Data Analysis Discussion Framework

Conducting an analysis of fieldwork data and writing it up in a way that makes sense to the reader can be quite challenging. The following framework of key questions can give you a way of thinking about data and making it meaningful to your geography enquiry. Not all of these questions might apply to the type of data you are handling but in most cases, answering these questions can make for a more well-rounded analysis and conclusion to the study.

Describing data

Begin by following the GRaDE acronym:

G   What is the general trend displayed by the data? . . . .

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Ra   What is the size of the data range and the minimum and maximum values? . . . .

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D   Quote some actual data to highlight what it shows. . . . .

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E   What exceptions are there to the general trend? . . . .

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Linking the findings to theory

Briefly summarise the geographical theory that underpins your enquiry. . . . .

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Look back at the description you have written of the general trend. To what extent does the general trend show consensus with the geographical theory you understand?

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Examine in the data through different ideas of scale

Look at the data you have collected more closely. Aside from the general trend, are there smaller, micro-scale patterns and relationships that feed into the larger, more general trend you have identified? Do these smaller patterns amplify the overall trend and relationships you can see or contradict them?

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Thinking about the value of data and its relative importance

In what ways does the data (in light of the conclusions you are trying to make) have different value? Which elements of the data hold more 'weight' or importance in the overall geographical picture that you are observing? Does this greater 'weight' overthrow multiple 'lighter' elements of the data that appear to contradict it?

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Dealing with exceptions

Are the exceptions you have noted in your observations true anomalies that have come about through human error? Or are the outliers actually alternative results that need further investigation or consideration? What geographical factors may explain why these outliers exist?

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Building an overall conclusion

Given all the ways in which you have analysed the data, what overall conclusion can you come to in relation to your enquiry title?

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