DOI: 10.15201/hungeobull.74.3.3 Hungarian Geographical Bulletin 74 (2025) (3) 269–284.

Theory, explanation and references in geography: Comparing two seminal books by David Harvey and Henry Yeung

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Abstract

This article aims to present how the comparative bibliometric analysis of seminal books' reference lists reflects, and enables scrutinising, some fundamental structural characteristics of the functioning of Geography as a scientific discipline in different periods. It employs David Harvey's *Explanation in Geography*, a magnum opus of Geography's quantitative revolution from 1969, and Henry W. Yeung's *Theory and Explanation in Geography* from 2024, a comprehensive conceptual work whose title consciously evokes Harvey's volume, as case studies. After discussing the possibilities and limits of investigating books as imprints of changing academic practices and addressing methodological questions, the paper reveals a significant increase in the number of references and referenced publications between the two books. It reaffirms the rising share of journal articles (instead of books) and multi-author publications (instead of single-author ones) as structural outcomes of 'academic neoliberalisation', while revealing that books, book chapters and single-author publications still make a difference and have a considerable impact on academic discourses. It presents that 'Geography' as a term has become rather a synonym of 'Human Geography' in certain contexts, instead of containing both Human and Physical Geography. The results prove a significant growth in the impact of publications by female authors and the visibility of scholars outside the UK and the USA, including the Global South. At the same time, they still indicate a firm male dominance and the hegemony of Anglo-American authors and English language publications in the discipline.

Keywords: decolonial, geographies of science, geopolitics of knowledge, Global North/Global South, scientometrics, David Harvey, worlding, Henry W. Yeung

Received July 2025, accepted August 2025

Introduction

In 2023, few new books attracted such interest in international geography as Henry Wai-chung Yeung's *Theory and Explanation in Geography*, published with Wiley in the book series of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (Yeung, H.W. 2024). Although the book was released with a 2024 copyright, academic events to discuss the volume began well before the end of 2023, with the Author Meets Critics session at the Annual International Conference of the RGS-IBG in the Ondaatje Theatre of the Society's London headquarters on 1 September 2023 certainly being among the most important of them (https://vimeo.com/860120139/b7a924c36b). In the succeeding one and a half years, a series of book launch events took place around the world, including a tour at seven Geography departments in UK universities in February 2024 (https://www.linkedin.com/in/henry-yeung-20176266/recent-activity/all/), a book trip around the north-eastern quarter of the USA and the UK in September and October 2024 (https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7239559854292377601/),

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and a series of visits at universities throughout continental Europe in November and December 2024 (https://www.linkedin.com/posts/henry-yeung-20176266_the-first-of-my-book-talk-in-the-last-book-activity-7262821435436392448-BSo8).

While the book aimed to be "useful in making a clear(er) case for explanatory mid-range theory in Geography" (Yeung, H.W. 2024, p. xiii), it was doing so by referring in the very first sentence in Chapter One to David Harvey's (1969) magnum opus with a similar, though not identical, title, *Explanation in Geography*, one of the best-known and most-cited pieces of Geography's 'quantitative revolution' in the 1950s and 1960s (cf. Johnston, R. 2008; Gyuris, F. *et al.* 2022). The similarity in the titles of the two books is unmistakable, just as their special relationship, with Harvey's work serving as a milestone and reference point in the history of Geography, relative to which Yeung introduced and presented his significantly newer and fundamentally different own argumentation (cf. Yeung, H.W. *et al.* 2025). Yeung's overview of theory and explanation in contemporary geographical thought also starts where Harvey's 1969 volume ended, "tak[ing] a quick tour of the key conceptual priorities and their styles of theory and/or explanation in the various critical approaches since David Harvey's (1969) rendition of the positivist approach for Geography" (Yeung, H.W. 2024, p. 36).

Both books are large-scale scientific undertakings that seek to find an adequate theoretical underpinning of Geography. In addition to that, their authors intended them to be gap-filling works, a significant educational function of which was to facilitate the work of professional readers who are (yet) less familiar with the complex and diverse topics presented in the book but who wish to review and understand these topics in a structured way. (Cf. Harvey, D.'s [1969] words about "I sought to publish it [the book] because I feel sure there are many geographers, both young and old, who are in a similar state of ignorance to that which I was in before I commenced to write" [p. v] and Yeung, H.W. [2024] stressing that "there is no recent authored academic book in Geography that goes into this kind of epistemological debates on theory and method" [p. xii] and "[j]ust like one very kind reviewer of my full manuscript has alluded, I too wished I had seen and perhaps read such a book during my Manchester PhD in the early 1990s" [p. xiii].) As a result of all of this, the two books provide a detailed overview of the newest (relative to their time) conceptual and theoretical discussions in Geography, along with the most influential authors and publications in these discussions. By doing so, they *record* the structure of contemporary theory debates in Geography and *influence* their readers' imaginations of who counts as the most important authors and what the most relevant theoretical works are in and for the discipline. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the reference lists of the two books and compare them to reveal some major structural characteristics of academic publishing in Geography, as well as the evolution of these characteristics between the 1960s and the 2020s. Particularly, it will focus on (1) the number of references, (2) the share of single- and co-authored references, (3) the most referenced scholars, (4) the gender ratio and (5) the geographical background of referenced scholars.

The relevance of analysing books from a geographies of science perspective

Over the last quarter-century, several scholars have investigated how the neoliberal shift in global economics and politics since the 1980s has led to a significant transformation in the functioning of academia, including the practices of scientific writing and publishing (Paasi, A. 2005, 2015, 2025; Hannah, M.G. 2018). Although, as Hannah, M.G. (2018, p. 18) pointed out, the consequences or "perils" of what he called "academic neoliberalization" have played out in variegated ways in different countries, they have some remarkable structural features that foster similar mechanisms of transformation in

academic strategies and practices virtually everywhere. In many cases, public funding provided to universities and research institutions either decreases or becomes conditional on what is called the academic productivity of these institutions, increasingly measured by the number of publications the scholars affiliated with the institution publish. That happens directly as well as indirectly, for instance, in the form of fetishising the rank a specific institution receives in some of the globally most powerful rankings produced by international analytics firms (such as QS World University Rankings by Quacquarelli Symonds and THE World University Rankings by the U.S. News & World Report in the United States, or ARWU Academic Ranking of World Universities by the Shanghai Ranking Consultancy in China). In these rankings, the number of publications and their citations play a decisive role (cf. Paasi, A. 2025). As another pervasive phenomenon, funding from research grants accounts for an increasing share of the revenues of scientific institutions (Hannah, M.G. 2018; Cupples, J. 2020). Consequently, these institutions find themselves in perpetual competition for these resources, where the number of publications and the citations they receive significantly impacts the likelihood of a grant application becoming successful (Paasi, A. 2025).

Neoliberal practices of audit and assessment are strongly quantitative. They pay distinguished attention to features that can be expressed in numbers, which allow technically precise calculations and measurements, including creating sophisticated rankings of which scholars or institutions are 'better' and 'how much'. (Even if these precise calculation techniques are not necessarily accurate in grasping the actual quality, novelty or general social utility of the scientific knowledge that is being produced). As researchers and their institutions are increasingly pressured to publish more, they become more interested in 'fast publishing' (Sheppard, E. 2012), including prioritising writing journal articles (Johnston, R. 2005; Cupples, J. 2020), which are much shorter and can be produced in significantly higher quantities within a given timeframe, rather than books. Hence, under these circumstances of 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter, S. and Leslie, L. 1997), "[i]nstead of monographs, institutional recognition is increasingly attributed to journal articles" (Paasi, A. 2025. p. 57), which, in some instances, may happen in quite harsh forms, such as "chairs suggesting [their staff to] desist from publishing books" (Sheppard, E. 2012, p. 1).

These structural features also push researchers towards 'getting more for less' by producing '*least publishable units*' (Broad, W.J. 1981), i.e. manuscripts with the minimum amount of research required for being regarded as publishable at a basic level, instead of writing comprehensive papers, and submitting papers to journals that just reach the minimum standard of avoiding desk rejection and only if they are allowed to undergo major revision, the authors will devote a significant portion of the work that should have been done before the first submission.

Moreover, publishing ten articles instead of a monograph may result in ten times more references to certain publications and their authors, and ten articles may attract ten times more citations than a single monograph. That also makes scholars collectively interested in producing more articles and fewer books, as they are expected to attract an increasing number of citations. The same underlying reasons also contribute to 'the collaborative turn' (Olechnicka, A. *et al.* 2019) and the skyrocketing share of co- and multi-authored publications, rather than single-authored ones, where the publication and its citations are fully included in the statistics of each co-author, thereby boosting their numbers (Gyuris, F. 2018). Since monographic books are usually the enterprise of a single author or two authors who have been working closely together on the same topic for a long time, the 'collaborative turn' also works against writing monographs.

Despite these structural forces, books, particularly monographs, continue to play a crucial role in many disciplines, including Geography. Although several academic

journals tended towards downsizing or even suspending their book review sections, the American Association of Geographers (AAG) launched *The AAG Review of Books* as a separate journal dedicated solely to book reviews in 2013. Whereas the Annals of the AAG published only 19 book reviews in its five issues during 2012, the last year before *The AAG Review of Books* launched, the latter released 3.3 times more book reviews (63) in 2013, which was not just a one-time outlier, as the journal also released 51 book reviews in 2024.

As another sign of the importance of books, checking the individual profiles of Google Scholar for scientists having Geography among their disciplinary labels (who can be identified by searching for 'label: geography' in the database) will lead one to find David Harvey standing on the top of the list with 384,697 citations (as of 17 June 2025). Although Google Scholar, like many other academic databases, have their significant limitations and biases (many of which are presented by Olechnicka, A. *et al.* 2019), out of Harvey's 15 most-cited publications, which received 237,440 citations in sum (or 61.7% of Harvey's total), there is only one journal article (Harvey, D. 1989) with 10,102 citations and 14 books and book chapters (including reprints and editions in foreign languages) with 227,338 citations. As Gyuris, F. *et al.* (2025) reveal for another research tradition, that of global production networks, the six most-cited publications in the field include a seminal book, *Global Production Networks: Theorizing Economic Development in an Interconnected World* from Coe, N.M. and Yeung, H.W. (2015), and if one counts only the citations from 2020 to 2024, the same monograph will lead the list.

There is also considerable evidence from various social sciences that monographs written in the form of comprehensive and easily understandable essays are especially likely to become fundamental textbooks, whose significance is not only reflected in the number of scientific citations they attract but also in the massive catalysing role they play in paradigm shifts. (See, for example, Barnes, T.J. and Bergmann, L.R. [2022] on Bunge, W.'s [1962, 1966] *Theoretical Geography* or Hubbard, P. *et al.*'s [2008] *Key Texts in Human Geography*, all 26 chapters of which are about books instead of articles.) In many cases, such books also have the potential to attract the interest of millions of readers outside the narrow confines of science, make them aware of certain phenomena and the connections between them, and achieve a remarkable social impact – including making the entire discipline much more visible, relevant and important to the eyes of the broader public (cf. Gyuris, F. 2014 on Wilkinson, R.G. and Pickett, K.'s [2009] *The Spirit Level*, Sheppard, E. [2015] on Piketty, T.'s [2014] *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, or Kornai, J. [2006] on the reception and afterlife of his influential book *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* [Kornai, J. 1992]).

In addition to their significant contribution to the scientific enterprise, books can also serve as essential *research objects* from a geography of science perspective. Especially monographs, which aim to synthesise a large body of literature and give a comprehensive overview of the state of the academic discourse and the most relevant ideas and publications, are significant milestones in the historical process of scientific knowledge production. They are not just one of the many publications of a particular scholar but also bear the imprint of the structural features of knowledge production of their time (and place). Comparing seminal books from different ages with each other may reveal not just the personal writing, editing, or referencing styles and habits of their authors. It also provides insight into the general writing, editing and referencing conventions and norms of the broader academic context in which these books were written – as well as ruptures and continuities in these conventions and norms.

Methodology and results

In this study, the reference analysis was based on the reference lists in Harvey's and Yeung's books. As Harvey, D.'s (1969)

seminal work was published well before the emergence of online citation databases, I scrutinised the items in its reference list manually, one by one. Yeung, H.W.'s (2024) volume is indexed in the Scopus database, which includes the entire list of references and allows a relatively fast and comprehensive analysis of the references. However, the database also contains some data errors and inconsistencies, necessitating manual review before the study. The resulting dataset included the title, authorship, year of publication, and the publishing platform (e.g. book or journal) for each referenced item.

The author data required for the analysis could be collected using several sources. In most cases, the Scopus database contains the full names of the cited authors, and the gender of the cited authors can usually be identified based on the first name. However, in some cases, only the first name's initial letter was included in the database, and the reference list in Harvey's volume only included the initial letter of the first name of all cited authors. Of course, the full name and gender of specific famous authors are also well-known and do not require special research. In other cases, for contemporary authors, the official open-access university/research institute profile of the cited author provided information about the author's gender. In the case of authors who are no longer alive, the necessary information could best be found in the former publications of these authors available in the open domain, in obituaries or memoirs written about them, and, occasionally, in library databases (e.g. the US Library of Congress catalogue).

Information on the geographical background of the authors cited by Yeung was primarily based on the Scopus database, which, in most cases, allowed the determination of the then-current institutional affiliation of the referenced author as recorded in the referenced publication. In other cases, official information in the open domain (primarily the personal profile on the institutional website) provided adequate information about the referenced authors. The geographical background of the authors cited by Harvey in 1969 could mostly be identified by scrutinising books and articles on the history of science, as well as obituaries and memoirs written about the particular authors.

Number of referenced publications and authors

David Harvey's 542-page book includes 514 references from 423 authors (including co-authors). Although Henry Yeung's volume is significantly shorter and adds up to 336 pages, it contains 839 references from 679 authors (*Figure 1*). In other words, while the average number of referenced publications per page is 0.95 for Harvey's monograph, it is 2.50 for Yeung. Likewise, the number of referenced authors relative to the number of pages increases from 0.78 for Harvey to 2.02 for Yeung. In both cases, this is more than a two-and-a-half times increase between the two books.

The two volumes also show remarkable differences in the structure of referenced publications by document types. For Harvey, D. (1969), 47.2 percent of the referenced publications are books (monographs and edited books), and 11.5 percent are book chapters, which add up to a total of 58.7 percent. The share of journal articles is significantly lower, 35.1 percent, and other document types (professional reports, discussion papers, dissertations and unpublished manuscripts) contribute 6.2 percent. In Yeung,

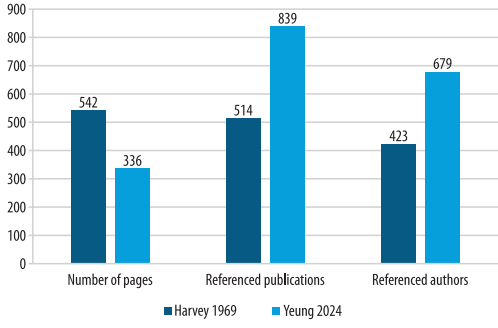

Fig. 1. The number of pages, referenced publications and referenced authors in Harvey, D. (1969) and Yeung, H.W. (2024). *Source:* Author's analysis.

H.W.'s book (2024), however, 64.1 percent of the referenced publications are journal articles, and only 25.2 percent of them are books (17.1%) and book chapters (8.1%), with other document types representing 10.7 percent.

The two books can also be compared regarding how far back their references go in time. In this respect, it is not fundamentally important how old the earliest publication they cite is (Tissot, M.A. 1881 in Harvey's case and Locke, J. 1975[1690] in Yeung's book), but how old or new the bulk of the cited works are. To determine this and make the references of the two books comparable, I compared the publication date of the cited publications to the publication date of the corresponding book (t), where the value of t is 1969 in the case of Harvey's book and 2024 in the case of Yeung's book. During the analysis, I examined each year the share of the publications published up to that year (i.e. in that year or earlier) relative to the cumulative total of all references in the given book. For example, in the case of Harvey's book, *t–50* includes all cited publications published up to 1919 (i.e. in 1919 and before), and in the case of Yeung's book, it consists of all cited publications published up to 1974 (i.e. in 1974 and before).

As the results indicate (*Figure 2*), in the case of Harvey's book, half of the cited publications were no more than seven years old when the book was published, while in Yeung's title, publications of the same age provided only 28.0 percent of all citations. In Harvey's volume, only one-third (33.3%) of the cited works were more than ten years old, and only 8.6 percent were more than twenty years old, while in Yeung's book, the exact proportions were 60.8 percent and 31.5 percent. For Harvey, publications older than thirty years accounted for only 4.9 percent of the references, while for Yeung, they accounted for 12.2 percent. In Harvey's book, the proportion of references older than eleven years was roughly the same (31.3%) as the share of references older than twenty years (31.5%) was in Yeung's book. Furthermore, the proportion of references older than 18 years in Harvey's volume was roughly the same (12.3%) as those older than 30 years in Yeung's book (12.2%). It can therefore be seen that the time horizon of the references in Yeung's book goes back significantly (about 10–12 years) further compared to the publication date of the volume than in Harvey's.

I also took a closer look at the number of referenced authors. In David Harvey's 1969 *magnum opus*, each referenced publication has an average of 1.16 authors. In Henry Yeung's 2024 volume, the corresponding value is 1.47 (*Figure 3*). That indicates an increase in the share of multi-authored publications, which is a general trend in contemporary academia. However, the value of 1.47 still reflects a significant share of single-authored works among the referenced publications.

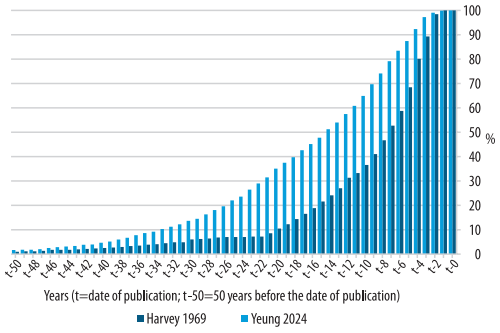

Fig. 2. The cumulative share of referenced publications released before a specific year in Harvey, D. (1969) and Yeung, H.W. (2024). *Source:* Author's analysis.

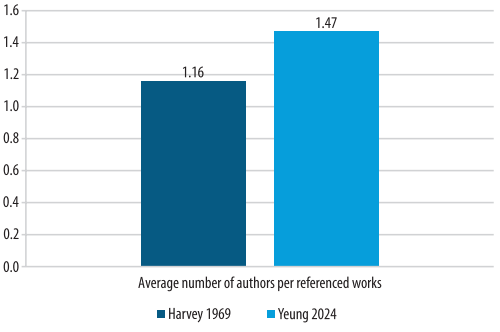

Fig. 3. The average number of authors of referenced publications in Harvey, D. (1969) and Yeung, H.W. (2024). *Source:* Author's analysis.

Most-referenced authors

In both books, the referenced authors significantly differ in the number of times their works were cited. Among the 423 authors cited by David Harvey, 386 scholars (91.3%) were cited with only one or two publications, and only 37 authors (8.7%) had at least three publications cited. However, the publications of these 37 authors received 33.5% of all references. For Henry Yeung's book, 679 authors were cited in total, 564 of them (83.1%) with just one or two publications and 115 authors (16.9%) with at least three publications, and the 115 authors received two-thirds (66.9%) of all citations (*Figure 4*). That means a relatively few, especially influential scholars lead the list of referenced authors for both books, and their dominance is significantly stronger for Yeung's book than for Harvey's.

Even among the most-cited authors, some stand out with remarkably high numbers. Harvey referred to 17 publications of the UK-born human geographer Brian Berry, who made his academic career in the United States and became one of the most influential representatives of Geography's 'quantitative revolution' (cf. Barnes, T.J. 2001; Johnston, R. and Sidaway, J.D. 2016; Gyuris, F. *et al.* 2022). Berry was closely followed in second place by the US quantitative geographer Michael Dacey, with 15 publications cited. The UK-based Richard Chorley, another leading figure of Geography's quantitative turn in the 1960s, is already significantly behind Berry and Dacey with 8 publications cited. Most of the list is made up by leading representatives of Geography's 'quantitative revolution', including a young Harvey himself (*Table 1*).

In Yeung's book, 30 references go to publications in which Yeung himself was involved as either a single or co-author. This is not surprising in a volume whose author aims to give a comprehensive overview of the current state of research in a field he has intensively contributed to for several decades as one of the most prominent international scholars. The other most-cited authors are the University of British Columbia-based geographer Jamie Peck (21), the British sociologist Andrew Sayer (16), the UK-born geographers David Harvey and Nigel Thrift (12–12), the Irish-American political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson and the British geographers Doreen Massey and Peter Dicken (11–11) (*Table 2*).

As a significant difference, Harvey, D. (1969)'s top references include many human as well as physical geographers and several philosophers. In Yeung, H.W.'s (2024) volume, the most-referenced geographers are all *human* geographers and some social scientists are also at the top of the list.

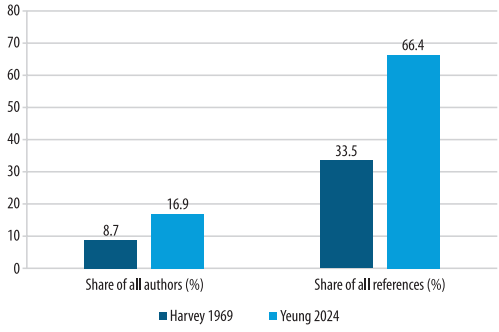

Fig. 4. The share of referenced authors with at least three referenced publications and the share of references of these authors in Harvey, D. (1969) and Yeung, H.W. (2024). *Source:* Author's analysis.

Gender ratio: Decreasing but still significant male dominance

I investigated the gender ratio for the most-cited authors, with three or more references each, which included 37 authors in Harvey's book and 115 in Yeung's volume. For David Harvey's monograph from 1969, *all* of these authors were male. In Henry Yeung's book, published 55 years later, the share of female scholars among the most-cited authors increased to 24.3 percent, and 20.8 percent of all references went to publications from female authors and co-authors. These numbers reflect a significant change over the decades (*Figure 5*). Nonetheless, the gender ratio still

Table 1. The most cited scholars in Harvey, D. *(1969)*

Rankings	Name *(Discipline)*	Country (place of birth)	Number of first-authored publications
1	Berry, Brian J. L. *(Geography)*	UK	17
2	Dacey, Michael F. *(Geography)*	USA	15
3	Chorley, Richard J. *(Geography)*	UK	8
4	Curry, Leslie *(Geography)*	UK	7
5–7	Garrison, William L. *(Geography)*	USA	6
5–7	Haggett, Peter *(Geography)*	UK	6
5–7	Harvey, David *(Geography)*	UK	6
8–11	Carnap, Rudolf *(Philosophy)*	Germany	5
8–11	Kendall, Maurice G. *(Statistics)*	UK	5
8–11	Marble, Duane *(Geography)*	USA	5
8–11	Tobler, Waldo *(Geography)*	USA	5
12–20	Getis, Artur *(Geography)*	USA	4
12–20	Hägerstrand, Torsten *(Geography)*	Sweden	4
12–20	Hartshorne, Richard *(Geography)*	USA	4
12–20	Hempel, Carl G. *(Philosophy, logic)*	Germany	4
12–20	Nagel, Ernest *(Philosophy)*	Austria-Hungary	4
12–20	Olsson, Gunnar *(Geography)*	Sweden	4
12–20	Popper, Karl *(Philosophy)*	Austria-Hungary	4
12–20	Robinson, Arthur H. *(Geography)*	Canada	4
12–20	Stoddart, David R. *(Geography)*	UK	4

Source: Author's analysis.

Table 2. The most cited scholars in Yeung, H.W. *(2024)*

Rankings	Name *(Discipline)*	Country*	Number of first-authored publications
1	Yeung, Henry W. *(Geography)*	Singapore	30
2	Peck, Jamie *(Geography)*	Canada	21
3	Sayer, Andrew *(Sociology, philosophy, urban and regional studies)*	UK	16
4–5	Harvey, David *(Geography)*	USA	12
4–5	Thrift, Nigel *(Geography)*	UK	12
6–8	Anderson, Benedict *(Political science, history)*	USA	11
6–8	Dicken, Peter *(Geography)*	UK	11
6–8	Massey, Doreen *(Geography)*	UK	11
9	Latour, Bruno *(Philosophy, anthropology, sociology)*	France	10
10–13	Allen, John *(Geography)*	UK	8
10–13	Coe, Neil M. *(Geography)*	Australia	8
10–13	Sheppard, Eric *(Geography)*	USA	8
10–13	Storper, Michael *(Geography)*	USA/UK	8
14	Bhaskar, Roy *(Philosophy of science)*	UK	7
15–24	Ash, James N. *(Geography)*	UK	6
15–24	Beach, Derek *(Political science)*	Denmark	6
15–24	Boschma, Ron *(Economics)*	Netherlands	6
15–24	Butler, Judith E. *(Education)*	Ireland	6
15–24	Cox, Kevin R. *(Geography)*	USA	6
15–24	Elder-Vass, Dave *(Sociology)*	UK	6
15–24	Foucault, Michel *(Philosophy, history)*	France	6
15–24	Harman, Graham *(Philosophy)*	USA	6
15–24	Hess, Martin *(Geography)*	UK	6
15–24	Tsang, Eric W.K. *(Business studies)*	USA	6

*Institutional affiliation as recorded in Scopus for 2024 or the latest available date before 2024. *Source:* Author's analysis.

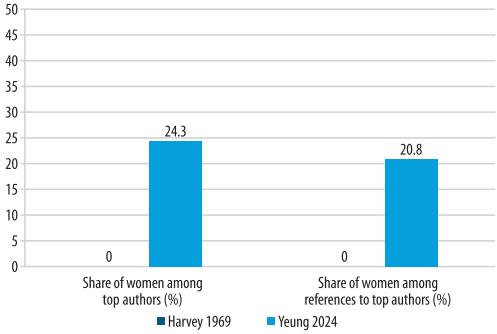

Fig. 5. The share of female scholars among the most-referenced authors and the references of female scholars among all references in Harvey, D. (1969) and Yeung, H.W. (2024). *Source:* Author's analysis.

moves within the range of 3:1 and 4:1, indicating a high degree of gender disparities in contemporary academia. Notably, among the 115 most cited authors in Yeung's book, one researcher identifies as non-binary in the publicly available personal profile at the university website, which would have been hardly imaginable in the 1960s. Despite the small case number, this phenomenon also indicates the more general social changes between the publication of the two volumes and the transforming social context of the operation of science.

Geographical background of the referenced works' authors: European and North American dominance, with a slowly increasing presence of the Global South

Determining the geographical background of the authors cited by Harvey is a highly complex task for two reasons. On the one hand, no source is available that would reliably contain all authors' biographical data. Instead, the related information can only be found by searching for individual authors in many different sources, which is sometimes extremely time-consuming and may not even lead to a clear result. Moreover, sometimes there are uncertainties in the available sources, so it is necessary to explore and critically compare several sources for a specific author, and only if these sources match will it be possible to produce the required geographical information. On the other hand, it is often particularly difficult or practically impossible to determine a given author's affiliation when a given publication was made, which was not consistently indicated in most publications for a long time. This is especially true for turbulent periods in history, when, for example, due to world wars and the terror raging in totalitarian dictatorships, many researchers were forced to flee their previous places of residence and work, sometimes even several times within a short period.

Therefore, rather than determining the geographical background of cited authors based on institutional affiliation, a more precise possibility has opened to scrutinise the authors' place of birth. Of the 37 authors from whom Harvey cited at least three publications each, nearly two-thirds were born in a location currently belonging to either the United Kingdom (35.1%) or the United States (29.7%). Most of the rest came from continental Europe (Germany: 8.1%; Sweden: 5.4%; Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Moldova and Norway: 2.7% each according to the national boundaries of 2025), one from Canada (2.7%), one from New Zealand and one from today's Turkey. Africa, Central and South America and the rest of Asia were not represented. Considering that Harvey did not refer to the same number of works by each author and focusing instead on the 172 publications from these 37 authors, the results will reveal that 72.7% of the references went to publications with authors born in either the UK (41.3%) or the US (31.4%), which indicates an extreme Anglo-American focus (*Figure 6*).

For Yeung, H.W.'s (2024) book, the Scopus database contains information about the institutional affiliation of the authors of the referenced publications. This dataset was used to analyse the geographical background of the referenced publications. As the results indicate, a strong dominance of British (37.0%) and US (23.6%) authors ap-

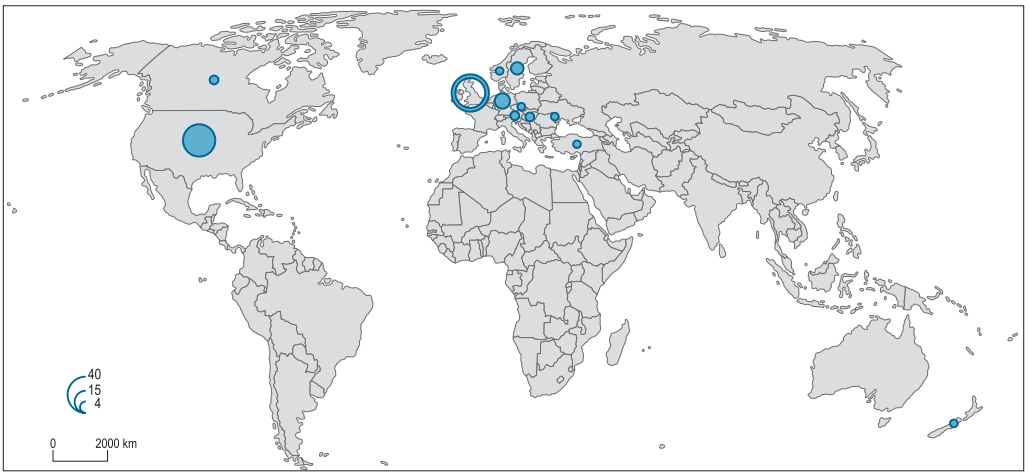

Fig. 6. Referenced publications from the most-cited scholars (with three or more cited publications per person) by the author's place of birth according to the national boundaries of 2025 in Harvey, D. (1969). (The area of pie charts is directly proportional to the quantity represented.) *Source:* Author's analysis.

plies. Their combined share, 60.7 percent, is lower than in Harvey's book (72.7%), but still reveals a firm geographical inequality, as the rest of the world adds up less than 40 percent. The list of countries owing a share of at least 1.5 percent only includes locations in North America (Canada: 7.0%), some other developed economies of the Commonwealth of Nations (Singapore: 5.7%; Australia: 2.8%), continental European countries belonging to the Western Bloc during the Cold War period (Germany: 2.8%; Netherlands: 2.5%; Sweden: 2.3%; Finland: 2.0%; Denmark: 1.6%; France: 1.5%) and China (1.7%) as the only representative of medium- and low-income countries. The absence of post-communist countries is also noteworthy. Still, on the other hand, unlike David Harvey's 1969 volume, Henry Yeung's 2024 work refers to publications by some authors from 13 countries in South America (Brazil and Chile), Africa (Egypt and South Africa), South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines) and East Asia (China, Japan, South Korea) (*Figure 7*). That is a significant step towards internationalising and decolonising international Geography (Ferretti, F. 2020; Schelhaas, B. *et al.* 2020; Radcliffe, S.A. 2022) by incorporating alternative views from outside the core of global academic knowledge production, even if the core's hegemonic position did not diminish, just decreased to a relatively minor extent.

It is remarkable, though, that the spaces of academic publishing remain much more geographically concentrated than the spaces of writing. The top ten publishing platforms with the most publications cited by Yeung, H.W. (2024) are all located in the UK (8 journals) and the USA (2 journals), with the Britain-based journal *Progress in Human Geography* leading with a large margin (86 publications) over *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, another UK-based journal in second place (29 publications) (*Table 3*). Similarly, the massive and increasing dominance of English as the *lingua franca* of international academia (cf. Paasi, A. 2015; Müller, M. 2021) is clearly indicated by the fact that 76.7 percent of the referenced works in Harvey's volume and all referenced publi-

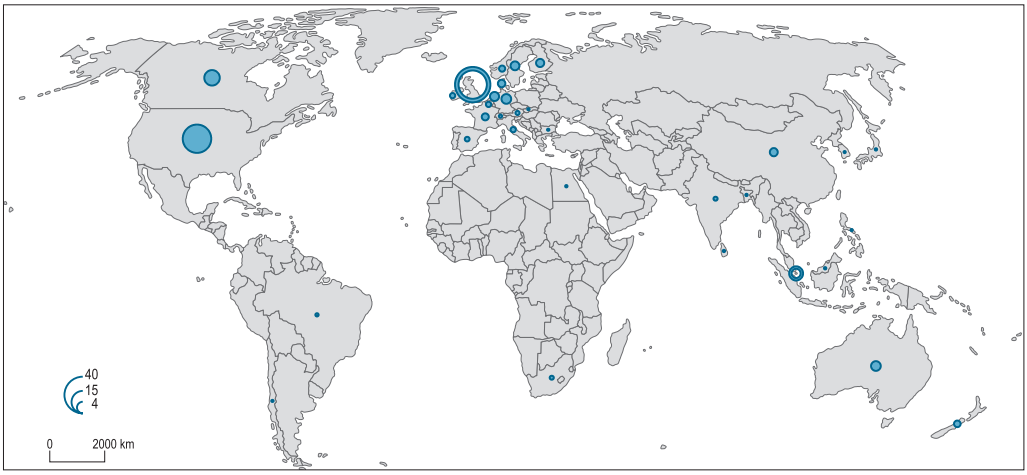

Fig. 7. Referenced publications by the author's institutional affiliation as recorded in the Scopus database in Yeung, H.W. (2024). (The area of pie charts is directly proportional to the quantity represented.) *Source:* Author's analysis.

Table 3. The number of publications cited by Yeung, H.W. (2024) in journals with at least ten referenced publications

Journal	Country	Number of publications
Progress in Human Geography	UK	86
Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers	UK	29
Dialogues in Human Geography	UK	27
Environment and Planning D: Society and Place	UK	21
Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space	UK	20
Regional Studies	UK	18
Economic Geography	USA	16
Journal of Economic Geography	UK	14
Antipode	UK	12
Philosophy of the Social Sciences	USA	11

Source: Author's analysis of Scopus data.

cations in Yeung's book are in English, even if a marginal share of references are English editions of academic works originally published in other languages (e.g. in the case of the English edition of Michel Foucault's publications in French).

Conclusions and discussion

As I explained in the introduction to the article, I did not examine the two selected books in isolation, but rather as a reflection of the scholarly practices and structural characteristics of their time. Consequently, I do not see the differences between the two volumes as a reflection of individual differences in the positions and work of the two authors, but rather as a reflection of the changing scholarly context in which the two authors and everyone else work. My findings, therefore, are *not* aimed at saying something about either David Harvey or Henry Yeung or other scholars in particular. Instead, they want to

illuminate what, how, and why changed in global mainstream Geography between the 1960s and the 2020s. Similarly, given that Geography (along with other disciplines) has continuously operated embedded into a broader academic, social, political, economic and cultural framework, I do not interpret the similarities between the two books primarily as a 'similarity' between two particular authors' scholarly work, but as a sign that certain things have remained structurally relatively unchanged in academic Geography, having had similar effects and consequences over half a century ago and today. My results and the many interesting patterns emerging from them also confirm that this type of reference-centric analysis of selected influential books can contribute relevant findings to interpreting and understanding Geography's past, present, and possible future.

(1) The first important lesson to emerge from the results is that the number of works and authors cited has increased significantly in proportion to the length of the book from Harvey, D. (1969) to Yeung, H.W. (2024). One can assume a combination of several complex factors behind that, of which contemporary geographers have a lot of personal experience, and which are often discussed in specialised works.

(i) The first possible suggestion would be that institutionalised Geography can reflect on a much longer history today than in the 1960s, meaning that scholars can refer to much more literature. In fact, the timeframe of Yeung, H.W.'s (2024) references goes back longer relative to the publication date of the book than in Harvey, D.'s case (1969), but both books predominantly refer to publications not older than 15–20 years.

(ii) The results may indicate the emergence of a new way of seeing in the international geographical community that authors should place their findings much better in the scientific discourse than was typical in previous decades, which necessarily requires broader and more abundant references to the literature. In other words, a new practice of scientific publishing has gained ground, which is rather 'discourse-centric' instead of its old 'personal interest-centric' counterpart. Many decades ago, authors conventionally began their study by presenting the significance they perceived of the chosen topic, justifying the topic's relevance by their personal interest, and intending to answer questions arising from their interest with their results. That is what one may call a 'personal interest-centric' approach. In contrast, the main characteristic of today's scientific operation is that the authors derive their research topic from the ongoing literary discourse, branch off from that discourse, justify the relevance of the subject by referring to the discourse, and primarily intend to contribute new additions to the discourse with their results – what one may call a 'discourse-centric' approach.

(iii) The results also seem to reflect that authors see a relatively greater value and significance of theoretical explanations and findings today compared to empirical findings than half a century ago. This explanation aligns with Yeung, H.W.'s (2024) remark about what he calls 'philosophy envy' in Geography and Nigel Thrift's (2021) comment about the risk of writing 'phiction' (also cf. Puente Lozano, P. 2025).

(iv) 'Academic neoliberalisation' can also be traced behind the significant increase in the number of citations. Especially in a world where scientometric indicators play a prominent role in the development of a researcher's career and opportunities for advancement (e.g. obtaining funding and getting promoted), authors become accustomed to publication practices where, during the writing of the publication, the need to comply with the editors and reviewers of the publication platforms increases, and the intention to adapt the publications to these (perceived or real) editorial expectations increases. A typical manifestation of this is when, based on our individual experiences and knowledge learned from others (e.g. our doctoral supervisor and more experienced colleagues), we feel that we need to include more references in a publication of a given length – either taking additional relevant ide-

as from those references or just using them as 'citationary alibies' (Roy, A. 2020) to make our work seem better grounded and justified – , because otherwise the journal, the editors or the reviewers will find these references too few and they will not accept our manuscript, saying that we either do not know the discourse well enough or that we do not position ourselves appropriately in it. This risk may be particularly acute for authors who are in some way 'outsiders', that is, they work outside the leading global centres of power in a given scientific field, and for their work to be accepted by researchers in the core area, they must particularly "keep in mind the people [they] write about and refer to in [their] work" (Yeung, H.W. *et al.* 2025, p. 250). The increase in the number of references may therefore not (only) stem from the author's motivation and conviction but may also result from the structural characteristics (distortions) of the scientometric-centric academic world and the publishing process in the broader sense, i.e. *shifting concepts of academic validation*. (Contemporary geographers probably have many experiences with such structural pressures and their influences.)

(v) The intensifying pressure of 'fast publishing' (Sheppard, E. 2012) under academic neoliberalisation also creates the pressures of 'fast reading' and 'fast referencing'. To improve their career opportunities, scholars need to publish more and more, which requires reading more and more and citing more and more works – which, given the finite physical capacities of humans, is only possible if scholars 'read into' or 'run through' more and more texts, which they do not have time to read in full, and they cite more and more publications based on the information found in these publications during such 'running through' acts, even if they may not have the capacity to read the entire work thoroughly.

All the above factors probably play a role in the significant increase in the quantity of references experienced over the past decades. However, it would be challenging to disentangle how strong the effect of each factor is compared to the others. In my opinion, this leads to an important research methodological issue, which has a general relevance for the renewed interest in writing and reading practices of human geography (Hones, S. 2025). By more intensively integrating cultural anthropology methods into the geography of science, the geography of knowledge, and the history of geography, *the everyday practices of writing publications* (along with their temporal and spatial disparities) should be studied more deeply, drawing on the approach and methodology of the geography of the everyday (Eyles, J. 1989; Sullivan, R. 2017). If it is technically possible, a meticulous study of the authors' correspondence with editors and publishers could also be part of the analysis, paying special attention to the either soft or more straightforward ways the editors and publishers as 'gatekeepers' are shaping, either along considerations of academic or economic interest, the author's referencing practice during the process of manuscript revision. Such investigations should include how, when, and why an author decides at some point during the writing process to add more references or remove some of them, as well as how structural pressures and the broader academic context shape such decisions, even if subtly.

(2) The theoretical part of this article discussed the proliferation of multi-authored works and journal articles instead of books. Although the average number of authors of the publications cited in the two examined books reflects this general trend, the average value of 1.47 authors/publication for Yeung, H.W. (2024) still indicates the large number and importance of single-author publications in international Geography. Likewise, although the two volumes convincingly illustrate the strongly decreasing role of books in favour of journal articles (with the share of the latter increasing from 35.1 percent in Harvey, D. [1969] to 64.1 percent in Yeung, H.W. [2024]), books and book chapters still make a difference as their one-quarter share of Yeung's references indicates. That is not just the proof of our discipline's peculiarity relative to some other dis-

ciplines, especially in natural sciences, including geosciences (cf. Cupples, J. 2020). It is also powerful feedback that, despite the changing disciplinary expectations in global academia, writing single-authored publications and books remains valuable to shaping agendas.

(3) Of course, there has always been inequality, as some authors have more publications referenced in a book or article, while others have fewer. There have always been, and still are, particularly influential authors. However, a significant difference between Harvey's and Yeung's books is that the proportion of authors cited with at least three publications has grown significantly, and the share of their publications among all referenced publications has increased particularly. There are more and more references and more referenced authors, but a few highly influential top authors, whom one could call 'rockstar geographers', give an increasing proportion of the references. This aligns again with the structural pressures resulting from the quantitative approach of 'academic neoliberalisation'. Due to the extreme proliferation of publications, more and more works by more and more authors become available, but it is impossible to understand and systematically follow all of them thoroughly. Scholars cannot do so. Therefore, academic people tend (or are structurally forced) to follow the publications of a few prominent authors published in the leading publication platforms with the greatest attention so that they can still keep themselves updated about the main directions of the rapidly expanding literature, which is a practical and understandable 'survival strategy' in the vast abundance of information.

(4) Harvey's book contains many references to works in both Human and Physical Geography, with an outlook especially on the results of philosophy and natural sciences. In Yeung's volume, the references mainly point to Human Geography and other social sciences publications. That reflects a remarkable structural shift, where 'Geography', a magic word featured prominently in the titles of both books, increasingly means 'Human Geography' instead of 'Geography' (without adjective), and many authors tend to bring closer Human Geography to social sciences instead of Physical Geography, as Yeung explicitly emphasises that while comparing his seminal book to that of Harvey: "For Harvey, Physical Geography was central because he was trying to bring Human Geography closer to Physical Geography. In my case, it's the opposite." (Yeung, H.W. *et al.* 2025, p. 250). These dynamics are in line with Johnston, R.'s (2009, p. 46) general remark that "[b]efore the 1970s few human geographers identified their discipline as a social science, but many now do".

(5) The proportion of women among the authors of cited works has increased significantly, from zero to about one-quarter. That is a considerable change, but it also indicates that male dominance is still strong in international Geography. The results draw attention to the fact that despite decades of dedicated work aimed at reducing gender inequalities in Geography and making the discipline more inclusive, the transformation of gender power relations is an extremely slow process and can only lead to sufficient results through prolonged and continued efforts. Also, further extensive studies are needed that more thoroughly explore the role of institutional settings, author affinity circles and production contexts in the persistence of gender inequalities, as well as the academic domains where there has been particularly limited progress in reducing gender injustice.

(6) Regarding the geographical background of references, the hegemony of the UK and the USA was very strong half a century ago and is still very strong today, both in terms of cited authors, but even more so in terms of the publication platforms that publish the referenced works. That illuminates the critical role leading publishers as significant beneficiaries of highly uneven power relations in neoliberal academia play in shaping practices of referencing (and writing and reading) in Geography and influencing which geographical ideas will circulate, where, in what form, and how long. From a Central and Eastern Europe perspective,

the absence of post-communist countries is also remarkable, indicating the lasting impact of separating scientific communities in these countries from 'Western' academia and a firm focus on empirical, instead of theoretical, questions in geographical research during the Cold War. At the same time, it is also apparent that this hegemony of authorship has somewhat declined. References to South American, African and Asian authors have also begun to appear, albeit in smaller numbers, indicating a significant qualitative change, the tangible impact of efforts to internationalise and decolonise Geography, even if there is still much to be done in this field.

***Acknowledgements*:** I owe a lot to the organisers and participants of the book launch event of Henry Yeung's *Theory and Explanation in Geography* in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, on 27 November 2024, where I presented the first findings of this research and received valuable feedback that inspired the more detailed elaboration of the results in the current manuscript. I am also grateful for the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript.

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