

CHAPTER TEN

GEOGRAPHY IN CULTURAL STUDIES

Geography is derived from the Greek "geographia", "earth description" and is the study of the lands, the features, the inhabitants, and the phenomena of Earth. The first person to use the word "geography" was Eratosthenes (276–194 BC). The historical traditions in geographical research are spatial analysis of natural and human phenomena, area studies (places and regions), study of the human-land relationship and research in Earth sciences. Modern geography is a multi-disciplinary subject that tries to understand the Earth and all of its human and natural complexity where objects are and how they have changed and come to be. Geography has been called "the world discipline" and "the bridge between human and physical science". Geography is divided into two main branches: human geography and physical geography with human geography contributing immensely to cultural studies.

Concepts that have contributed to Cultural Studies:

Environmental Determinism is the notion that the physical environment has a massive and often controlling (and perhaps never-changing and generationally stable) effect on human beings, in essence dictating their abilities in all realms of life and society.

Possibilism is a rejection of the environment as the only controlling influence. It claims that cultures are also the result of human agency and action and that the environment is a considerable influence.

Formal Region (or uniform or homogenous region). An area in which everyone shares in one or more distinctive characteristics. A formal region is defined as any geographic location whose boundaries are clear and whose territory is set. There is no disagreement over the relative area a formal region may occupy.

Functional Region (or nodal region). An area organized around a node or focal point. A functional region is a region whose territory is organized around something central, such as a newspaper. The distribution of a given local newspaper is limited to a certain area, which is its functional region.

Vernacular Region (or perpetual region). An area that people believe exists as part of their identity. A vernacular region is nonexistent in a literal sense, and the territory it occupies is not clearly defined. There is disagreement on the location of a given vernacular region, and stance is dependent solely upon personal view.

Diffusion: the process of dissemination, the spread of an idea or innovation from its hearth to other areas.

Relocation diffusion: The spread of an idea through physical movement of people from one place to another, for example, the spread of AIDS from New York, California and Florida.

Expansion diffusion: The spread of a feature from one place to another in a snowballing process. This can happen in three ways: Hierarchically, the spread of an idea from persons or nodes of authority or power to other persons or places for example hip-hop and rap music, Contagiously, the rapid, widespread diffusion of a characteristic throughout the population, for example, ideas placed on the internet and through stimulus, the spread of an underlying principle, even though a characteristic itself apparently fails to diffuse.

Carl Sauer's cultural landscape theory states that the cultural landscape is shaped by humans and various cultural aspects of their culture. For example, humans have altered the

physical environment in many ways including the architecture humans build, the toponyms placed on certain locations, burial practices and established sacred sites.

Malthus Population Growth Model is the theory of Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) which describes the difference between population growth and the growth of food supply where if the population is allowed to increase exponentially then it will surpass the linear growth of food supply. Eventually population will begin to surpass food production leading to worldwide starvation if no new source of food can be found.

Demographic Transition Model. The process of change in a society's population from a condition of high crude birth and death rates and low rate of natural increase to a condition of low crude death and birth rate, low rate of natural increase and a higher total population. There are four stages.

Stage 1 has very high birth and death rates making them even out. Stage 2 has a rapidly declining death rate though it has high birth rates causing a boom in population growth. In Stage 3 the birth rate begins to decrease and the natural increase rate begins to slow down. Stage 4 has a very low rate of increase in birth rate and death rate leading to little or no population growth.

The Gravity Model. This predicts that the best location of a service is directly related to the number of people in the area and inversely related to the distance people must travel to access it.

Push and Pull Factors

Economic: when people migrate to a location where there could be greater economic opportunities such as an increase in job opportunities. People migrate when there is an economic depression.

Cultural/Political: when a population migrates to a place which is more tolerant towards minority beliefs or customs. A population will leave due to persecution as in the late nineteenth century when Jews escaped pogroms in Eastern Europe to move to Britain and America.

Environmental: a pull factor would be migration due to better weather as opposed to a push factor such as ecological catastrophe.

Ravenstein's Laws of Migration were formulated by Ernst Georg Ravenstein (1834-1913) who emigrated to Britain, became a professor of Geography specializing in cartography. His laws of migration still form the basis of contemporary migration theory.

- Most migrants move only a short distance.
- There is a process of absorption, whereby people immediately surrounding a rapidly growing town move into it and the gaps they leave are filled by migrants from more distant areas, and so on until the attractive force is spent.
- There is a process of dispersion, which is the inverse of absorption.
- Each migration flow produces a compensating counter-flow.
- Long-distance migrants go to one of the great centers of commerce and industry.
- Natives of towns are less migratory than those from rural areas.
- Females are more migratory than males.
- Economic factors are the main cause of migration

Distance decay describes the effect of distance on cultural or spatial interactions. The distance decay effect states that the interaction between two locales declines as the distance between them increases. This can lead to a breakdown in viable communication between communities.

Heartland theory. In 1904, Sir Halford Mackinder published the Heartland theory. The theory proposed that whoever controls Eastern Europe controls the Heartland. It also supported the concept of world dominance. Nazi Germany's strategic goals were influenced by this during World War II.

In 1942 Nicholas Spyman created the **Coastal Rim theory** which countered Mackinder's Heartland theory. Spyman stated that Eurasia's rimland, the coastal areas, is the key to controlling the world island. His theory was influential on both sides during the Cold War. Both the Soviet Union and the USA desired to control the rim land around the USSR.

Culture

Indo-European Origins Theory

There have been two theories which have relevance to Cultural studies

Marija Gimbutas (1921-1994) proposed that the first Proto-Indo-European speakers were the Kurgan people, whose homeland was in the steppes near the border between modern day Russia and Kazakhstan about 6,000 years ago. The theory attempted to locate where Indo-European languages originated and the origins of what later became characteristic of Indo-European religions.

Colin Renfrew (1938 -) proposed **the Anatolian thesis** from archaeological and genetic evidence that parts of Eastern Turkey were inhabited 2,000 years before the Kurgans. Their descendants spread as agriculture spread westwards and northwards through Europe together with the ancestors of Indo-European languages.

An ecological model was advanced by Chauncy Harris and Edward Lillman in a 1945 article "The Nature of Cities." The model describes the layout of a city. It notes that while a city may have started with a central business district, similar industries with common land-use and financial requirements are established near each other. These groupings influence their immediate neighborhood. Hotels and restaurants spring up around airports, for example. The number and kinds of nuclei mark a city's growth.

Homer Hoyt proposed a model of **urban land use** proposed in 1939. It is a variation on the concentric zone model of city development. The benefits of this model are that it allows for an outward movement in growth.

Regional Concepts

A region can be defined as an area

- of any size,
- homogenous in terms of specific criteria,
- distinguished from bordering areas by a particular kind of association of related features, and
- possessing some kind of internal cohesion.

Regions can be divided into **uniform** and **nodal**.

A uniform region is an area where one or more distinctive characteristics are similar over the region. This similarity is strongest near the center of the region and gradually weakens toward the margins, where it is replaced by a different type of homogeneity. The boundary of the uniform region is established along the line at which this replacement occurs.

A nodal region is centered on a single node or focus. The focus is usually urban, and most often is the center of trade, communication and circulation for the region. The unity of the region is based upon the interconnection of the places within it. The boundary of the nodal

region is located along the line that defines the end of the dominating influence of the node in question and the introduction of the dominating influence of an adjacent node.

The British School

Geography, one of the oldest fields of human curiosity drew very little attention in Britain until the middle of the 19th Century. Exploration of new lands, description of travels and voyages, description of the newly discovered lands and their people were considered as the areas of geographical studies.

In the middle of the 19th century, scholars were busy accumulating facts and information about newly discovered places of the world. In 1859, Darwin published his 'Origin of the Species' which attracted the attention of biologists, geologists and sociologists. After this evolutionary theory British scholars started paying attention towards earth as the home of man. It was the end part of the nineteenth century when geography was introduced as a discipline in British universities.

Halford J. Mackinder was a scholar of dynamic personality and a person who could give simple expression to complex ideas with an imaginative mind. He was the founder of the British School of Geography. His thinking was permeated by visualization of the world's regional complexes as combinations of varied physical and human elements. He considered geography as a bridge between the humanities and the natural sciences, between history and geology. He applied these concepts to the interpretation of world political affairs.

At the beginning British geographers concentrated on Physical Geography, where there was hardly any description of man as an agent of change in his physical surroundings. Mackinder identified geography as a discipline that traces the interaction of man and his physical environment. In 1904, he formulated the concept of the 'Geographical Pivot of History' also known as 'The Heartland Theory of Mackinder'. In the Heartland Theory Mackinder identified a 'World Island' consisting of the continents of Eurasia and Africa. The most inaccessible part of the World, he called heart-land. This is an area of low population and difficult to access. He summarized his view of global strategy with the famous dictum; **Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; Who rules the World Island commands the World.**

He established that throughout the history of mankind coastal islands had always proved vulnerable to attack from heartlands. Heartland remained invulnerable because sea power could be denied access. Thus Mackinder was mainly concerned with a global overview. In 1943, a few years before his death, he saw a danger of the heartland falling in its entirety under the control of Soviet Russia who would then have the ability then to strike out towards peripheral lands to east, south and west of the 'World Island'. His regional concept also pervaded his interpretation of the British Isles.

Mackinder wrote **Britain and the British Seas**, published in 1902. This book is considered as a classic in modern British geographical literature which shows a more mature and sounder approach to a regional interpretation of Britain and its seas. His second great work was **Democratic Ideals and Reality**, published in 1919. In this book he discussed world power-politics.

The concept of 'region' was a popular theme for British geographers before the First World War. **Sir Patrick Geddes**, a Scottish geographer, undertook research on family life styles and family budgets. He recognized that a family can be characterized by life style and budget. Family life is dependent on the means of obtaining subsistence, for example, work whilst the character of the latter is largely determined by place. Geddes created a slogan, "**place, work, folk**" as the basic concepts in the study of cities and regions.

Contemporary Trends in British Geography

There has been a tremendous change in the philosophy, approaches and scope of geographical studies during the last three and a half decades. The major change was in the form of 'Quantitative Revolution'. In this period, scholars like Richard Chorley and Peter Haggett made enormous use of sophisticated statistical techniques, and formulated models and theories in the fields of human and social geography. In the post-war period, geography in Britain is recognized as a spatial science. Now geography is concerned with providing an accurate, orderly and rational description of the variable character of the earth's surface. The quantitative revolution began in the United States and was quickly adopted in Britain. British geographers are now paying attention to inter-regional and intra-regional inequalities in society, environmental degradation, the ecological crisis and environmental management. Public welfare, social amenities, medical geography and landscape ecology are areas where British geographers are breaking new ground.

American Geography

Geography as a subject in the American schools and colleges was introduced by Europeans in the middle of the 19th century. **Arnold Guyot** was the first professor of geography in America. Guyot was a teleologist regarding the continents as the abode of man and a theatre for the action of human societies. Guyot's view of the role of man on the earth had a great influence on the attitudes of his era through many of his school textbooks.

Geography in U.S.A. between the Two World Wars

In the inter-war period, there was a shift towards human geography from physical geography. American geographers began describing the unique features of places and regions and there was very little focus on the formulation of general concepts. New approaches developed during this period included:

- Human ecology
- Chorology – the study of places and regions
- Historical geography
- The functional organization of space

Thus there was a shift from academic studies to the use of geographical concepts and methods in the study of practical data.

The Second World War

During the Second World War there was an enormous demand for trained professional geographers. Geographers served in the armies as commissioned and non-commissioned officers as well as in intelligence agencies. The geographers were also busy in the compilation of information of countries to provide information for military forces.. Some geographers specialized in transport geography. Research on natural hazards, river floods, droughts, environmental pollution also attracted the attention of geographers. Some scholars worked in marketing centres and the establishment of retail centres for private firms. Thus the geographers became interested in socio-economic and political problems.

Geography after the Second World War

By the 1960's the younger generation of geographers began to use the concepts of mathematics as it could express ideas more precisely than the concepts of the humanities. In the last thirty years statistical tools have been used to investigate geographical distributions. Statistical tools are applied both to physical and social phenomena. Mathematical concepts are used to measure and explain, for example, the functions, size and spacing of urban centres and crop distribution.

The new trends besides being statistical in approach are concerned with the analysis of spatial systems. There is a shift of emphasis towards group behavior in the assessment of the relations between human beings and the environment described as 'spatial perception'. There is also interest in current social problems.

An interdisciplinary approach to explain human environments has been adopted by American geographers. There is an emphasis on cultural geography which deals with material and non-material phenomena relevant to an understanding of the spatial distributions of human cultures. Cultural geographers are concerned with the earth as the home of humanity who, by means of culture, has come to dominate the earth's ecology. The usual approach of a cultural geographer is that of studying the spatial distribution of the elements or traits of a culture.

Political geography is also an area where American geographers are expanding their research. The study of political geography examines the interaction of geographical area and political processes. It is the study of the spatial distribution and space relations of political processes. It focuses on a region of the earth occupied by a particular political system, sub-system or systems. General political problem areas are identified.

IMPORTANT THINKERS

British Geography

Ernst Georg Ravenstein (1834 – 1913) was a German-English geographer cartographer. As a geographer he was less of a traveller than a researcher; his studies led mainly in the direction of cartography and the history of geography.

Sir Patrick Geddes FRSE (1854 – 1932) was a Scottish biologist, sociologist, geographer, philanthropist and pioneering town planner. He is known for his innovative thinking in the fields of urban planning and sociology. He introduced the concept of "region" to architecture and planning and coined the term "conurbation".

Sir Halford J. Mackinder (1861-1947) was an English geographer, academic, politician, the first Principal of University Extension College, Reading (which became the University of Reading) and Director of the London School of Economics, who is regarded as one of the founding fathers of both geopolitics and geostrategy.

Andrew Colin Renfrew (1937 -) is a British archaeologist and paleolinguist noted for his work on radiocarbon dating, the prehistory of languages, archaeogenetics, and the prevention of looting at archaeological sites. He developed the Anatolian hypothesis, which argues that Proto-Indo-European, the reconstructed ancestor of the Indo-European languages, originated approximately 9,000 years ago in Anatolia and moved with the spread of farming throughout the Mediterranean and into Central and Northern Europe. This hypothesis

contradicted Marija Gimbutas' Kurgan hypothesis, which states that Proto-Indo-European was spread by a migration of peoples from the Pontic-Caspian steppe approximately 6,000 years ago.

American Geography

Rollin D. Salisbury (1858 – 1922) was a major force in the development of geography in the United States during the period of 1903-1919. He established and organized the department of geography of the Chicago University. He was a stimulating teacher and distinguished administrator. He wrote several valuable university level textbooks. He was more interested in physical geography. Nevertheless, he rejected the idea of simple cause and effect between the physical earth and the human response.

Mark Jefferson (1863-1949) was the chief cartographer of the American Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. He travelled widely and corresponded frequently and at length. In America he was the founder of human geography. Jefferson examined the size, extent and functions of cities and areas of access to railroads under the phrase 'the civilizing rails' together with the concept of Centraland the law of 'Primate City'. His students of urban geography and urban centres as 'central places' were far ahead of their time. His geographical interest was with human beings 'where they are', 'what they are like' and 'why they are there'. This approach was ecological exploring interrelated associations of various distributions of different factors that lead to a further understanding of human groups in their environmental settings.

Ellen Churchill Semple (1863-1932) studied in Germany where she took keen interest in the study of anthropology and was greatly stimulated by the study of man and environment when she returned to the United States. In 1903 she published **American History and its Geographical Conditions**. During the last decade of her life she asserted that man could be studied scientifically only by the land he cultivates or over which he travels or the seas over which he trades. Man's relations to his environment are infinitely more numerous and complex than those of the most highly organized plants or animals. So complex are they that they constitute a legitimate and necessary object of special study.

Ellsworth Huntington (1876-1947) was an environmental determinist who tried to explain the styles of life of human groups and nations in the light of their weather and climatic conditions. He developed the hypothesis that the great outpouring of nomadic peoples from Central Asia, which led to the Mongol conquest of India and China and the invasion of Eastern Europe in the 13th century, could be explained by the drying up of pastures on which the nomads were dependent. In 1915 he published **Civilization and Climate** in which he asserted that humanity's civilizations could develop only in regions of stimulating weather. Contrary to this the monotonous heat of the tropics would prevent the attainment of higher levels of civilization. In 1920, he published Principles of Human Geography. This book was written as a University textbook but it became popular not only among geographers, but attracted the attention of historians, sociologists, scholars of medicine, agriculturists, ecologists, climatologists and geologists.

Huntington consistently followed a quantitative approach in the measurement of civilization. This is evident in his early writings in which he describes the remarkable regional coincidence of weather conditions conducive to human, physical and mental effort and the levels of assessment of civilization. He also gave weight to heredity, the stage of culture and diet. Nevertheless, he gave too much weight to 'physical factors' and too little to the autonomous development of societies.

Carl Ortwin Sauer (1889 –1975) was an American geographer. One of his best known works was Agricultural Origins and Dispersals (1952). In 1927, Carl Sauer wrote the article "Recent

Developments in Cultural Geography," which considered how cultural landscapes are made up of "the forms superimposed on the physical landscape."

Marija Gimbutas (1921 – 1994), was a Lithuanian-American archaeologist known for her research into the Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures of "Old Europe" and for her Kurgan hypothesis, which located the Proto-Indo-European homeland in the Pontic Steppe.

MAIN POINTS

- The most important concepts concern environmental determinism, possibilism, the classification of regions, demographic studies, migration both international and intranational, cultural origins, geopolitical theory such as the heartland and coastal rim theories and the relationship of urban areas to the regions in which they are located. The use of quantitative methods is a paramount importance in contemporary geographical studies.

SEMINAR EXERCISES

- Walk through the centre of the village, town or city where you live at a busy time and make notes on what you observe. What kinds of activity are people engaged in? Is there a relationship between their activity what they wear, the pace at which they move and their demeanour? Does your behaviour affect them?
- What kind of social myths inform the geographical perceptions of British and American people? Why do the British value the countryside so highly? How do Americans regard farming as opposed to industry? Are there political differences between urban and rural areas?
- Where do immigrants live in Britain and America?
- "Place, work, folk". Write down what you remember of a study or work stay in Britain or America in terms of where people work and live and the differences in the mixture of people who work for the same organization or company and the mixture of those who live in the same neighborhood.
- Where are the churches in your home town? Compare them with where the churches are in British or American towns? (Use photographs from the web if necessary) What could this imply about cultural differences between Slovak and Anglophone cultures?
- Where are the shopping centres in your home town? Compare them with where the shopping centres are in British or American towns? (Use photographs from the web if necessary) What could this imply about cultural differences between Slovak and Anglophone cultures?

READING

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See also:

<http://www.valpo.edu/geomet/geo/courses/geo101/glossary.html>

<http://www.travel-university.org/general/geography/history/determinism-possibilism.html>