

Book Reviews

Researching the City: A Guide for Students by Kevin Ward, London, Sage, 2013, 184 pp., £20.99 (paperback), ISBN 9781446202111

In recent decades the work of geographers increasingly overlaps with the work of social psychologists, so as a social psychologist teaching and supervising students completing final year projects, I was interested to see that Kevin Ward had produced a book that is designed to maintain an inter-disciplinary focus whilst at the same time providing a practical 'how to' for students researching urban environments.

'Researching the City' is designed to help students at the dissertation stage of an undergraduate degree and gives a clear account of the purpose, approach and goals of research together with an exposition of the advantages and disadvantages of a number of methodological approaches. The volume focusses on eight methods: archival research, interviews, ethnography, questionnaires, linguistic and discourse analysis, diary research, GIS and photography and video work. Contributing authors draw on their own work and use engaging examples, based on personal experience, of the research process from their methodological perspective in their particular field.

Whilst the volume is aimed at geographers, the advice in relation to the research methodologies discussed could potentially be of use to researchers across the social sciences. The chapter on GIS methodologies in particular might potentially be of value to social researchers working in a variety of disciplines. Stephen Ward's chapter on archival research gives clear instructions on how to plan an archival search, as well as considering what might be absent and why. It offers useful advice on developing working relationships with archivists as well as taking a critical approach when reading documents. It offers reassurance on when to stop reading as well as helpful advice on writing up. Allan Cochrane offers a clear account of interview-based research, with an explicit caution to students that personal testimonies are not an account of objective reality. The chapter discusses the purpose of interviews along with an important, informative and clearly explained discussion of power in interactions. Kate Swanson's account of ethnographic research offers students an enlightening account of the ways in which the aims and approaches of a research project can change in response to the research environment. She emphasises the importance of field notes and gives clear guidance on writing up. Nik Theodore's chapter on questionnaires considers some of the complexities of constructing interview questions that will provide informative responses. He advocates careful investigation of the group that is

being researched before questions are constructed and cautions against the use of questions which will merely reinforce the pre-existing beliefs of the researcher. He provides a study of his own as an example of how data can be collected and offers suggestions for further reading on questionnaire construction and data analysis.

Annette Hastings' chapter on discourse and linguistic analysis offers three distinct approaches: Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis; critical discourse analysis; and narrative analysis. All three are covered in a manner that is both succinct and easy to understand. Alan Latham's chapter on diaries for the study of urban worlds considers the advantages and disadvantages of diary-based studies as well as looking at some examples of the kinds of diaries that might usefully inform researchers about cities. He also considers the importance of the use of GPS and social media as forms of diary research. Matthew Wilson considers the use of GIS as a tool for researching the city. He discusses its potential role in both observation and analysis of different aspects of city life and encourages students to carefully plan the role of GIS in their research. The final method, entitled 'worlds through glass' presented by Bradley Garrett, is the use of photography and video for researching cities (as distinct from using pre-existing photographic and video materials). He describes with great enthusiasm his own work using video and photography and emphasises the usefulness of these approaches to data collection.

The focus on post-structural approaches to research is both refreshing and useful at undergraduate level, though an extended discussion in the introduction, about the ontological and epistemological bases and the situated nature of the knowledge constructed might add to a clearer understanding of this kind of research at the outset. The volume would also benefit from more worked examples on how data being utilised from different methodological standpoints might be rigorously analysed and how claims made for the data might be warranted. On the whole, the specific and clearly explained focus of this volume will make it a very practical guide for any student researching cities for a final year thesis.

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Mobilities and Health by Anthony C. Gatrell, Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, 2011, 229 pp., £60 (hbk), ISBN 9781409419921

Gatrell's text 'Geographies of Health' is an inspiring and thought-provoking examination of the relationship between mobility and health. This text is part of the 'mobile turn' that has occurred in Geography in recent years, helping to move our understandings beyond the common tendency towards stasis. This book is part of the very successful Geographies of Health series edited by Allison Williams

and Susan Elliott.

The scope of the text is far reaching and this could be seen as both a strength and a limitation. I prefer to think of it as a strength. Reading any of the sections acts as a prompt encouraging the reader to want to know and research more.

After a valuable introductory chapter introducing the 'mobilities' concepts, Gatrell examines both *Walking and Cycling*. Outlining different types of walking, Gatrell addresses contemporary initiatives such as 'walking buses', which have spread globally in the face of a rising epidemic of obesity. The text then neatly 'ramps-up' the mobility scale, moving on to examine cars (Chapter 3), before moving on to *Trains and Boats and Planes* (Chapter 4). Sobering statistics outlining road traffic deaths are presented, which are made all the more poignant through their presentation by income level. Each of these, and related topics, are only lightly touched on, which left me with a flurry of questions and ideas about potential research projects. The next chapter explores *Vacations and the Tourist* (Chapter 5). In briefly examining issues such as the impact of vacations on mental health, sun exposure and sex tourism, once again it left me thirsty for more knowledge.

The second part of the book examines migration, starting with an examination of the *Displaced and the Dispossessed* (Chapter 6). The text discusses slavery and human trafficking, with a focus on the trafficking of women and children as part of a global sex industry. This is followed by an equally distressing section examining the poor health of refugees.

Chapter 7 examines the relationship between *Migration, Health and Well-being*, topics that have been well researched over a long period. This chapter explores some of the subtleties involved in researching the process, including the selectivity of migration, the impact of acculturation and population mixing.

The third element of the book examines *Diffusion* and neatly explores classic topics such as smallpox, bubonic plague, cholera, influenza, and measles (Chapter 8). The next chapter in this section examines more contemporary concerns including HIV, TB, foot and mouth disease (FMD), SARS and malaria. In the context of the current Ebola outbreak this chapter invites careful study. A minor deficit in this chapter might be the absence of any in-depth discussion of the issue of the diffusion of health-related interventions or technology.

The final part of the text is a welcome examination of contemporary issues of health and mobility. Once again the discussion is brief, but this section touches on a range of topics such as cyberspace, health tourism, remote/ tele-health care, and the international mobility of health professionals (Chapters 10 and 11). The book ends with a brief conclusion which outlines emerging themes for mobilities and health research.

This text is clearly written and articulates a personal style that is engaging and informative. It is an excellent introductory text to an enormous body of research, and as such would make an ideal final year undergraduate or Masters level text introducing students to this new field of mobilities and health. I would strongly recommend it, not so much as a way of answering questions, but for raising

them. Exploration of the link between mobilities and health throws up so many questions, such as the impact of pace/ speed of the journey (e.g. canal barge vs ocean yacht race). A few other topics that I had anticipated were not addressed in-depth, such as transhumance and travel to access termination services. However, in the context of the breadth of topics explored these are minor points.

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