

Qualitative GIS

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Abstract

GIS have been largely understood as a tool for the storage and analysis of quantitative data since the early days of their development. This understanding has foreclosed many opportunities to use GIS in qualitative or mixed-method research. In this presentation I provide a brief overview of the important developments in Qualitative GIS (QGIS) in the last or so decade (e.g., participatory qualitative GIS, geo-ethnography, grounded visualization, geo-narrative, and emotional GIS). I focus in greater detail on using GIS to analyze narrative materials collected in mixed-method research. This approach to GIS-based narrative analysis (called geo-narrative) is based on extending current GIS's capabilities for the analysis and interpretation of narrative materials such as oral histories, life histories, and biographies. A case example based on a study on the lives of the Muslim women in Columbus, Ohio after 11 September 2001 is used to illustrate the approach. Further, I discuss some important directions for the future development of QGIS. I explore the promise of using GIS and geospatial technologies to address questions of human mobilities in light of the new mobilities paradigm. I also suggest that QGIS is powerful tool for helping researchers to recover the silenced voices of marginalized individuals and social groups and to expand their attention to locations or places individuals do not go, cannot go or fear to visit (the absent and the silenced).