

Call for Papers

Advances in Analyzing Contextual Effects on Behavior, Practice and Experience

2017 AAG Annual Meeting, Boston (April 5-9, 2017)

Organizers:

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Much of geographic and social science research is concerned with the influence of various contextual factors on human behavior, practice, and experience. Widely understood as the neighborhood effect in urban and health research, contextual influences on people's behavior and experience were often analyzed using arbitrary and static enumeration units (e.g., census tracts or post-code areas), which may deviate significantly from the "true causally relevant" geographic contexts and lack sufficient consideration of past contexts.

The spatial dimension of this problem has been recognized and recently articulated as the uncertain geographic context problem (UGCoP): the problem that findings about the effects of area-based attributes (e.g., neighborhood walkability, access to health food outlets, or social deprivation) may be affected by how contextual units (e.g., neighborhoods) are geographically delineated and the extent to which these areal units deviate from the "true causally relevant" geographic context at a given moment (<http://www.meipokwan.org/UGCOP.html>). It is a significant methodological problem because it means that analytical results can be different for different delineations of contextual units (e.g., census tract, circular buffers, network-based buffers, or perceived neighborhood) even if everything else is the same.

There is also a temporal dimension to the problem of contextual influence: contexts from earlier times may still exert influence at later moments (e.g., during the day or during the life course) when physical proximity has been replaced by connectivity. Such relational effects have been described in many different ways (e.g., historical dependence, spill-over or life-course effects), but they remain poorly understood and their evaluation presents major methodological challenges. It is difficult to identify which, when, where and how past context(s) matters. Spatially uncertain contextual effects are mediated and often amplified by temporal uncertainties.

We seek to organize several sessions to further explore and deepen understanding of various spatiotemporal uncertainties in the analysis of contextual effects on human behavior, practice, and experience. We welcome papers from all geographic subfields and perspectives. Topics may include but are not limited to: (1) more accurate representation and assessment of the space-time configurations of environmental risk factors, individual daily mobility, and their interactions (e.g., capturing situational contingencies and real-time context with ecological momentary assessment; reconstructing the daily paths and activity spaces of individuals of different social groups using means like GPS, mixed methods, and qualitative GIS; and collecting and using high resolution space-time data of environmental influences and individual mobility); (2) examination of the differences between the UGCoP and the modifiable areal unit problem (MAUP); (3) exploration of means for mitigating the UGCoP; (4) conceptualizations of temporally extended and spatiotemporally uncertain contextual effects; (5) realistic representations of such effects using quantitative and mixed methods approaches; and (6) empirical examination of temporally extended as well as spatiotemporally uncertain contextual effects.

If you are interested in participating in the sessions, please send a short abstract of no more than 250 words to Mei-Po Kwan (mpk654@gmail.com) and Tim Schwanen (tim.schwanen@ouce.ox.ac.uk) by October 14, 2016. Please follow AAG guidelines for preparing and submitting abstracts at:

http://www.aag.org/cs/annualmeeting/call_for_papers