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The globalization of qualitative research

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Doing qualitative research is a very data-driven process in the sense that most of the time one has to proceed inductively from empirical observations towards more general ideas regarding theory or methodology. When proving that our interpretation is valid, suggesting an interpretation, or weighing the pros and cons of different interpretations, we also typically give examples or take excerpts from the qualitative data, for instance from transcribed interviews or from video-recorded naturally occurring situations. Thus, even when we do want to make a point that we think holds not only in the material at hand but also more generally, we have to prove and illustrate it at a 'local' level. For the same reason, when at a more methodological level we want to show what kind of analyses can be made of qualitative data, we give a concrete research example.

This has certain consequences for the globalization of qualitative research. By globalization in its broadest sense we can refer to the process whereby a global network of interconnections and interdependences uniting different countries and regions is becoming increasingly dense, so that we create an ever stronger sense of the world as one place (Held et al., 1999: 16; Tomlinson, 1999: 2). Within qualitative research and methodology this process would mean that, irrespective of where one lives and does research, to an ever greater degree we share the same theories, methods and ideas about how to do qualitative research and how to make sense of human phenomena on the basis of empirical qualitative data. This is of course partly because we have read and consulted the same articles, studies and textbooks. But what if the 'international' (read: American- or British-based English-language) publishers think that their audiences do not understand too exotic examples?

That was one of the problems I ran into when preparing the English-language version of my qualitative methods textbook *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies*. My publisher expressed a concern about the fact that in the book there were plenty of references to studies that had been published in Finnish:

At a basic level, the proportion of Finnish work cited in the text will not be helpful to British, American or other readers, to whom this literature will not be readily available or familiar. ... Would it be possible to rework the text as you go along so that references of this kind are replaced by references to examples which are fairly well-known in the English language literature? I am not asking you to completely empty the text of any Finnish connection, but to ensure that the overall balance makes the English language reader feel at ease with the presentation.

The request was quite understandable, and I did change several research examples into work that had appeared in 'internationally' published books or journals. In some cases, having to build my point around a new research example probably improved the text, in other cases I was not pleased with the quality of research I found and thought that that the original research example was better and more interesting. Yet I grudgingly had to promote a piece of research basically only because it had been published in English.

I think this example illustrates remarkably some of the problems related to the globalization of qualitative research, and especially to the fact that the English language and therefore the big American and British markets have such a dominant position in social science publishing.

The formation of a truly global network of researchers can only take place if there is a global

flow of ideas across borders and language barriers. It means that we have to have access to the work being done in different countries and regions and in different languages. Then, if and when we have read and consulted the same articles, studies and textbooks, any of us can make a contribution to the discussion by challenging a previous idea or applying a method in a new and innovative way. Despite the problems referred to above, it seems that such a global network of qualitative research is gradually developing, and to be realistic, it can only happen at the 'cross-roads' or meeting point called the English language. However, just as in other forms of globalization, the process forms – or is conditioned by – a structure consisting of centres and peripheries.

In the globalization discussion, it is also often argued that globalization more or less equals 'westernization' or plainly Americanization. It is argued that the global spread of US standards – for instance via the global media industry and US-based companies and brands – gradually homogenizes world cultures. By browsing through the names and institutions of authors who have published books on qualitative methods, one gets the impression that the globalizing world of qualitative research is also very US and Anglo dominated.

We should not, however, revert back to the spatial metaphor behind the notion of 'globalization' to the unidirectional modernization or scientific progress narratives, as is done in the idea that globalization equals Americanization. Although the position of the English language and the American publishing market is strong, there are still other networks and flows of influence in the world. Even more importantly, we must bear in mind that the whole idea of one universal line of development towards truth is an ideological construct and highly questionable when talking about the development of qualitative research. Instead, there are several parallel developments and flows of influence going on, and where a school of thought heads next depends primarily on the local cultural trends and needs of qualitative research.

In this chapter I shall discuss the problems and challenges related to the globalization of qualitative research. I shall first discuss the Anglo-American dominance of the publishing market and how that dominance is reflected in the progress narrative of qualitative research. Thereafter, I shall discuss the implications and possibilities of the spatial metaphor of globalization. It does not mean that we disregard the Anglo-American dominance, but the globalization framework provides us with conceptual

tools to analyse why that is, rather than fall for the easy solution that methodological development is driven by an inner-directed quest for the truth. I shall also point out an additional aspect of the development of qualitative research. That is, rather than a question of flow of ideas across regions, globalization of qualitative research can be seen as a growing flow of ideas across disciplines, especially from the humanities to the social sciences – and back. Therefore, we must bear in mind that most of the innovations we make or read of are rediscoveries from neighbouring disciplines and from the history of social sciences and humanities. From that viewpoint, the rapidly globalizing body of knowledge known as 'qualitative research' is not so much a new thing as a repackaged bricolage of existing wisdom.

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN DOMINANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

It is quite obvious that, especially during the latter half of the twentieth century, the social sciences have seen a gradual reorganization of the networks of information flows within the global community of social sciences. On the one hand it is undoubtedly true that cross-border contacts have become easier and therefore also more common, but on the other hand the networks have increasingly often centred in North American scholars. One could assume that, along with globalization, a single-centre network model will give way to a multi-centre world, but it seems that the centre has simply changed its location. The continent that has the oldest universities, and was once the heart of the development of the social sciences, Europe has been decentred.

Consider Jean Baudrillard's world-famous book *America*, which can be compared to other travelogues Europeans have for long written about their journeys to foreign countries and continents. Alexis de Tocqueville's book *Democracy in America* is an obvious progenitor. Baudrillard continues the tradition of Europeans and particularly Frenchmen writing about this remote continent. However, since the days of de Tocqueville the structural position of the author has totally changed. De Tocqueville actually wrote about 'the other', about a foreign country at the outskirts of Western civilization. But Baudrillard, when writing his book, was a French philosopher in the late 1980s, somewhat famous because of his fashionable, daring, 'postmodern' thoughts and style, but still fairly unknown to the great

(American, or English-speaking) public. Most of all, he is French. He likes to write about contemporary phenomena, but as a Frenchman his examples of course deal with France. And that is not 'common knowledge' or a commonly known environment. As a Frenchman he is slightly disadvantaged in the 'international' market. That is why it was a good trick to write a book about America. 'Everybody' is supposed to know the Golden Gate Bridge, Burger King, Los Angeles. And most of us (who is us?) know these scenes because of all the American movies and television serials we have seen. To write cultural analyses about such places and phenomena is interesting, because 'everybody' knows what you are talking about. In this sense Baudrillard's *America* is a good example of the Anglo-American dominance in the human sciences.

One could of course argue that the Baudrillard case proves the opposite: no matter what country you come from, if you have important things to say, it will be published by international publishers in English, which has become the lingua franca of science. It could even be that this is especially the case with textbooks dealing with research methods, for instance with qualitative methodology. That is because, although it may be difficult to get empirical research dealing with a peripheral location published by international publishers, theory and method are universal: if you are innovative methodologically, you will get your ideas across to the international market.

To obtain a rough estimate as to how dominant the Americans and authors from other English-speaking countries are in the qualitative research publishing market, I went through the list of books classified under 'qualitative methodology' on the Sage Publications web page on 7 May 2002. Of the 217 books listed there, I checked the country of origin of the authors on the basis of their institutional affiliation.¹ If there was more than one author (or editor in the case of edited books) to a book, and if they represented more than one country, I marked a 'point' to each country. However, if the authors all came from the same country, I gave only one 'point' to that country. There were a handful of cases in which the institutional affiliation of the authors was not mentioned, in which case I omitted the book in question. Of the total number of 232 'points', the United States got 139, the United Kingdom 47, Australia 12, Canada 11, Israel 8, France 3, New Zealand, Germany, Denmark and Sweden 2, and Japan, Norway, Singapore and Switzerland 1 point.² In other words, the English-speaking countries held 91 per cent of the 'market', and the United States and United Kingdom alone had an 80 per cent market share.

The Sage case may well be biased and cannot be generalized to the whole English-language qualitative methodology literature. However, I have good reason to assume that the market share of the rest of the world as opposed to American and British authors would be even lower if we took into account all major publishers, because several others do not consciously try to reach the international market. They are content with the US or UK home market, which also means that you hardly find a foreign author in their lists. The best way to study the market shares would be to analyse the actual sales of the books, which I suspect would further sharpen the picture of Anglo-American dominance.

How can we then explain the Anglo-American dominance? Just consider the still very strong position of quantitative methodology in the US social sciences and compare it to many European countries where qualitative methods have more or less become the mainstream. You could easily assume that, for instance, European social scientists would have a much stronger position in teaching qualitative methods to the global academic community.

As already implied above, the reasons for the Anglo-American dominance of the qualitative methodology publishing market are obvious and manifold. For one thing, because of the great number of higher-level education students in the country of 281 million inhabitants, the United States is the biggest single textbook market, which means that to ensure global sales of any book it has to be made suitable for the US market. Textbooks by British authors easily fit in the US market because of the close cultural connections between the US and the UK. The 'biggest market advantage' in turn reflects the related fact that the United States is also the biggest academic education and research market. Therefore it is quite natural that it also produces a lot of publishing authors. Another important reason is the role the English language has inherited from Latin as the new lingua franca of science.

It could of course be argued that the big 'market share' of American and British authors in the qualitative methodology literature justly reflects the superiority of these scholars as compared with authors from other countries. Or, to the same effect, although qualitative methods are still a challenge to quantitative social research in the American academic scene, perhaps the strong position of Anglo-American authors in the market is due to more emphasis laid on empirical research methods in teaching social sciences. That is how the anonymous referee of the first version of this chapter saw the situation.

According to him, the first version of this chapter 'doesn't discuss all of the intellectual and market forces that may have contributed to that'. And he goes on:

The English language is one obvious factor, but it is not the only one. The emphasis on training in empirical research methods and techniques in American programmes is a powerful influence on the marketing of methods texts – joined at a later date by the British market, also driven by research training (both operate mostly at graduate level). The incorporation of qualitative research methods into numerically powerful empirical fields (such as health research) has also helped to promote the circulation of methods texts – not least when such fields search for bases for research legitimacy.

Thus, if other countries would only put more emphasis on training in empirical research methods and techniques, according to my critic there would be more methodology authors entering the international publishing market from non-English-speaking countries. Following this line of thought, he assumes that the Anglo-American dominance in the methodology literature is an exceptional case. According to him, social theory has a very different appearance:

Contemporary versions of grand theory are, for instance, dominated by European figures – not just Baudrillard, but Bourdieu, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Latour, Gallon, to name just some of the Paris people. This is to say nothing of the reception of German social philosophy, or Russian formalism. Theory and method are relatively context-free while empirical research is context-specific. They both travel well, and commercial publishers find they can sell them widely; empirical research is not commercially viable on a global scale. But theory and methods have very different kinds of origins and their circulation is very different. They establish very different spheres of exchange, different hierarchies of esteem, and so on.

To find out whether that is indeed the case, I studied the Sage online catalogue listing of social theory as it appeared on 20 October 2002.³ Compared with the qualitative methodology book market, the picture is admittedly somewhat different. According to my small sample, the UK is the leading country and the US only number two. Altogether, the market share of English-speaking countries seems to be only three-quarters, compared with 91 per cent in qualitative methodology.

However, despite the difference, and in spite of the general impression that many theorists come from elsewhere, the great majority of book authors come from English-speaking countries. Why is that? Is the 'mother tongue advantage' of English-speaking authors a sufficient explanation?

I suggest that there is another, more subtle reason for the Anglo-American dominance in the social science book market. One factor that subtly strengthens the Anglo-American dominance is the fuzzy but strangely persistent notion of 'modern society' or 'modernity' in the sociological vernacular. The Anglo-American dominance is unconsciously legitimated by an implicit definition of 'modern society' as the object of most sociological studies. 'Modern society' is mainly the United Kingdom and the United States – and perhaps France and Germany, because the whole sociological discussion about the advent of modern society originated there in the late nineteenth century. The discussion of other countries has to be redeemed by pointing out its role as a special example. So Finland used to be discussed as an example of a small Western country living next to the big bear, the Soviet Union. Sweden and other Nordic countries are often dealt with as examples of the welfare state and of considerable state intervention in a (semi-capitalist?) Western democracy. Maybe considerable gender equality is another theme. The cases have to be discussed, even by non-Anglo-American scholars, from the viewpoint of the centre (or 'normality', as opposed to extremes illustrated by 'others'), as somehow interesting examples of 'the other'. This creates a tricky situation for a non-American author wanting to discuss, for instance, insufficient social welfare systems or gender equality in these countries. To avoid the interpretation that insufficient equality or social security is a particular characteristic of the country being discussed, the writer easily ends up defending the existing achievements, although the author's original point was to analyse the reasons why the situation has stayed unsatisfactory.

The special trends and characteristics of the centre (i.e., particularly the US) tend to be considered from the point of view of 'modernization': as something one expects to happen in the periphery some time in the future. This leads into the phenomenon of fashions in social thought: when a phenomenon such as, say, political correctness, or a theoretical paradigm, is born and discussed in the centre, a non-American writer cannot help taking it into account in his or her writings. In that way the discourses of the centre structure the discourses of the 'others', no matter how ill-fitted they are to the trends and socio-political situations in other countries. We enter the 'international' discussions in terms of the conditions set by Anglo-American scholarship and social and cultural trends. If we say that a phenomenon, such as political correctness, does not exist in our country to any considerable

extent, it is easily seen as a sign of 'backwardness', and we are expected to make an interpretation of the reasons for its non-existence. In the latter case we make a worthwhile contribution to the 'international' discussion, which shows how its function is, in fact, to make sense of the phenomena that take place in the centre.

This leads us to the related factor, already referred to in the Baudrillard example, that strengthens the Anglo-American dominance. It is the default assumption that we are all familiar with American and British places, celebrities and popular events. If we for instance analyse an American television series, pop star or film, or a British celebrity such as Princess Diana, it is quite acceptable in an international publication. In addition to the more theoretical points made, such objects of study in themselves represent phenomena 'of general interest', because 'everybody' is supposed to know them. The same is not the case if one analyses people, places or phenomena deemed peripheral from the centre position. The reason why the audience should read analyses of more remote objects has to be made explicit, and in doing so we often relate the object in question to related phenomena in the centre. In other words, whoever enters the 'international arena' necessarily contributes to reproducing the same structures. We have to make Anglo-American and other readers believe that everything worthwhile takes place in the Anglo-American countries, in the centre. In order to get our works published in the international market, we have to contribute to reproducing the centre-periphery structure, both by making our contribution to the development of a field of study, and by making it in such a way that it becomes part of the 'centre discourse'. We have to adopt the gaze of the people in the centre, looking at ourselves from afar or above.

Such distancing from one's own given perspective is by no means only a harmful thing. On the contrary, being able to take distance from familiar phenomena and thus show them from a new angle is one of the key gadgets of social scientists. However, the problem with Anglo-American dominance is that such distancing is one-sided: only outsiders are required to take another's perspective, whereas people located in the centre easily slip into ignorant ethnocentrism.

We cannot totally circumvent the structural determinants of international English-language publishing, but in my view our aim should be to avoid glaring Anglo-American ethnocentrism. For instance, as editors of the *European Journal of Cultural Studies (EJCS)*, we – that is, Ann Gray, Joke Hermes and myself – have made the observation that especially British and American

scholars every now and then submit articles to us that address only a narrowly defined audience. Although we emphasize that *EJCS* is an international journal based in Europe, some authors either miss that or simply do not realize that not all our readers are familiar with, say, prominent politicians in the local-level London political scene, or that the point of the whole analysis has to be other than a remark aimed at the national political discussion.

THE PROGRESS NARRATIVE

Part of the cultural dynamics that tacitly contributes to the Anglo-American dominance of social science and qualitative research is the stubbornness of modernization and progress narrative within the 'western' sociological imagination. According to this line of thought, which stems from the Enlightenment philosophers (Pollard, 1968), the development of human societies can be best thought of in terms of an evolutionary process, within which primitive, technically and economically less developed societies gradually develop towards a more 'modern' model. Some critics may welcome modernization, others may be critical of it and long for the past, but within this progress or modernization discourse one tends to assume that social development, aided by social science, means that gradually all societies will look alike: the features of different primitive world cultures will eventually converge upon a single global 'culture of modernity'.

For instance, Saint-Simon argued that in the cultural evolution of mankind, there are 'organic' and 'critical', i.e., peaceful and revolutionary phases. According to him, the world has seen two organic phases, classical Hellenism and Medieval Catholicism. He named the third, coming phase 'positive' and 'industrial'. According to him, development is led by providential and inevitable divine guidance, but in the final phase its ideal realization requires from humankind conscious, enlightened co-operation, which is directed by the science of society. Later, Saint-Simon's disciple August Comte developed the same three-stage narrative and argued that humankind moves from the Theological or fictive phase to the Metaphysical or abstract phase and then to the Scientific or positive phase.

When we conceive of the development of human disciplines within this discourse, we tend to narrate it as a single story of scientific progress, within which old assumptions are every now and then questioned and challenged

by a new paradigm, thus increasing our knowledge of society. For instance, in the influential *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln tell the development of qualitative research in terms of such a progress narrative (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).⁴

According to them, the history of qualitative research in the human disciplines consists of seven moments, which are 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); and the future (2000–).

Denzin and Lincoln associate the traditional moment to Malinowski's discussion of the scientific principles of objective ethnography and to the Chicago School urban ethnography. Malinowski's norms of classical ethnography established the image of the male 'lone Ethnographer' who first endures the ultimate ordeal of fieldwork in a strange, other culture, and after returning home with his data writes an objective account of the culture studied. The Chicago School added an emphasis on the life story and the 'slice of life' approach to ethnographic materials, seeking to develop an interpretative methodology that maintained the centrality of the narrated life-history approach (2000: 13).

In Denzin and Lincoln's narrative, the modernist phase, or second moment, is linked to the formalization of qualitative methods in several textbooks, such as Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Bogdan and Taylor (1975). They characterize this phase with an attempt to make qualitative research as rigorous as its quantitative counterpart. Thus, work in the modernist period clothed itself in the language and rhetoric of positivist and postpositivist discourse. Denzin and Lincoln mention Howard S. Becker's *Boys in White* (Becker et al., 1961) as a canonical text.

Denzin and Lincoln define the beginning and end of the third stage, the moment of blurred genres, by two books by Clifford S. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) and *Local Knowledge* (1983). In these works Geertz argued that the old approaches to the human disciplines were giving way to a more pluralistic, interpretative, open-ended perspective. According to him, the observer has no privileged voice in the interpretations that are written; the central task of theory is to make sense out of a local situation. According to Denzin and Lincoln, the naturalistic, postpositivist and constructionist paradigms gained power in this period.

The fourth stage, the crisis of representation, occurred according to Denzin and Lincoln with

the appearance of five books, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus and Fischer, 1986), *The Anthropology of Experience* (Turner and Bruner, 1986), *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), *Works and Lives* (Geertz, 1988) and *The Predicament of Culture* (Clifford, 1988). According to Denzin and Lincoln, these books made research and writing more reflexive and called into question the issues of gender, class and race. They articulated and discussed ways out of the conclusion that the classic norms of objective ethnography can no longer be accepted or defended. Therefore, new models of truth, method and representation were sought.

Only four years after the beginning of the previous stage, Denzin and Lincoln distinguish the next moment, which they call 'the postmodern, a period of experimental and new ethnographies' (1990–1995). According to them, it struggled to make sense of the triple crisis of representation, legitimation and praxis. In this instance, Denzin and Lincoln make reference to only one book, *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing* (Ellis and Bochner, 1996).

Five years from that stage, Denzin and Lincoln again distinguish a new stage or moment, this time called the postexperimental (1995–2000), immediately followed by the seventh and last moment, the future (2000–). When jointly discussing the last two moments, they write that fictional ethnographies, ethnographic poetry and multimedia texts are today taken for granted. And they continue: 'Postexperimental writers seek to connect their writings to the needs of a free democratic society. The demands of a moral and sacred qualitative social science are actively being explored by a host of new writers from many different disciplines.'

I have summarized Denzin and Lincoln's narrative of the development of qualitative research at considerable length because it quite carefully records the different major turns that qualitative methodology discussions have seen during the past decades. Therefore, I recommend reading that story and consulting the literature referred to therein to acquire an overall picture of the recent history of qualitative research.

However, that story also testifies to the problems and dangers of the progress narrative, which cannot be entirely avoided even if the storytellers are themselves aware of the pitfalls. Denzin and Lincoln do make many reservations to their story. For instance, when first introducing their model of the seven moments (2000: 2), they do define their scope by saying that they discuss the development of qualitative research in North America. In the same instance they emphasize that these seven moments overlap and

operate simultaneously in the present. Furthermore, they say they are mindful that any history is always somewhat arbitrary and always at least partially a social construction (2000: 11). Finally, they emphasize that future researchers' interests in these moments are largely unpredictable: some are now out of fashion, but may again become fashionable in the future (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000: 1047).

Despite these reservations it is undeniable that their story, as an example of a progress narrative, also functions as a way to argue implicitly that what they describe as the last moments are where up-to-date, well-informed researchers should now be going if they are not there yet. Likewise, researchers and studies mentioned as examples of the most recent moments represent the avant-garde or cutting edge of present-day qualitative research. It is hardly a surprise that the authors of exemplary studies of these moment of qualitative research development are a very small and practically all-American group of people. And the closer to the present you get, the more frequently are there new stages, and the narrower is the group.

GLOBALIZATION: FROM A TEMPORAL TO A SPATIAL METAPHOR

Compared with the modernization and progress narrative, the globalization story is less akin to the ethnocentric bias, because it implies global spread and increasing mutual interconnectedness rather than unidirectional development. Within the spatial metaphor behind the concept of globalization, it is easier to investigate the multiple routes of influence in the world of scholars, books and scholarly institutions.

Moving over to the spatial metaphor does not mean that we entirely reject the temporal aspect. Some theories of globalization in fact present the modernization story in a new guise. In particular, discussions about the cultural aspects of globalization have circled around the thesis of homogenization, according to which increasing mutual interconnectedness of world cultures leads to a homogenized global culture. Thus, the globalization discussion has rejuvenated an older theory of cultural imperialism and Americanization (Holton, 1998: 166–72). According to the arguments presented in that debate, American companies have a predominant role in the ownership of 'the cultural industry'. The US has also been claimed to hold a role in constructing a regulatory

framework within the culture the and information industries that favours US interests. Moreover, it is argued that there is a deeper diffusion of (American-originated) cultural practices and social institutions throughout the world, referred to as 'McDonaldization' by George Ritzer (1993). All this is claimed to contribute to an ever more thorough homogenization of world cultures (e.g. Thussu, 1998), with the US as the model.

If such a homogenization thesis is applied to the development of qualitative research, one would argue that because the United States is such a strong market area of academic education and publishing, the views on methodology that gain a paradigmatic position there will eventually achieve dominance throughout the world. From this position, we can lament the prospect that the US dominance easily overrules the richness of multiple parallel scientific and methodological traditions. This variant of the modernization or progress narrative does not necessarily assume that the best and most advanced methodological views gain the upper hand, it is just that theories and methodologies formulated from a centre position are more easily heard and seen.

It seems that in some ways the homogenization thesis holds also in the field of qualitative research. For the reasons discussed above, there is a flow of influence from American authors to other parts of the world. English-language publishers form the global marketplace of ideas and thus strengthen the position of US-based publishers. Because English is the lingua franca of contemporary science, international publishing is often equated with English-language publishing.

For the same reasons, ideas stemming from elsewhere also enter the world market via American or 'major international' publishers. Scholars anywhere wanting to be heard internationally publish in American journals and books published by American or 'major' publishers. Similarly, books that have appeared in other languages get translated and thus enter the American market.

In that sense, what at first sight appears like increasing Anglo-American dominance, gradually leading into homogenization or 'Americanization' of qualitative research, is not that straightforward. The dynamics of international publishing in English also means that the American scholarly community is repeatedly influenced by people coming from elsewhere in the world.

That is one of the aspects of globalization. In the globalization discussion it is emphasized that not just money, products and ideas cross borders increasingly often; migration is one of the aspects and drivers of the process. The 'brain

drain' from different parts of the world to US universities also contributes to the strong position of US-based publishers and the US academic scene. This is an old phenomenon. Just consider people like the founder of American anthropology, Franz Boas, a key figure in the development of survey methodology, Paul Lazarsfeld, or a key figure in the Chicago School of social research, Florian Znaniecki: they were migrants from non-English-speaking European countries who then made their career in the US.

Therefore, what seems to be increasing US dominance in the world of human science disciplines is in many ways based on a rich international cultural heritage. What now appears like the cutting edge of qualitative research is in countless ways the outcome of the accumulation of social science knowledge, much of which stems from elsewhere than just the English-speaking countries. To take just one example, in Denzin and Lincoln's story of the development of qualitative research, from the 1980s onwards new stages are almost regularly initiated by American anthropologists, but the points they make are mainly implications for ethnography drawn from the French discussion on postmodernity.

In the discussion about the cultural aspects of globalization, what is known as the 'hybridization' thesis challenges the homogenization thesis, and argues that because of globalization there are more and more 'hybrid' cultural forms on the globe. To apply that to the field of qualitative research, it can be argued that the increasingly strong position of English as a common language among world social researchers means that the shared cultural and scientific heritage, embodied in all the literature published in English, is constantly enriched. The American and other major English-language publishers do work as a kind of trading room of ideas in qualitative research and more generally in human disciplines. They work both ways: the US scholarly community gains influence from people abroad, and scholars working in different parts of the world can see what is going on elsewhere by reading English-language books.

In this instance we must, however, hasten to note the problems related to the Anglo-American dominance of the publishing field, discussed in the previous sections. As we said, the dominance of the big US market sets restrictions on what kind of work gets published. To interest the (American) audience and thus to get published, empirical research has somehow to address the American reality or political and cultural agenda. The same goes for innovations in social and cultural theory. To catch on in the English-language market, a new theory or theoretical framework

has to somehow speak to the current situation in the American reality. If that is not the case, it may be largely ignored and perhaps 'discovered' at a later stage. For that reason, it can be said that innovations made in academic communities speaking other languages form a resource of ideas, waiting for the right moment to be found in the centre – that is, in the English-language community.

Unlike natural science, whose development can be described as accumulation of knowledge about the laws of nature, human disciplines are quite different. They are more like a running commentary on the cultural and political turns that different societies or larger regions go through over the decades. Because there is no unidirectional progress in social development, different historical and cultural contexts have provided the world academic community with the conceptual and methodological tools with which to tackle almost anything that is possible in the human reality, seen from a plethora of viewpoints. However, such a collectively owned toolbox is never and cannot ever be at once utilized to the full. It is rather that the changes we see in the development of human disciplines in one country or region are due to the fact that some of those tools are in and others are out. Very rarely we witness a wholly new tool being developed, although each user leaves their marks on the tools they use.

The same goes for qualitative research as a special area. Instead of assuming the unidirectional progress of science, we should perceive the qualitative research scene as consisting of interconnected networks. Because human disciplines typically address locally important problems, theoretical and methodological ideas are either discovered from the global collective 'archive' or invented anew each time there has been a use for them. With all due respect to present-day and future innovative thinkers, in many respects it seems that the shared human cultural heritage and the potentials of the human mind provide us with the tools people use each time the conditions are suitable for them. For the same reason, similar development in different parts of the world creates similar lines of thought both in social life and in the realm of human disciplines.

International discussion about the origins of what is known as cultural studies – a school of thought also influential for the development of qualitative research – is a good example. According to the standard canonized version, cultural studies originated in the 1950s and 1960s in Britain, especially in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. However, the 'school

discourse', in terms of which there is a single tradition that has then spread around the world, has been challenged. For instance, Handel K. Wright (1998) has half seriously argued that cultural studies originates in Africa. In a similar vein, I have traced the formation of cultural studies scholarship in Finland to several different sources of influence, with the Birmingham School as only one of them.

Even when discussing the formation of cultural studies in the Birmingham School, it has been pointed out that it came into being as a fusion from several sources of influence. From the very outset the British roots of cultural studies represented at least literary studies, history and sociology. The Birmingham School was just as comfortable in borrowing terms and picking up influences from Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, and symbolic interactionism, as from the Marxist theorists Althusser and Gramsci. In a word, the Birmingham School cultural studies was an outcome of the intermeshing of influences at the time when the so-called 'linguistic turn' took place in the human disciplines.

In that sense, the ideas and sensibilities underlying the Birmingham School were sort of 'in the air', and therefore it is no wonder that similar formations of 'researching culture and society after the linguistic turn' took place in several places simultaneously. The 'spirit of the time' urged that culture be taken seriously and granted certain independence, but simultaneously several people realized that 'cultural matters', or meaning-making practices, need to be seen within the context of power and politics. Defined from this vantage point, it becomes clear that cultural studies actually has several independent histories. The researchers at CCCS and their 'godfathers' Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams were just one group who invented cultural studies among many others, such as Pierre Bourdieu (*Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 1977; *Distinction*, 1984), Clifford Geertz (*The Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973) and Marshall Sahlins (*Culture and Practical Reason*, 1976).

Thus it can be said that several groups of people invented cultural studies simultaneously, independently from each other – a phenomenon that is quite common in the history of science. However, in addition to that it is important to notice that cultural studies also spreads by association; that is, cultural studies has had a contagious effect on the writers quoted in its texts. Many of these writers have been drawn into cultural studies, and most have readily accepted the label. Janice Radway, for instance, had never as much as heard of the Birmingham School when she was told, after her book had been published,

that *Reading the Romance* (Radway, 1984) slotted into the category of cultural studies. Today, the book counts as one of the classical works of American cultural studies.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CONSTRUCTION

Parallel with the story of the multiple and discursive formation of cultural studies as an academic movement and discipline, qualitative research can also be seen as a social construct, which spreads around the globe more by association than by exportation. One could argue even more strongly that in some ways and to a degree, 'cultural studies' and 'qualitative research' are competing social constructions, with which scholars can associate themselves, thus spreading the field by contagion. At least we can say that the development of qualitative research as a cross-disciplinary, firm body of knowledge is the outcome of a process by which the know-how or craft of doing empirical social research has been accumulated by borrowing from and consulting researchers from different disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. The accumulated knowledge has then been renamed as 'qualitative methodology', and scholars applying parts of that knowledge in their research have been renamed as or associated with 'qualitative research'.

From the viewpoint of sociology, behind that history is the methodological development by which the quantitative social survey acquired a dominant position within the discipline by the end of the 1950s. It gained such a strong position that the social survey became virtually a synonym for empirical social research. It was understood as *the* scientific method of studying social phenomena, and it also provided the model for other possible methods such as (quantitative) content analysis: you define your population, take a representative random sample, define variables, code the data and test your hypotheses by analysing statistical relations between the variables. In other words, in addition to a set of procedures it provided the whole language of empirical social research. Surrounding the survey language was a more diverse field labelled as 'social theory'. The idea was that after gaining inspiration from theories, researchers operationalize them into survey research designs and test them as hypotheses, thus giving at least circumstantial evidence to verify them.

By the 1970s there was growing dissatisfaction with the limitations of survey research.

Those who were particularly displeased with it either went back to the history of sociology or learned from other disciplines how to study social and cultural phenomena. Although a great deal of the skills that people acquired and procedures they adopted stemmed from the old stock of common knowledge of the craft of analysing and reflecting on social phenomena, in the new paradigmatic situation they were given a new meaning. The whole process of questioning and reasoning about social phenomena, making observations about them and coming up with empirical findings based on other research than an analysis of statistical relations between variables, was relabelled as 'qualitative research' or 'qualitative methodology'. This renaming of a great deal of the tricks of the trade of sociological reasoning effectively concealed the fact that, prior to the 1950s, practically everything that went by the name of sociology or empirical social research was other than survey research, and would in that sense represent 'qualitative research'.

Most of what goes by the name of qualitative methodology is just another name for the basic skills of social scientists. It is just that, due to the amnesia of sociology caused by the effects of the survey paradigm, these skills, the craft of social research, did not seem to have any space left. Instead of craft, the survey paradigm wanted so desperately to make sociology a science in the false model of natural science that people did not have much space in which to discuss or pass on the 'secret' that behind the clean, straightforward and elegant-looking front of a published social science research report is a process that involves and requires puzzlement, innovation and sociological imagination. We may argue that such uniqueness of each research process is characteristic of qualitative research, and we may even celebrate qualitative researchers for their innovativeness that defies all the rigid rules of science, but by doing so we contribute to reproducing a biased and harmful view of the methodological field of the social sciences and humanities as a two-party system.

Because qualitative research methods are more like a new package to a collection of old tools than a new developing area of scholarship, the picture of Anglo-American dominance we obtain by studying the list of textbook authors is actually an illusion. A great majority of the knowledge of human societies and behaviour, and of the logic followed in applying that knowledge to empirical research that is marketed as qualitative research methods, is borrowed from the common international heritage of the human sciences. Some of that knowledge dates back all

the way to Ancient Greek philosophers, whereas later ingredients and spices of this pot of soup are fetched from many sources. Classical European sociology, social and cultural anthropology, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, 1950s and 1960s French structuralism and post-structuralism, have probably had great influence, to name just a few examples. But more important than naming the geographically dispersed and cross-disciplinary sources of influence to present-day English language literature on qualitative methodology is to notice that interesting – or dull for that matter – mixtures of more or less the same ingredients, flavoured with some local components, can be found practically almost everywhere and in a number of languages. To a degree, wherever social scientists pause to reflect on the logics of their research on and reasoning about social phenomena, and write about such reflections to pass on the craft of doing empirical social research, they will tap the same sources.

HOW DOES ONE BECOME A QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER?

Given the nature of qualitative research as a social construction, at least during the formation of qualitative research as an area of scholarship 'in its own right', one did not necessarily become a qualitative researcher or an expert in qualitative methods by first taking courses in qualitative methods and then doing qualitative research. Instead, one learned by doing, by reflecting on what one did, and by trying to reconstruct the rules one followed by doing it. Then, becoming labelled as a qualitative researcher was the final seal. Such a process of entering the field was probably an inefficient way to learn the craft, because it certainly sometimes entailed reinventing the wheel, but it also meant that people brought with them their own educational and disciplinary backgrounds and thus enriched the array of discourses labelled as qualitative research.

My own entrance to the field from the early 1980s onwards is a case in point. It was a surprise to me to soon become labelled as an 'expert' in qualitative research, especially because, before starting to do empirical research and even before I had already started teaching courses in qualitative methods, I had hardly read a single book about qualitative methods from cover to cover, let alone taken courses in them.

During the time I studied sociology at the University of Tampere, from the late 1970s until

1983 when I completed my MA thesis, qualitative methods (or 'soft methods' as they were alternatively called) were not taught that much because our teachers' generation was trained to be modern scientific sociologists, whose methodological training mostly consisted in survey research. However, that era was marked by what was called positivism critique, which mostly stemmed from Marxian social thought, and the tide was just turning from an economic Marxist structural orientation to approaches that emphasized the importance of everyday life and people's own experience and sense-making. In that context, I became interested in the Birmingham School cultural studies and the way they studied youth or working-class subcultures (e.g. Willis, 1977, 1978; Hebdige, 1979). It was therefore logical that my student colleague Jorma Siltari and I did an ethnographic study of a group of men who played darts in an urban pub (Alasuutari and Siltari, 1983), and that study led to a larger research project that was completed in 1985 (for a later published English translation see Sulkunen et al., 1997).

By the time I conducted the first case study, my literacy in qualitative research methods was mostly restricted to the scarce methodological appendixes that appeared in some of the studies I had read as examples and models. The few textbooks I tried to read were in my view so boring and different from the approach I had adopted from the Birmingham School that I only skimmed them. However, my ignorance about qualitative methodology did not prevent me from starting to teach qualitative methods right after I had obtained my MA. The reason why they asked me to do it was obvious: only very few people had done an empirical study based on anything else than survey. Therefore, I just had to force myself into reading at least something, but I think that my first lectures consisted mostly in reflecting on and reconstructing my own fieldwork 'methods', and discussing theoretical and methodological frameworks such as semiotics.

At the time, my objects of interest within the social sciences and humanities certainly reflected the paradigm constellation within Finnish sociology. In addition to direct influence from researchers and theorists within the country, influences in the domestic field were filtered from several directions. Many older generation sociologists had studied at least for some time in the United States and become trained as survey researchers. However, in the 1970s economic and purely theoretical, even philosophical Marxism, or the Scandinavian, especially Danish *Kapitallogiker* school⁵ (together with the

more Soviet-influenced, explicitly political Marxism-Leninism), enjoyed a firm paradigmatic footing, especially among the younger generation. Marxism was a response to American 'behavioral science', and sought to account better for the structural determinants of society. By the late 1970s, however, researchers were beginning to look for 'softer' approaches that took account of people's everyday life. The solution was to be provided by the concept of way of life, adopted from Soviet and German Marxist sociology. Many articles by J.P. Roos (see Roos, 1985) were a particularly important influence in this regard. In addition to East and West German influences, such as Jürgen Habermas, the French cultural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu became early on very popular in Finland, and in addition to him there was a constant flow of influences from French philosophy and 'poststructuralist' social theory. Names like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser became known, read into French or in translations into Finnish or English. On top of all that, there were the old traditions of Finnish folklore and ethnology, which caught my interest when I later tried to relate my experience from fieldwork to those of others and to develop methods for analysing life stories.

Those were the main ingredients from which I cooked up an account of theories, methods and practices sold as a qualitative research textbook, but more or less the same texts could as legitimately be sold as 'cultural studies' (see Alasuutari, 1997) or simply as sociology. That very well illustrates the character of qualitative research as a construction. Therefore, I think my story shows that the same basic wisdom behind what is known as qualitative research can be independently acquired from several sources and traditions. That is because the main gist is the same as in all social research, informed by different traditions of social and cultural theory: to question and problematize everything you tend to take for granted.

On the other hand, the configurations of theoretical and methodological trends and influences peculiar to a particular country or region are also a strength for the development of empirical social research. For instance, had I been formally trained as a qualitative researcher before entering the field, I may not have looked elsewhere for ideas. Therefore, the professionalization of qualitative research as an independent field of scholarship brings with it the danger that the flow of influences from outside is diminished, especially if textbooks are primarily published by Anglo-American scholars.

TOWARDS GLOBALIZATION OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Despite the dangers related to specialization and to conceiving of the development of qualitative research in terms of a progress narrative, it must be emphasized that qualitative research has certainly been a useful construction in the sense that nowadays students do not have to reinvent the wheel that often. Those of us who have assumed the identity of qualitative researchers and tried to pass on the craft of social research by reconstructing the fuzzy logics of doing empirical social research have helped to unravel an essential part of the profession. Although it was especially due to the positivist attitude prevailing in the social survey paradigm that created the amnesia of sociology, the tricks of the trade were never really thoroughly discussed or consciously thought through. Before qualitative research textbooks started teaching them, new generations of social researchers had to learn to master their profession by trial and error.

Given all this, wouldn't it then be fair to say that qualitative research has entered the stage where empirical researchers around the world no longer reinvent the wheel over and over again, in ignorance of each other? Doesn't the seven-moment story about the development of qualitative research told by Denzin and Lincoln tell exactly about the development ever since the first moment, when qualitative research was established as a field of scholarship?

I think it is certainly fair to acknowledge that we have come a long way since, say, Bronislaw Malinowski's (1961[1922]) guidelines for ethnographic research or Vladimir Propp's (1975[1928]) method of studying the narrative structure of folktales. As Denzin and Lincoln argue, the 1980s and 1990s alone included three historical moments.

However, there are important fallacies in the progress narrative at least as far as the global scene of qualitative research is concerned.

First, the temporal root metaphor of the progress narrative makes it difficult to account for several parallel developments going on in different human disciplines and in different regions. Although from a North American perspective it may seem that all major discoveries from neighbouring disciplines have already been made, even the story of seven moments referred to above can be said to testify to a different picture. The moments typically depict situations in which qualitative researchers draw implications from and react to challenges from new philosophical

and theoretical trends in the human disciplines. In that sense, the moments come 'from outside' qualitative research as a field of inquiry in its own right. It is most likely that future changes in the field will take place under similar circumstances: somewhere in the human disciplines researchers come up with a new fresh idea and – sooner or later – an empirical researcher applies it to their research and writes about the innovation. Moreover, we have hardly exhausted ideas and discoveries about human reality that have already been made elsewhere on the globe. In fact, lessons from other cultures and from parallel traditions of social thought are a largely untapped and promising resource.

Second, the progress narrative easily guides us to conceive of the history of qualitative research as scientific development, within which outdated and antiquated modes of thought are now and again critiqued and rejected for better, more adequate and valid ways of conceiving of the human reality. As tempting as such a story is, I think it is wiser to be more humble and modest and to start from the assumption that qualitative research consists of a toolbox of approaches and practices aimed at a rational, entertaining and touching running commentary on social and cultural phenomena. The particular tools picked up and trimmed each time depend on the local historical and cultural context. At times, an entirely new tool may be developed, but it is foolish to think that there could be one tool that is applicable in any situation. From this viewpoint, true globalization of qualitative research does not mean that at any point in time there would be a global trend towards using a single tool or a set of latest design tools. There are such global trends and fashions, but hopefully globalization means that there is increasing knowledge and circulation of tools developed in different parts of the world. Truly global qualitative research could depict a trading point for different approaches and practices circulating within the global community of researchers.

NOTES

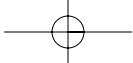
- 1 That was the quickest way to study the matter, although it is partly problematic. Some scholars may in fact be immigrants, i.e. 'legal aliens' as the US law calls them. But even if authors' nationality differs from their place of residence, it reflects the strong position of the country in which the author resides.
- 2 My own textbooks, *An Invitation to Social Research* (Sage, 1998) and *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies* (Sage, 1995) were not

classified as 'qualitative methodology' and are not therefore included in these figures.

- 3 It listed 272 books, from which I took a random sample of 42 books and checked the institutional affiliations of authors in a similar vein as I did in the case of qualitative methodology. However, to give due credit to books that introduce or discuss a theorist like Bourdieu, Durkheim, Giddens, Simmel or Weber, I also gave one point to the country of origin of the theorist mentioned in the book's title or subtitle. The fact that I studied only such a small sample of course means that chance plays a bigger role and that the results give only a very rough estimate of the actual situation. A bigger sample would, for instance, mean that there would be more countries that get a point or two. Anyway, the 42 books turned into 47 points, which were distributed in the following manner. Out of 47 points, the UK got 18, the US 8, Australia 5, France 5, Canada 4, Germany 3, India 2, Denmark 1, and the Netherlands 1 point.
- 4 In an earlier critique of Denzin and Lincoln's account of the development of qualitative research, Atkinson et al. (1999) also point out the teleological character of the Denzin and Lincoln scenario. As they put it, 'despite the postmodernist standpoint from which they survey the scene, a grand narrative of intellectual progress is reinvented' (1999: 468).
- 5 As a short introduction, see the Special Issue on the Critique of Political Economy, *Acta Sociological*, 20(2), 1977.

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