

Interactive comment on ““Doing” cultural geography/“being” a cultural geographer – reflections by an “accidental geographer” on practising cultural geography in the Netherlands” by B. van Hoven

B. van Hoven

b.van.hoven@rug.nl

Received and published: 23 December 2010

Jörg Becker’s comment addresses the article as well as the referee comments. Interestingly, I think that our readings differ at times. In my responses to de Pater and Berg, I briefly outline how I read their comments as well as how I would utilize suggestions made. Therefore, I will not address Becker’s references to the two other reviewers in detail except to note that I have found de Pater and Berg’s reviews useful and stimulating. Becker struggles, it seems, to discover the direction of my article. He rightly points at the lack of attention to defining ‘cultural turn’ in the context of my article. Nev-

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Discussion Paper



Interactive
Comment

ertheless, he estimates that such a definition might include place making, otherness, difference and gender as well as a methodological preference. All of these are indeed components in the context of my own institution. However, keeping in mind Berg's request for a reconsideration of the way in which I relate Dutch cultural geography to UK cultural geography, more dedication to the explanation of the term is wholly justified. Based on Becker's commentary, I think perhaps the article does not always do a good job of conveying what it is meant to. Becker concludes that the cultural turn was learnt the hard way and reiterates a part of my academic path as described in the article (C46). True, some personal turns were initiated by barriers experienced but this quote was meant to illustrate that a re-assessment of my identity as a (cultural) geographer has been largely the result of a consideration of opportunities. One more comment addresses an abandonment of 'rigorous' theory in favour of a rather 'weak' theorizing one in which I, myself, move to the center of reflection. Perhaps Becker and I have different perceptions of what theory is, how it comes to be and what it is for. Inspired by authors such as Bain and Nash (2006), Dunn (2005), McDowell (1995) and Valentine (2005), I see the production of theory, of knowledge, as inextricably linked to the context and person of the researcher, both material and immaterial. This does not, however, result in a theory that is less strong or less rigorous. In fact, readers who are familiar with qualitative data analysis nowadays, for example employing CAQDAS such as NVivo 9, understand the demands by the qualitative research community for an analysis to be meticulous. Unfortunately, the SG forum does not yet allow a direct, live link between reviewer and author in order to facilitate interesting conversations such as this would be. Where Becker and I do have intersecting views, however, and this may not transpire from the article explicitly, is the revisiting of 'old' ideas in 'new' geography. Particularly today, cultural geographers turn to texts that have been 'done' by other disciplines in the past (most notable sociology, philosophy and psychology) and either apply them in relation to space or even breathe new life into them. Becker is correct in stating that the relationship between humans and their environment was considered explicitly in the past, too, and that these direct connections continue to provide bridges

[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)[Discussion Paper](#)

between the social and the physical part of geography. Having said this, I do feel that this relationship between the human and non-human has been rethought significantly (see, for example, Carolan, 2009; Cloke and Jones, 2003; Staddon, 2009). In that sense, I do not concur with the conclusion that there is an exchange for old basics of landscape and regional geography. Again, a live discussion forum would make a great addition to SG's interactiveness. Particularly if it could connect some of its readers with the author and reviewer as well. Last but not least, Becker takes issue with the referencing in the article because it consists to a large extent of references which I, myself, have (co-)authored. First of all, I agree with the fact that this potentially looks suspicious. Although I agree with Becker that some of these references serve no purpose, I would like to clarify how they were intended originally. About half of those are used in footnote 8 where my intention is to give examples of the work by students that was transformed into published articles. The basis for the student work is interesting and relevant but the writing skills are often not developed enough yet to target scientific journals. It is for that reason that we coach them through the process in the form of a writing collaboration. At the time of writing, I aimed to showcase these students but in retrospect, I agree that the point can be made equally well using fewer references. The second 'bulk' of references is used in the context of outlining the themes addressed within our department. As the biographic part of the article suggests, I am not much of a specialist and like to think through a variety of topics and methods. As a result, I have worked with a range of different people who work on these themes. As with the previous bulk of references, I agree that some of these references could be removed.

References

Bain, A.L. and C.J. Nash (2006) Undressing the researcher: feminism, embodiment and sexuality at a queer bathhouse event. *Area* 38(1): 99–106
Carolan, M.S. (2009) 'I do therefore there is': enlivening socio-environmental theory. *Environmental Politics* 18(1): 1-17.
Cloke, P. and Jones, O. (2003) Grounding ethical mindfulness for/ in nature: trees in their places. *Ethics, Place and Environment* 6(3): 195-214
Dunn,

K. (2005) Interviewing. In: I. Hay (ed) Qualitative research methods in Human Geography, 2nd edn, pp. 79-105. Oxford: Oxford University Press McDowell, L. (1992) Multiple voices: speaking from inside and outside 'the project'. Antipode 24(1): 56-72 Staddon, C. (2009) Towards a critical political ecology of human-forest interactions: collecting herbs and mushrooms in a Bulgarian locality. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 34: 161-176 Widdowfield, R. (2000) The place of emotions in academic research. Area 32(2): 199-208 Valentine, G. (2005b) Geography and ethics: moral geographies? Ethical commitment in research and teaching. Progress in Human Geography 29(4): 482-487

Interactive comment on Soc. Geogr. Discuss., 6, 165, 2010.

SGD

6, C92–C95, 2010

Interactive
Comment

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Discussion Paper