: The Mapping of the Border between Algeria and Tunisia, 1881-1914 (Blais, 2011)

Reconstructing changing spatial patterns over time

The repercussions of European colonialism are still essential in many conflicts within and between former colonies and/or protectorates. Constructions of national space often happened on the grounds of regional processes between groups of indigenous people under the influence of colonial power(s).

Based on the source-oriented case study of the intra-imperial boundary between Tunisia and Algeria (both under French rule between 1881 and the 1910s), Blais (2011) aims at understanding the processes that took place between 1881 and 1914, while borders were drawn between two territories holding different legal status, but being administered by the same colonial power. While Algeria had become officially a French colony in 1830, Tunisia was given the status of French Protectorate in 1880.

In contrast to Latzko's (2013) paper, no individual subchapter describes the nature of the *sample* used by the author. Historical documents served as grounds to reconstruct the process of defining and drawing the boundary between the two territories under French influence.

Blais (2011) used two types of historical sources. On the one hand, two excerpts from inquiry sheets produced by the Border Commission in 1895 offer insight into the quantity and quality of available historical textual data. On the other hand, a total of five map sketches visualize both the way the Border Commission represented the collected data and alternative cartographic representations of the region. With the exception of a map from 1939, showing Algeria in the 17th century, all other maps were drawn between 1882 and 1894.

As in the case of the sample, Blais (2011) does not dedicate a special subchapter to the *research methods*. The entire paper is a narrative of an intra-imperial conflict. Blais (2011, p. 178) aims at understanding "[...] what was at stake when it came to separating two territories holding different legal status, but both administered by the French: Algeria which had officially become a French colony in 1830 and Tunisia which was given Protectorate status in 1880".

To achieve her aims, she raised questions and soak out answers in historical documents. In doing so, she chose a number of historical sources. Thereby, she extracted data in a very selective manner. The interpretation of the extracted data then turned into a narrative that rarely links back to published literature. This not unusual algorithm in historical research bears great challenges for research in Regional Geography as questions, such as the overall availability of historical sources, the quality of sources, the methodology of document analysis, etc. remain unanswered.

The main *findings* describe the interconnectedness between borders and identities. Borders–being physical barriers–divide different identities in various ways. In the case of the intra-imperial boundary between Tunisia and Algeria, the lived, constructed, perceived, and considered identities of indigenous people, military in charge of monitoring the border area, and colonial administration (both in the region and in Paris) seem to be fluid. Each one of these social identities is strongly connected to the territory of the drawn and redrawn border. However, social identity appears to be linked to the status of the colonized, which implicitly resulted in the attribution of a 'nationality' as a mark of colonial domination to specific groups of people.

Along these lines, identities could become and indeed became interconnected in both enforced and voluntary ways. In contrast to the voices registered in the historical sources, however, a number of stakeholders never told their stories. Blais (2011) reminds of the fact that the way indigenous people

perceived the border and valued the repercussions of its (re)drawing was never directly registered. Reading between the lines of the official documents and historical sources remains the only way to reconstruct their voices. This, however, is highly speculative and presumptuous.

3.3. Review of case study 3: "Umlandprozesse: Bevölkerungssuburbanisierung und Migrationen am Beispiel siebenbürgischer Städte" (Bagoly-Simó, 2012)

Explaining revisited changing spatial patterns over time

Daily life in former socialist countries means living in a hybrid world that contains elements of both the socialist past and the post-socialist present, but also new elements emerging from the interaction happening between the former two. Some of the most dynamic spaces of former socialist Europe after the fall of the iron curtain were the suburbs.

While rural spaces, and subsequently also urban areas experienced a progressive population decrease, suburban settlements around major cities enjoyed growth. However, the beginnings of growth in the suburbs precedes the post-socialist decades. Who are the people moving into the suburbs? What are their motivations? What kind of change occurs in the suburbs?

To answer these questions, Bagoly-Simó (2012) took a closer look at Transylvanian cities and their suburbs in a problem-oriented perspective. The *sample* consisted of data connected to Transylvania in historical sense (i.e. encompassing the current Romanian Banat and the Western territories along the Romanian-Hungarian border). Thereby, data of different nature served to grasp the complexity of suburban dynamics.

Firstly, statistical data on population dynamics (natality, mortality, immigration, and emigration), construction activity, and housing space per capita for the interval 1990-2007 allowed indicator-based quantitative analysis. All statistical data were collected by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (INS).

Secondly, historical sources served to understand the official status of the suburban space as defined within urban and regional planning from as early as the 1950s. Thirdly, survey-based data explored the individual migration experiences of suburban inhabitants. Fourthly, interviews with stakeholders (e.g. mayors, community leaders) offered insights into local and regional decisions and enabled a historical perspective on the suburban dynamics. The third and fourth type of data described above was limited to the case study of Târgu Mureş and its suburban space.

Exploring the suburban dynamics during post-socialism required a *mixed-methods approach*. Along with statistical analysis (descriptive statistics, factor analysis, cluster analysis), content analysis of historical documents, questionnaire-based surveys, and in-depth interviews served to grasp the changes that occurred in suburban Transylvania. Both data collection and the nature of historical data came with a number of challenges.

Firstly, the basic administrative units went through several changes. These materialized in shifting borders, hence changing spatiality of communes. All changes resulted from rural settlements splitting from communes and becoming independent administrative units. Overall, a tendency of administrative atomization became evident.

Secondly, some rural settlements that reached a certain threshold of population and displaying features of functional centrality in their immediate region were granted the status of urban settlements. In consequence, both developments represent a challenge when grasping the quantitative nature of the urban and the rural. Therefore, Bagoly-Simó (2012) opted

for the most recent administrative structure and computed spatial data.

Thirdly, historical sources, such as censuses preceding 1989 and official documents coming from urban and regional planning were only partly accessible. Fourthly, data published before 1989 remained under the suspicion of having experienced political mutilation. Interviews with stakeholders in charge of urban and regional planning as with mayors helped reconstruct processes, inaccessible data, and put the available data into context.

Results show that the concept of suburban space experienced repeated instrumentalization over the decades. During socialism, controlled internal migration led masses towards suburban communes as obtaining a permit to move to a city was difficult. The Romanian Communist Party, however, counted the suburban population as urban population to achieve a statistically higher urbanization rate (perceived as progressive and necessary to equal democratic societies). The physical space of the suburban settlements, however, was in the same time counted as rural space. As a result, suburban settlements became second-choice homes for the population that never received the permit to move to the cities.

After 1989, the official category of suburban settlement was abolished. Both population and surface of the suburbs was counted as rural. Similarly, the motivation to move into suburbs became more diverse. As in the case of many Western-European and Northern-American cities, young families with small children followed the dream of the single-family detached home in a relatively green area, in the immediate proximity of urban areas.

However, the special post-socialist condition also forced people to move into suburbs in order to decrease living expenses by means of subsistence agriculture, in the proximity of urban areas. Overall, suburbanization in former socialist Europe, in contrast to Western Europe, is fuelled by numerous motivations to relocate. Understanding these patterns,

however, required a historical glance at special prerequisites of spatial planning and migration histories.

4. Conclusions

Doing historical research in Regional Geography faces a number of challenges. Both the anatomy and the physiology of space and place, however, can only be understood in the light of their genetic factors. The case studies exemplify the major challenges of working with historical sources.

On the one hand, historical data–with the exception of oral history–rarely can be produced in the present. Therefore, in most cases, historical research in Regional Geography is limited to a certain amount of sources. On the other hand, data interpretation needs to happen in a specific social, political, and cultural context. Naturally, this applies only to a certain extent to physical-geographic data, such as temperature or precipitation data series.

However, knowledge on the measurement protocols and instruments used to carry out data harvesting are crucial. Being aware of these challenges is crucial when doing historical research on regions.

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Chapter 12. Analysing Cultural Texts

Ioana Scridon & Claudia-Violeta Tomoiagă

Contents

1. Definitions

Text analysis is a method of analysis of primary data from the point of view of the content and speech (Perkins, 2004, p. 35). In this sense, it can be considered a means of communication from a cultural perspective, a universal protocol, with a message to be transmitted, using image as a key to communication (Tomko, 2004, p. 72).

Cultural texts are a "language-game of cultural studies" (Barker, 2005, p. 4). This term and, implicitly, the qualitative research method, are used by historians, geographers, ethnologists, sociologists, linguists, etc. and are closely associated with the research in these fields. The analysis of a cultural text is no less than the decryption of the message

transmitted. However, it is not a classical operation of understanding, but rather a destructuring of the content.

Another definition of cultural texts consists more in an attempt to trace their field of action, as their meaning is "derived from the codes, conventions, and genre of the text and its social, cultural, historical, and ideological context, which can work together to convey a preferred reading of the text" (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865).

2. Theoretical background

Generally, texts, whether cultural or not, comprise messages with multiple interpretations. Some of the interpretations can be instantly "read", while, for others, a text analysis is needed in order to decrypt the hidden messages being transmitted. In any case, not all texts, not all cultural texts, contain information which can be decrypted by any reader (Kovala, 2002, p. 2).

Jacques Derrida proposes a deconstructivist interpretation of the deciphering of a message. "We think only in sign", idea launched by Michael Peirce, suggests that anything represented through signs offers more information than the sign itself (Valsiner, 2007, p. 43). When we speak, the signs activated in our subconscious through their images lead to the formation of the language of what we want to express. Based on the receiver and his/her previous experience, including the cultural one, the message is transmitted to a greater or lesser extent and so "the signs of that struggle are there to be read in its blind-spots of metaphor and other rhetorical strategies" (Norris, 1991, p. 19).

On a similar note, in the context of this discussion, Derrida's deconstructivism can be interpreted as "as a way of uncovering the questions behind the answers of a text",

according to Ricoeur's critical thinking in *Time and Narrative* (Klein, 1995, p. 8).

Another famous linguist, Michel Foucault, partially supports Derrida's idea, claiming that not only what is transmitted is important, but especially "when and where". This idea emphasizes the importance of the context in which the message is transmitted, and also that of the audience and the receiver (Rabinow, 1998, p. 63). Therefore, the textual analysis should be a contextual one and, implicitly, dependent on the culture, to the extent to which culture underlines the differences in social, cultural, and power relations (Kovala, 2002, p. 5).

Clearly, context can be modelled, the audience can be chosen, but the basic idea is that text analysis offers different interpretations in a cultural frame and texts should not be reduced solely to this analysis. "All cultural texts are limited in their ability to reach readers who do not share the cultural background and social values of the researchers/artists" (Perkins, 2004, p. 384). Therefore, text analysis does not give a "correct" interpretation, but a wide range of possible ones.

It is important to know the motives behind the cultural text. In the guides of *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, emphasis is placed on knowing the background of a cultural text or image which aim at transmitting a cultural message (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865):

> "[...] questions asked during textual analysis refer to the rhetorical context of the text (Who created the text? What are the authors' intentions? Who is the intended audience?), the specific textual characteristics (What topic or issue is being addressed? How is the audience addressed? What is the central theme or claim made? Is there evidence or explanation to support the theme or claim? What is the nature of this evidence or explanation?), and the wider context of the text (How does the text relate to other texts in the same genre or format?)".

An important issue in the analysis of cultural texts in Geography refers to the visual representations of cultural

"signs" on maps. They represent a new stage in the field of cartography, moving away from the medieval map, as a message aligned with political and historical events. Modern forms of investigating the visual in cartography and the new cartographic techniques have changed the meaning of "deconstruction" of sign language that were transmitted through Ancient and Medieval Cartography. There are important works which investigate the social and historical diversity of contexts in which maps have been created and then analysed (Perkins, 2004, p. 386).

One of the typical geographical means of transmitting a message or exemplifying something is the map. It is a project with specific objectives, clearly listed, which indicates what it should communicate depending on the audience it targets; just like a cultural text. The message creates the connection between the author of the map and the audience and it is the medium of communication, simultaneously implying coded values and strategies for the reception of information, not in the strict sense of representation, but in that of meaning.

"Looking at the map as an opaque device should be the way historians look at maps: that is, looking at maps for themselves, as artefacts, as construction, as a complex language, rooted in a society's visual culture" (Jacob, 2006, p. 14). It can be said that the map is a more sophisticated form of communication, even beyond verbal language, as it is "a cultural document, a creature of its time and place" (Perkins, 2004, p. 390).

The means of transmitting a cultural message are not simple conventional communication forms. They rely on the context in which the message is composed, on the context in which it is made public, as well as on the audience. The way of communication can be conventional or unconventional, it can involve images, text, or gestures.

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "Taking Possession: The Cartouche as Cultural Text in Eighteenth-century American Maps" (Clarke, 1988)

The main topic of this article is the human attempt to understand the world we are living in and our feeling of belonging to a certain space. Maps want to express an objective image of this feeling, and the article discusses maps in a different manner, perceiving them as images which reflect the relationship between some cultures and the area to which they belong. From these collective images, we can understand how culture imposes in the space itself, creating, in this way, a cultural text: a reconstruction of the culture over the world.

The purpose of the study, as the author mentions it, is to point out the map as a cultural image of the world, a combination between cartography and art, and to consider the decorative artworks found on the map as proof that these are cultural texts. The most relevant examples for this can be found on the 18th century maps of the British Colonies from North America.

As methods of research, the cartographic method was used mostly. Analyzing and interpreting the maps are the basis of this study, completed by the numerous bibliographic sources, through which the author manages to highlight the most important aspects of what a map means as a cultural text, and how the map describes in detail the cultural and social lives of the 18th century with the help of their most important assets: the cartouche and the artworks.

We will present next some clear examples of maps from the 18th century, in which there are described political or cultural images for which the cartouche was used with a decorative purpose (Figure 1). On this map we find represented the most inhabited part of New England, and the author wants to underline the importance of cartouche and of

the decorative art in the depicted image, as for example the MXCXX inscription graved in stone.

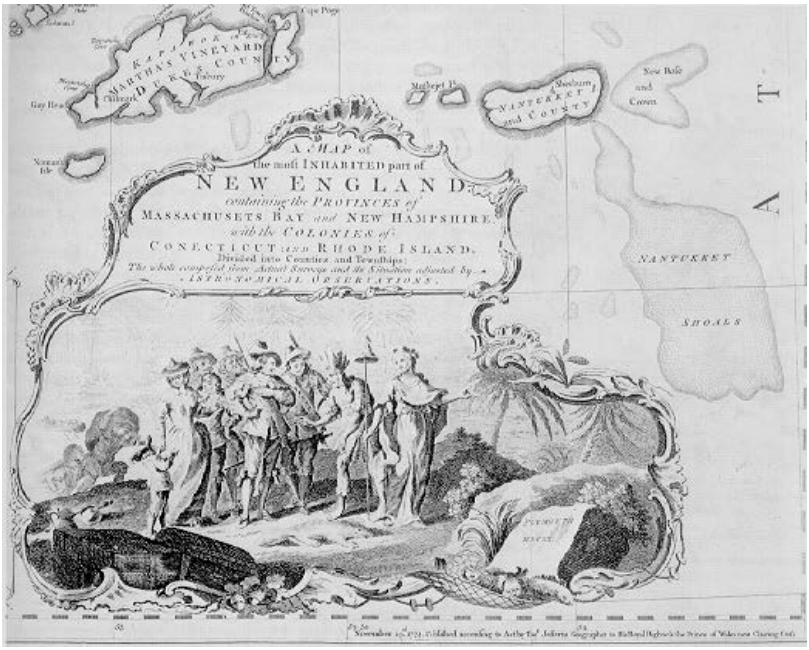

Figure 1. Thomas Jefferys, *A Map of the Most Inhabited part of New England 1774* (Library of Congress). Source: Clarke, 1988, p. 459

Another image which describes the political and cultural life of the 18th century is a 1773 map of the Province of South Carolina, which depicts the political and social life of that time, but also subtly suggests the racial disputes that were about to spread all over the United States.

We can see once more the importance of the ink and artwork, through which the white people are differentiated from the coloured (black) person. The two white people standing in the middle of the map seem to be in charge, while the black person is carrying something heavy on his back (Figure 2).

Figure 2. 'Jams Cook', *A Map of the Province of South Carolina, 1773*. Source: Clarke, 1988, p. 463

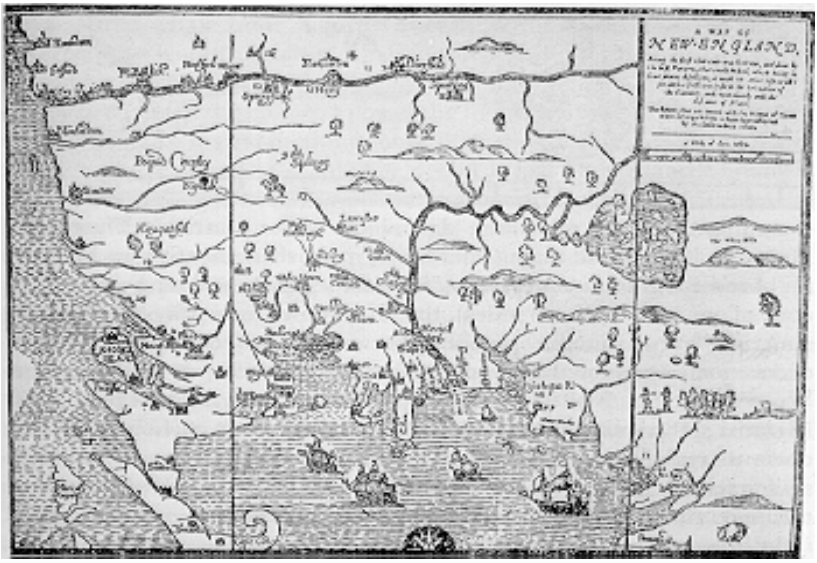

Figure 3. John Forster, 'A Map of New England', published in William Hubbard's *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England* (1677). Source: Clarke, 1988, p. 473

Figure 4. William Wood, *The South part of New-England (1634) in New England Prospect (1635)*. Source: Clarke, 1988, p. 474

Also as cultural texts are considered the more simple maps, without any ornaments or excessive detail. These maps also have the same meaning as the more detailed ones, expressing the feeling of belonging to a certain surrounding (Figures 3 and 4).

As a conclusion, the map, at its beginnings as a cultural text in America, had a distinct status as a property document, offering possession and dominance over the country, colony, or nation. As an administrative text, the map was considered a sign of authority, be it British, French, Spanish, or American.

The decorative role of the map depicts the objective nature of the perceived space in that time. Cartouche and decorative art have a fundamental role, which comes to complete the history of American cartography.

In his pursuit to prove that the map can also be seen as a cultural text, the author tries to use as suitable images as possible, and the cartographic method offered him the best support available.

3.2. Review of case study 2: "How Graffiti Provide Evidence on the Relation Writing, Orality, and Identity" (Depau, 2012)

The author of this paper, Giovanni Depau, is affiliated to Gipsa-lab, Université Stendhal, Grenoble, France. The linguistic differences existent on the island of Sardinia will be exemplified in his article by presenting a series of graffiti. Further, we will find out what their meaning is and how they can be considered as cultural texts.

This study shows how graffiti, if we look at them as cultural texts, will offer us important information about the relationship between orality, identity, and writing in Sardinia, a region which has a different culture, a different political view and a different dialect in comparison with the rest of the

country. 23 graffiti were studied (out of 140 graffiti found), all of them from Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia.

To define the purpose of this study, we will quote the author who says*:* "I present some considerations on the relationship between graphic realisation and orality in the production of graffiti. More precisely, I focus on graphic deviations from written conventions (more or less established), which are produced to assert identity or to achieve a humorous effect" (Depau, 2012, p. 185).

Participant observation as a working method is extremely useful for the arguments the author brings, at which we could also add the cross-cultural research. He gives examples of graffiti through a number of expressive photographs in support of which he comes with rich references.

The social-linguistic environment and its characteristics have a great importance in the creation of these graffiti, thanks to the existence of two languages: Italian (the official language) and Sardinian (the local language).

This articles objectives are split into two parts, the first part where the author talks about Sardinia from a socio-linguistic point of view, and then a second part where the writing and pronunciation differences between the two languages are detailed, as these differences have the graffiti at their basis.

Sardinian language was spread orally in most cases among young graffiti artists, and is seen as a second language differently from one region to another. However, Italian is the most common language on the island and is used in both contexts, both in formal and non-formal situations.

These considerations may provide additional elements for an understanding of the relationships between writing, oral practices and social attitudes in bilingual contexts characterized by the coexistence of a highly standardized

national language and a minority language, without an official standard.

Using non-standard spelling is a strong expressive resource, so any graffiti is a cultural text that defines the region's social and cultural space. Many symbols are included in graffiti, providing additional support for the message that the author wants to transmit.

An example is the use of the ***k*** grapheme, which, in both languages, is used to replace the ***ch*** grapheme. This abbreviation has a German origin, and is often associated with Nazism, instigating to violence.

"(1) **Skinheads okkio al kranio** "Skinheads watch your skull" (Ita. occhio, cranio)" (Depau, 2012, p. 187)

Another feature is the use of grapheme ***k*** followed by double ***ss***. In this regard, the author defines Cossiga as an accomplice of the fascist regime (Depau, 2012, p. 187).

"(2) **Kossiga Boia** "Cossiga murderer/hangman"" (Depau, 2012, p. 188) (Figure 1)

"As in Italian, in the Sardinian language the use of ***k*** is mostly associated with leftist ideology and/or with aggressiveness. But unlike Italian, ***k*** is also associated with Sardinian separatism as in the case of the graffiti" (Depau, 2012, p. 189) below:

(3) **Kontr'a su kolonialismu** "Against colonialism"

(4) **No a su nukleari** "No to nuclear"

"An interesting symbolic value of ***k*** in Sardinian is that of identity demarcation from standard Italian orthography, in that it does not admit the use of ***k*** for the transcription of the phoneme **/k/** which is always represented by the graphemes ***c*** and ***ch*** depending on the context" (Depau, 2012, p. 189).

These are just some examples that can show the link between orality and the identity of a space, between graffiti art and popular identity, and between spelling, culture, and politics.

Figure 1. Graffiti in Sardinia. Source: Depau, 2012, p. 189

As a conclusion to this study, we can certainly say that graffiti can be considered a cultural text at any time, because it has in its structure a number of signs and symbols which can be translated and understood in the same way as any text. Take your time to read – and to learn how to read.

4. Conclusions

The use of qualitative research methods in Regional Geography is generally beneficial for case studies, like in the case of those which were previously analysed, apprehending their originality and uniqueness.

Through qualitative methods, research explores how the world is seen and lived, how places, people and events are created and represented in various forms. For example, in the first article, we had an interpretation of the cultural text which had a map as the main topic of discussion.

Analysis and interpretation of the maps is the basis of this study, in addition to which numerous specialized bibliographic sources have been brought, through which the author manages to reflect the most important aspects of what the map means as a cultural text.

In the second article, we find an interpretation of the cultural text which has as prime topic graffiti paintings. Participant observation as a working method is extremely useful for the arguments the author brings, to which cross-cultural research was added. The researcher gives examples of graffiti through a series of expressive photographs, in support of which he also comes with a rich reference list.

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Chapter 13. Discourse Analysis

Anca Roxana Popa & Maria Eliza Dulamă

Contents

1. Definitions

"Discourse analysis (DA) is best seen as a cluster of related methods for studying language use and its role in social life" (Potter, 2008, p. 217).

"It is common to distinguish the subfields of critical discourse analysis (CDA), Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA), and discursive psychology (DP). CDA is a collection of approaches to discourse that are given coherence by an emphasis on social critique and the use of analytic concepts from linguistics, in particular Michael Halliday's functional grammar. This style of work often aims to reveal the ideologies and discourses that underpin different forms of talk and text and, importantly, sustain relations of inequality" (Potter, 2008, p. 219).

"Here, more developed theories and methods of discourse analysis have to be sought out. And, in the search, one quickly finds out that discourse analysis is not just one approach, but a series of interdisciplinary approaches that can be used to explore many different social domains in many different types of studies. [...] Different perspectives offer their own suggestions and, to some extent, compete to appropriate the terms 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis' for their own definitions. Let us begin, however, by proposing the preliminary definition of a discourse as *a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)*" (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 1).

"For the discourse analyst, the purpose of research is not to get 'behind' the discourse, to find out what people *really* mean when they say this or that, or to discover the reality behind the discourse. The starting point is that reality can never be reached outside discourses and so it is discourse itself that has become the object of analysis. In discourse analytical research, the primary exercise is not to sort out which of the statements about the world in the research material are right and which are wrong (although a critical evaluation can be carried out at a later stage in the analysis). On the contrary, the analyst has to work with what has actually been said or written, exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality" (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 21).

2. Theoretical background

In Geography, the qualitative methods are used in order to asses something that cannot be measured in numbers (quantifiable) like the characteristics of regions (Ilovan and Mihalca, 2014, p. 19). Qualitative methods could be used to answer the questions how? or what? and in this way to anticipate a future phenomenon (Wertz *et al.*, 2011, p. 2).

Linda McMullen (2011, pp. 205-206) affirms that discourse analysis is a way of capitalizing the “power” of words. It is a kind of approach that breaks the borders between disciplines (is a multi-disciplinary approach) and helps researchers to fathom their studies.

In the last 15 years, discourse analysis has been a “fashionable” term used in different types of studies, even if in some cases it has a vague significance by having “a different meaning in different context” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 1), but notwithstanding this term has the roots in the researches of Zeling Harris in 1950, when he tried to find out the meaning of an idea by comparing it with the ideas around it and put them in a relationship (Potter, 2008, pp. 217-218).

Another scientist that had contribution to the development of the concept of discourse analysis was Michael Foucault, who saw the approach as a whole of methods, which not just expressed the meaning of discourses, but also created an accurate identification of the man who had the discourse.

This characterization is not emerging just from the words, but also from the tone of the voice, from gestures, and, the most important, from the message transmitted. For instance, this method was used for analysing racist discourses (Potter, 2008, p. 218).

In addition, researchers found out that discourse analysis had two main approaches: descriptive and critical. The descriptive approach shows how language (grammar and the way it is expressed-the tone of the voice) is used so that the interlocutor gets the right message; the aim of the critical approach, besides describing the language, is to intervene in disputes and even adjust them. Some people think that critical discourse analysis may be considered “unscientific” because the analyst tends to be subjective; and others think that a descriptive approach is not enough to reach the goals of discourse analysis (Gee, 2014, pp. 9-10).

According to Van Dijk (1995, p. 17), the main criteria of a relevant critical discourse analysis are: it may be used in any kind of framework as long as the analyst is able to study the discourse; it must focus on human-society relationships; it pays attention to all dimensions (style of talking, speech, gesture, interaction with other people) in the construction of a discourse analysis.

Most researchers or people who analyse discourses would like to contribute through their work to a certain change, so for this to happen, they usually tend to criticize or to underline the negative consequences of speech (for instance, how political actors try to manipulate population in order to reach their interest). Another of their aims "is to unmask and delineate taken-for-granted, common-sense understandings, transforming them into potential objects for discussion and criticism and, thus, open to change" (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 178).

Due to Fairclough's theory, through its analysis, "discourse contributes to the construction of:

- social identities;

- social relations;

- systems of knowledge and meaning" (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 67).

In Geography, the approach of discourse analysis is often used in Human Geography to reveal qualitative results of debates or discourses regarding regional identity, migration, regional development, etc. Notwithstanding, genuine results may be achieved by using together qualitative and quantitative methods (Ilovan and Mihalca, 2013, 2014, p. 20).

For instance, the scientific literature about the forests of Romania underwent a brief discourse analysis (both descriptive and critical) in order to point out researchers' opinions about the past and present situation of forests, under

the impact of the political changes in Romania after 1989 (Dulamă *et al.*, 2016, 2017).

3. Case studies

3.1. Review of case study 1: "Citizens' Consultation – Public Spaces of Argument Evaluation? A View from Critical Discourse Analysis" (Mădroane, 2014)

The present article was written by Irina Diana Mădroane, from West University of Timişoara, and it was published in May 2014.

The aim of the case study presented in this article is to evaluate the citizens' opinions present at the public consultation sessions regarding the mining exploitation project of Roşia Montană by Roşia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC), Alba County, Romania, using an approach characteristic of the discourse analysis method.

Collecting data via the Internet, thus defying the geographical and social limits, is one of the article's objectives. Using e-consultation (online consultation) with respect to this project has the roots in the government's idea of stimulating people to express their own opinions. Even if this concept pretended to encourage citizens to make use of their right of "equality of status in communication" (Mădroane, 2014, p. 203) and of their freedom to express their arguments, it also had some disadvantages. Most of them were related to the access to the Internet or differences due to age, education, ethnicity, income, or gender. Despite of these, many studies agree that "e-democracy" (Mădroane, 2014, p. 203) can produce positive or negative consequences, depending on the IT knowledge of the users and their technological resources (i.e. personal computer, Internet connection).

Between March the 1st and May the 5th, 2011, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MEF) made available

online the report of "Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)" of RMGC and proposed to citizens to express their opinions on the subject by using emails, snail mail, or comments on MEF's site at the section regarding EIA of RMGC. This process was just a second part of the ample session that took place in 2006, including face-to-face debates on the subject of environmental protection, feedback from the citizens that was processed by MEF and presented to RMGC as proposals for the project. This activity is considered to be one of the first steps of e-democracy in Romania (Mădroane, 2014, pp. 203-205). The assessment of the citizens' feedback is another objective of the study.

The critical approach used in this case study was presented and developed by Isabela and Norman Fairclough in *Critical Discourse Analysis: A Method for Advanced Students* (2012) (Mădroane, 2014, p. 205).

A discourse analysis also comprises a political discourse about which Aristotle says it is "a form of practical argumentation, argumentation for or against particular ways of acting" (Mădroane, 2014, p. 205).

According to Fairclough and Fairclough, this analysis comprises "a circumstantial and a value premises which together with the goal premise" put the basis of people's and institutions' requirements: "*Goal premise* (specifies an "imaginary" or a "future state of affairs" the agents want to achieve; it is a normative premise, rooted in a set of values); *Circumstances premise* (introduces the current state of affairs, considered problematic in some way; "natural, social and institutional facts"); *Values premise* (specifies the values and concerns that inform the agents' goals); *Means-Goal premise* (proposes a means of action leading from circumstances to the desired goal); *Conclusion* (claim for action) (after Fairclough and Fairclough 2012: 45ff.)" (Mădroane, 2014, pp. 205-206).

In this study, through discourse analysis, the author identifies and brings logical arguments towards the main point of view expressed through the citizens' discourses and of the RMGC's requirements.

Since 1997, the mining activity from Roşia Montană has been a controversial topic in Romania. The company's shareholders are a Romanian enterprise and a Canadian one (which owns the majority of the shares). A license transfer made the NGOs to take action and the document was contested as being illegal, but, despite of this, the license contained a legal basis of exploitation.

As time passed by, NGOs, representatives of the Academia and other citizens with different occupations did not agree with these activities and they even created a campaign named "Save Roşia Montană". In 2007, the Alba County Court suspended the exploiting activity and the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development had an important contribution to it.

RMGC also initiated campaigns in favour of their project, underlining its benefits (jobs, economic development, welfare, etc.). Later, after the recession had begun, they tried to manipulate the population in an aggressive way with their campaign named "Letter to Romania", which had the motto: "The people in Roşia Montană only ask to work" (Mădroane, 2014, pp. 206-208).

RMGC presented their arguments in favour of the project and the author presented it according to Fairclough and Fairclough's discourse analysis scheme:

Goal Premise: RMGC is interested in helping the people of the area as well as the Romanian state in its development through the jobs created and by protecting the heritage and the environment.

Circumstances Premise: physical, social and economic dysfunctions (absence or low quality of infrastructure, unemployment, low life standard, lack of investment, and insufficient progress in the tourism sector).

Values Premise: RMGC claims to protect the environment, the historic heritage and people's goods.

Means-Goal Premise: the purposes may be achieved by the activities of RMGC.

Claim: the only way of well-being is through the mining exploitation project (Mădroane, 2014, p. 208).

For this article, the author used the questions and comments list from the MEF's site. Some of them were not taken into consideration because of anonymity, inappropriate language or other reasons, but RMGC received full texts. Also, out of the 100 entries, 98 were against the project, but 24 were rejected because of deviation from the subject.

The results of the methodology are presented in the analysis of the discussions. The people involved in these discussions vary a lot according to age, occupation, and income. From the rest of the 76 entries, 51 were against the project and pointed out the negative consequences of the mining activity.

One critical opinion referred to the impact that the mining exploitation had on the environment, on heritage, on people's everyday activities and on hindering the development of the other sectors of activity:

"... The opening of the exploitation site at Roşia Montană would be a disaster, even in conditions of 100% safety. Not only tourism, but all the sectors that rely on local resources would be affected, with a direct impact on the development of the entire Apuseni region. [...] Whoever would choose to take their family on vacation to an area they know is contaminated with toxic substances? (Q12, Dr. Mircea Rastei; my translation).

"My reasons [against] are: The local environment would be irreversibly polluted with cyanide. A mountain together with archaeological remains valuable for both Romania and the international heritage would be lost forever. All the economic benefits envisaged by RMGC for Romania do not outweigh the disadvantages above. (Q16, Delia Mihalache from Bucureşti; my translation)" (Mădroane, 2014, pp. 209-210).

The next argument has a dual signification. First, it shows the contradiction between what the RMGC are claiming

regarding the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. For example, they declare their intentions to protect it, but, in fact, it is already known that if the project unfolded, this would not be possible. Secondly, in what the heritage we leave to our children is concerned, no one but them should benefit from the resources, at the right time, when they find an appropriate way to do it:

"I think this PROJECT should be rejected. Why? Because the technology is highly polluting. We don't have to exploit these ores. Are there no proper conditions? Fine. We'll have to wait for future generations of ROMANIANS, who will be equipped with superior technology, to exploit them. THIS IS OUR LEGACY TO OUR SUCCESSORS!!! (Q 25, Domnica Ghiuta; my translation, original emphasis)" (Mădroane, 2014, p. 210).

The opponents of the project offer ideas contrary the RMGC's ideas and state that the area could be developed by putting into value the other sectors with the help of EU's funds (agriculture, tourism), which are not compatible with cyanide gold processing. Another discontent is because of the possibility that the authorities from outside this area could decide its fate, using "the national interest" in a way that would damage "the interest of the community" (Mădroane, 2014, p. 210) even if this "benefit" is not so helpful:

"This project seems to me all the more absurd as the benefits of the Romanian state from this deal are minimal (the Romanian state has a low stake in the RMGC shares, its only benefits being taxes and royalties, which cannot exceed a MAXIMUM of 2%). (Q71, Alexandru Popa, Ph.D. student; my translation, original emphasis)" (Mădroane, 2014, p. 211).

Other citizens were concerned about financial, legal, and environmental protection issues. They argued that RMCG's proposals were not sufficient compared with the proposals of the projects they hosted in other countries, where authorities were more responsible and strict. Also, the people demanded a renegotiation on this subjects and for it to be available to the public. Several opinions analysed by the author

claimed that RMGC and Romanian authorities were trying to manipulate the population:

"The Environmental Impact Assessment is not complete or *sincere*! (Q30, Dr. Gheorghe Ionaşcu; my translation, my emphasis).

"...you only have to look at what this firm has done in all the other countries and at its total contempt for the state authorities [there] ... you should be aware that all those involved are no better than CRIMINALS and everything has a price sooner or later...". (Q65, Iuli Tacu; original emphasis, my translation)" (Mădroane, 2014, p. 211).

The population's distrust in Romanian authorities is because of their inefficiency and irresponsibility regarding other issues related to the well-being of the Romanian people. The distrust in RMGC's project has its roots in the changes of arrangements and misleading evaluation. In some messages from MEF's site, people thought that Roşia Montană's path represented a national liability and proposed a national referendum:

"In 2006, [RMGC] submitted the 33 volumes of its Environmental Impact Assessment. Thousands of negative comments poured in, from various specialists, NGOs, etc. Instead of having the project rejected, for non-compliance with environmental legislation, RMGC was asked to revise it by taking the feedback into account. Now we're discussing the improvements that were made and, probably, following criticism, they will be allowed to revise it yet again, and so on, until they get the green light? [...] We consider this procedure of the Ministry of Environment to be unacceptable and inconsistent with existing norms, and biased towards the foreign corporation. (Q86, Mircea Medrea; my translation)" (Mădroane, 2014, p. 211-212).

The case of Roşia Montană mining exploitation is a much discussed subject throughout Romania and not only, people declaring their opinions in favour or against the RMGC's activities. In this study, the author used the discourse analysis approach for rendering citizens' claims on the theme and for revealing the main points of their arguments.

Also, this kind of methodology is easily understood by readers and can be applied in other field such as Environment,

Sociology, Economy, and Human Geography and, usually, it uses a multidisciplinary approach.

The present case study is useful for Regional Geography by emphasizing the importance of the results revealed by the discourse analysis method on the region of the Apuseni Mountains. Through this method, indigenous people's opinions regarding the mining exploitation of Roșia Montană were analysed and showed the negative consequences of the RMGC's project which they tried to cover up. For instance, the destruction of biodiversity, heritage and people's goods, the impossibility of developing another economic sector, and the pollution with cyanide represented citizens' main concerns. All these aspects revealed through the discourse analysis method would be useful in the case of a national referendum (proposed by some citizens), when all the Romanian people should be aware of what they are voting for.

3.2. Review of case study 2: Forest in Crisis: 2 Decades of Media Discourse Analysis of Bangladesh Print Media (Names and Rahman, 2016)

The present article is written by Names Sadath and Sabrina Rahman and is part of a publication *Analytical Forest Policy Analysis: Advancing the Empirical-analytical Approach to Forest Policy Analysis,* from 2016.

For debating and discussing issues related to the deforestation problem of Bangladesh, the parts concerned use the media for expressing their thoughts and defending their interests. Therefore, the aim of the study is to analyse the discourses and discussions related to "forest crisis", a problem debated in the articles of the *Daily Ittefaq* newspaper of Bangladesh during 1989-2009 (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, p. 16). *The Daily Ittefaq* was the newspaper chosen because it was the most trustworthy in the country, which meant it ranked high in people's preferences.

Choosing data from a newspaper instead from the Internet ("new media") is due to the fact that information from the Internet is not always reliable; anyone could upload anything. The data from newspapers, radio or television channels ("old media") are filtrated in a way or another, and that was the reason why the actors involved in the decision-making process preferred to use the "old media" in order to find out citizen's opinions (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, pp. 16-17).

Every institution, in order to deploy its activity, needs to be included in a circuit. This circuit involves and refers to communication with the citizens. For instance, institutions or leaders of Bangladesh transmit their ideas regarding deforestation through discourse. In this article, their discourses are evaluated through the discourse analysis method, which is "a potent way of public policy analysis used by the policy scientist" (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, p. 17).

Throughout time, different studies proved that media has a big impact on people's opinion. For example, an individual (person or institution) has a constant presence in media to promote his or her own interest. The more an individual expresses himself publicly, the higher are the chances to convince people of his ideas.

In this article, the actors, who have their contribution in media regarding issues of deforestation, are divided into two groups: centre actors ("public stakeholders like politicians, judiciary and the administration"), and peripheral actors ("journalists, NGOs, scientists, social activists, social groups) (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, p. 18). An objective of the study is the measurement of these actors' influence. Another objective is represented by the identification of issues affected by the deforestation process.

Both actors are trying to get media's attention by reporting different activities or events, which are classified in three sections: *genuine* (the ones that happen independently and media finds out about them only after they occured, being able only to make them public without influencing them in any

way, e.g. earthquake, natural disasters in general), *mediatized* (events which are known to the media, are made public without being directly influenced by it, they would happen even if they were not mediatized, e.g. elaboration of a national forest report), and *staged* (activities which are organised to catch the media's eye, e.g. demonstration against illegal hunting) (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, p. 18).

For this study to be realised, *The Daily Ittefaq*'s articles, which take into discussion the subject of deforestation, were collected from the national library archives of Bangladesh for the period 1989-2009. In order for these articles to be appropriate for the study, they had to have in their contents aspects related to forests, and for their analysis the authors took into account "general impressions regarding the forest issue in Bangladesh and participation of different political actors" (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, p. 18). 609 articles and 630 opinions were found.

The discourse analysis method used in this study is a conclusive approach of examining discourses and discussions from *The Daily Ittefaq* and it shows the way in which media addresses the problem of clear-cutting forests (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, pp. 17-18).

The results and discussions included:

a) Forest issues in the print media

The investigation showed that the subject of deforestation and its consequences are very promoted by the print media (newspapers). Figure 1 shows that issues related to deforestation and the conservation of wildlife were the most popular, but also aspects like illegal logging, reforestation, illegal hunting, and wildlife-human conflict had their importance.

Another of the citizens' fears is related to the sea level increase. They affirmed that there was the possibility of losing

the largest mangrove forest of the world if the prognosis regarding the global warming was accurate. If this were to happen, the biodiversity would also have to suffer (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, p. 19).

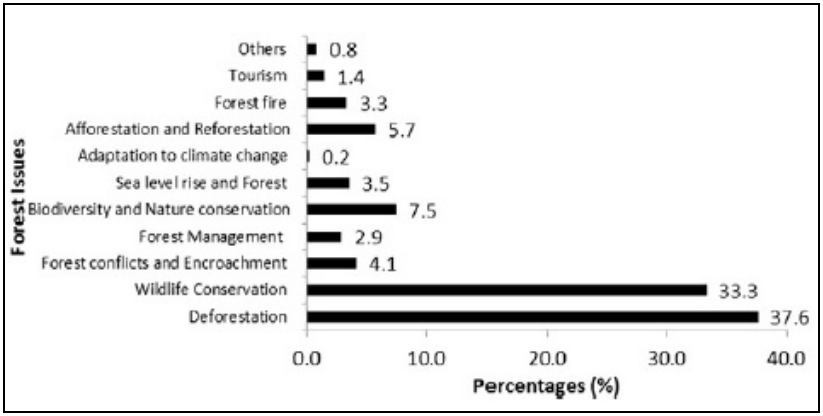

Fig. 1. Forest issues in Bangladesh print media

(Names and Rahman, 2016, p. 18)

b) Events reported on media

The analysis of the discourse showed that the most promoted articles were those related to events that took place without being influenced by the media (*genuine*). So, the most popular subjects were the loss of biodiversity, the problematic relation between humans and animals, or the misunderstandings because of certain interests. Events which had their activity being publicized by the media, that being the reason for their existence (staged events, e.g. demonstrations regarding the forest conservation), were the most unpopular. The results this method revealed showed that the media's selection of the subject played a capital role in the way people saw this subject (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, p 19).

c) Who shapes the forest discourses in the Bangladesh media?

Each of the 630 opinions were analysed and the results showed that the topic concerning deforestation problems of Bangladesh was discussed to a large extent by peripheral actors, particularly by journalists in print media (Figure 2).

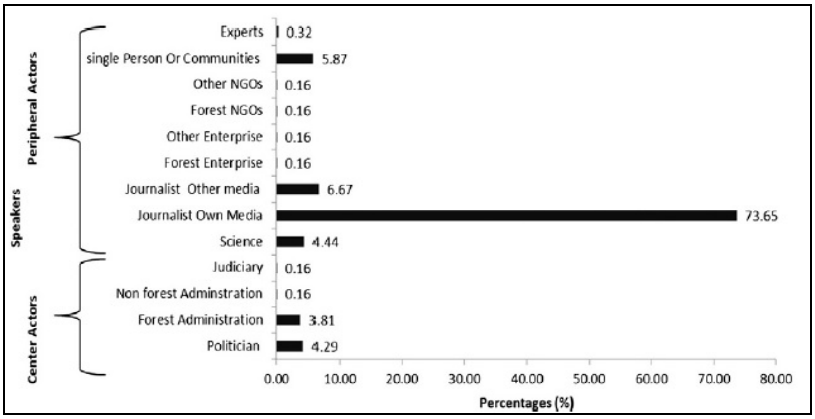

Fig. 2. Actor standing in the forest discourses in Bangladesh print media (Names and Rahman, 2016, p. 20)

Also, the people who offered their opinions claimed that the reason of the low central actor's involvement was their lack of concern about the subject and that they were interested to take attitude and catch media's attention only when they had a certain interest, like convincing people of their intentions and obtaining support (Sadath and Rahman, 2016, pp. 19-20).

This article reveals that the subject of "forest crisis" in Bangladesh is actual and popular among the media's topics. From the discourse analysis method resulted that the biggest problems were linked to deforestation and wildlife conservation and that the main stakeholders involved in these cases were the people who did not have any political interest.

Also, this shows us that the popularity and understanding of a subject depends on the way in which media decides to approach it or to promote it.

Having in mind this case study, the method of discourse analysis is useful for Regional Geography because of the possibility of identifying individuals' concerns regarding the forested areas of Bangladesh. Issues about the deforestation debated in *The Daily Ittefaq* newspaper are analysed in order to discover the main problems of the process and to offer citizens the possibility to solve them or to anticipate possible problems related to human-wild animals conflict, which almost always include injury or death, saving a regional heritage like the mangrove forest, or informing population about the possible interests of certain corrupt authorities.

4. Conclusions

Discourse analysis is a method used in many fields, but in all of them has the same aim: to identify the qualitative information of a discourse. Moreover, this method is focused on the main idea of a discourse and on the way the language used has the power of manipulating.

One of the fields in which the discourse analysis framework can be applied is that of Regional Geography, where it could bring relevant information revealed from indigenous people's, authorities', or people's (concerned about the situation of a certain area) opinions.

The case studies presented above confirm the fact that, through this approach, researchers pointed out significant pieces of information which could bring an important contribution to saving a region from disappearance in a literal way (e.g. the case of Roşia Montană), to the conservation of biodiversity and heritage, and to regional development.

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