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SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

No generally accepted definition of social geography exists. The variety of literature which has appeared under the title of social geography is astounding; even within particular schools there are wide disparities of approach and definition. With some notable exceptions, for example, in Sweden and Holland, social geography can be considered a field created and cultivated by a number of individual scholars rather than an academic tradition built up within particular schools. Furthermore, for many people the term "social geography" itself is in disfavor because of its past association with various forms of determinism that postulated a causal connection between society and the geographical environment.

Perhaps, therefore, the best way to examine social geography is to establish a general theoretical outline of the field and, on this basis, to review the existing literature. Naturally, many of the works relevant to what is here called social geography will have been written as contributions to some other discipline.

The argument that social geography is a necessary discipline can be made in at least two ways. One is by analogy with other, better established branches of geography. A widely accepted defini-

tion of "human geography" is that it deals with mankind in the context of his total geographical milieu. For the purposes of analysis this milieu has been subdivided into separate categories corresponding to various orders of human activity, for example, the economic, the political, and the cultural. Therefore, one could postulate that social geography is the subdivision of geography that deals specifically with the social order, or that it is the systematic study of the social dimension in areal differentiation.

An alternative way is to begin with the definition of geography as the study of similarities and contrasts between places on the face of the earth. Society, that is, social organization and values, patterns of social movement and interaction, and social dynamics and change, plays such an important role in producing similarities and contrasts between places on the earth that it justifies systematic consideration within the discipline.

The question immediately arises as to how to isolate this social dimension for independent study. In fact, since human activities characteristically are group activities, how can human geography be anything else but social? The virtually interchangeable use of the terms "human" and "social" by several geographers in the British and Dutch schools serves to emphasize the logical (and etymological) basis for this question. Yet, although in the evolution of human geography emphasis has been placed in varying degrees on purely social elements—and although languages, races, and religions have rarely been excluded from consideration—the function of these social elements in the total conceptual framework has not been very clear. In fact, the idea that such social elements could be systematized into a general framework for geographical analysis has been only recently proposed (Bobek 1959; van Paassen 1965).

There are two primary questions social geography must answer: How do mankind's social characteristics vary through space? How do these characteristics affect (or reflect) man's adaptation to and adaptation of his total geographical milieu? Since such questions touch every aspect of human geography, it is difficult to conceive of social geography as a separate field. Its distinctive feature would thus appear to lie more in its focus and objectives than in any clearly delineated subject matter. In practical terms, the traditional twofold method of geography can be applied to these central questions in the following way: by the examination of spatial variations in the distribution and interaction of social groups within their total geographical milieus and by the examination of dif-

ferential patterns of society's use of the earth, as indicated in settlement forms, livelihoods, circulation networks, and land use patterns. While the first method implies a morphological or formal study of world social patterns, the second method implies a functional interpretation of such patterns in terms of their underlying social processes.

Having thus outlined, in broad terms, the place and function of social geography, let us now see how these fundamental questions have been studied in the past. From such a general and necessarily eclectic survey we may discern some of the major conceptual and technical ingredients from which a definition of social geography can be formulated.

The development of social geography

Studies explicitly or implicitly directed toward the exploration of social geography can be considered under two broad headings: first, the historical precedents, which fall roughly into three major stages, each one characterized by a different approach; and second, the works of twentieth-century geographers.

Historical precedents. Descriptive reports written by explorers and men of letters during classical times, for example, the writings of Herodotus, Thucydides, Strabo, and others, provide the first written recognition of world social differences. Such encyclopedic descriptions continued to appear intermittently in the Occident up to the seventeenth century, for example, the accounts of Marco Polo and the *lettres édifiantes* of Jesuit missionaries. The twofold implication of these works was that social life takes various forms in different parts of the world and that these differences are caused by, or at least are associated with, differences in the physical—particularly climatic—environment.

A second phase consisted of the various philosophical reflections on these and later geographical discoveries. On the one hand, speculative thinkers sought normative principles for an ideal social order from natural law, and, on the other hand, the positivists insisted that such principles should be sought in the existing and empirically observable conditions of society. The essential message of this second phase was that there is a rational order in world society and that this order can be discovered deductively (speculative approach) or inductively (positivistic approach).

A third and far more significant phase began in the nineteenth century, accompanied in France by the emergence of the idea of democracy, in Germany by the rise of national consciousness, and elsewhere by the slow yet effective permeation of a "scientific" approach to knowledge. Ethnographers

and historians were among the first to study world social variations in a systematic way. As early as 1725 Giambattista Vico suggested that human development followed an identical series of stages and that the actual variations in world society at any particular time were due to their differential positions within that series. Later in the eighteenth century, Johann Gottfried Herder in Germany and Condorcet in France expressed similar ideas. The geographer Johann Georg Kohl examined the social function and significance of various settlement types; later, his colleague E. Hahn (1896) studied the evolution of livelihoods and demonstrated the religious and social origins of some economic practices. Yet this "scientific" approach to the study of mankind's social differences was also associated with exaggerated single-factor explanations, for example, the biological interpretation first expounded by A. Schäffle (1875–1878) and the psychological interpretation, which found its fullest expression in the Durkheimian school in France. Friedrich Ratzel's *Anthropogeographie* (1882–1891) incorporated both these elements: the ecological view of society within its natural environment and the role of human intelligence (the "idea") in enabling man to overcome physical barriers (1901). Unfortunately, the latter perspective did not emerge too clearly in his monumental work—on which the whole tradition of anthropogeography has been patterned—and so his name has been linked with the idea of society being determined by the physical environment. His *Politische Geographie* (1897) and some articles (1876; 1901) in fact contained hypotheses that were far more relevant to social geography than the *Anthropogeographie*.

One of the most significant precedents to social geography in the nineteenth century was the work of Frédéric Le Play. Disdainful of the various a priori explanations of society prevalent in his day, he set out to study the actual social conditions of worker families in France. His famous monograph technique produced an encyclopedic inventory of social facts, and from a great number of studies he deduced certain basic types, which then served as bases for comparison. Traces of Le Play's analytical formula *lieu-travail-famille*, later adapted by Geddes (1915) into the formula "place-work-folk," can be found in the writings of such early British geographers as H. J. Fleure (1918). French geographers inherited important elements from Le Play, for example, the monograph technique in empirical field studies, but the most important legacy of *lieu-travail-famille* was the social survey movement, which flourished in Britain and America during the early part of the century.

Many geographers, such as Ritter, von Hum-

boldt, Hassinger, Ruhl, and Hettner in Germany, Reclus in France, George Perkins Marsh in America, and H. J. Mackinder in Britain, deserve recognition as pioneers of social geography. However, the three major channels of thought that contained the most useful concepts were those initiated by Le Play (the social survey movement), Ratzel (anthropogeography), and Durkheim (social morphology).

Twentieth-century social geographers. The mutual relations of society and environment was a subject that aroused great speculation and interest at the turn of the century. Yet there was no discipline equipped to embrace the entire question. Ratzel had made an abortive attempt to do so, and his environmentalist disciples exaggerated rather than corrected the deterministic premise of anthropogeography. Many scholars, particularly the Durkheimian sociologists, remained unconvinced that geography had any right to entertain such a monumental task.

At this juncture came one of geography's greatest entrepreneurs, Paul Vidal de la Blache. Society for Vidal (1896; 1902) and his school could not be explained entirely in terms of biological, psychological, or environmental interpretations. It was rather an intricate network of ideas and bonds that provided stability and orientation to human life within particular geographical milieus. In his classical studies of the Mediterranean world and of monsoon Asia (1917–1918), Vidal demonstrated the complex, yet harmoniously balanced, interplay between human institutions and particular natural settings. *Genres de vie* (literally, patterns of living) were the concrete expressions of a society's ongoing contact with nature: sets of techniques, cemented through tradition, whereby human groups secured the material necessities of life within a functional social order (Vidal 1911; Sorre 1948). Repeated experiences in meeting life's common problems within a particular geographical milieu occasioned the development of community consciousness, which made a *genre de vie* truly an ecological system. Variations of this basic concept appear in the literature of other disciplines, for example, social anthropology (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952; Redfield 1955), American human ecology (McKenzie 1934) and urban sociology (Park & Burgess 1921). By means of *genre de vie* and other concepts, the French school of human geography replaced the exaggerated Ratzelian notions of environmental determinism by the more elastic concepts of possibilism and dismissed the charges made in the *Année sociologique* between 1890 and 1910 more by substantive works than by theoretical arguments. "La géographie humaine," thus formulated,

was a social geography in the broad, integral sense: all other dimensions of the human milieu were studied from the vantage point of society. Many British and American human geographers followed almost identical lines, while the Dutch "sociale geografie" was the direct equivalent of the French "géographie humaine." The kernel of this orientation, namely, society as the source and framework for all human activity, reappears in the work of Hans Bobek (1959) in Vienna. Lucien Febvre's famous apologia (1922) articulated the philosophical and historical *raison d'être* of such a discipline.

To Vidal's essentially ecological approach, his disciple Jean Brunhes added the important dimension of group psychology, asking, for example, why similar environments were used in entirely different ways at different periods in history. He defined social geography as the third level of complexity in human geography's fourfold structure. The fourfold structure included the primary groups of family, kin, and culture; the secondary groupings of livelihood and special interest; the various forms of spatial interaction within and among these groups; and, finally, the legal systems which institutionalize a society's subdivision and access to land and property ([1910] 1924, pp. 36-46). This definition, admirably suited to the study of European—particularly French—rural society of the early twentieth century, remained the basic framework for social geography among British, French, and Dutch scholars up to World War II. Most of the early studies in social geography were regional in character, and their excellence consisted more in their artistic cohesion and integrative descriptions than in their analytical or theoretical expertise. The empirical conditions which favored the use of the regional framework by French scholars did not exist to the same extent elsewhere; this partly explains the divergence of orientation and method which developed among the various schools of human geography.

During the 1930s, British social geographers were involved in methodological controversy. Does social geography consist in merely mapping mankind's social characteristics, or must it also analyze the processes involved in relating a society to its geographical environment? What is the relation between social geography and human ecology? Why not replace the term "human" by "social" as the generic term to signify all the nonphysical aspects of geography?

The fundamental dichotomy between a formal and functional approach expressed in this British debate reiterated the duality that had developed in Holland since the 1920s. While at Utrecht the study of social groups within their territorial

framework (de Vooy 1950) was being pursued along the lines of the French school, at Amsterdam Steinmetz' "sociography" was used to study the entire social content of space as a system in itself—aside from any considerations of a group's relation to its natural environment. The birth of sociology in Holland—particularly rural sociology as a separate discipline—has no doubt modified the original disciplinary orientations of these two schools (van Paassen 1965).

Prior to World War II little attempt was made to systematize the elements of social geography. In general, the important associations evident in the spatial organization of society—particularly in the United States—appeared in the literature of human ecology (Theodorson 1961) and urban sociology (Park & Burgess 1921). One major exception, of course, was the work of the environmentalists in examining connections between human behavior and the geographical environment (Thomas 1925).

Pierre George and Maximilien Sorre (1943-1953) were the first great systematizers of social geography. In George's works a close link is maintained between social and economic aspects of human behavior, the social being one facet of the economic (1946, p. 1). For Sorre (1948, pp. 13-16, 66-122) society represented a system of techniques—family and kinship systems, livelihoods (*genres de vie*), languages, and religions, each one having a specific influence on the spatial organization of mankind and his work. Sorre's schema does not make clear, however, whether social geography consists of a series of systematic subfields based on these various kinds of techniques, or whether a distinction is to be made between the "social" and "political" techniques. In his work all forms of organization from family and kin groups to giant political blocs form a continuum (1961, pp. 211-264). Gourou's more comprehensive concept of *civilisation* (1964) comprises both material techniques (modes of production) and spiritual techniques (ideas, values). These three approaches at generalization are important because they try to maintain the integral and holistic character of social geography at the same time that they establish some order and a basis for comparative work. Bobek has made a similar attempt to construct a spatiotemporal framework for world society (1959). His work is a fertile synthesis of French and German traditions: his systematic framework is based on a holistic approach involving types of societies defined in terms of their actual use of their geographical environment (1961).

Several other attempts to formulate the problem of society in geography in terms of a particular systematic framework have appeared: for example,

those of Wagner (1960), Ackerman (1963), and van Paassen (1965). Yet more characteristic of postwar work is the development of individual systematic lines of enquiry, for example, geography of rural and urban life, population studies, and geography of religions and political behavior. Associated with this is a more lively *va-et-vient* between geographers and scholars in other disciplines, particularly concerning questions of rural and urban life (Friedmann 1953) and regional planning (Philipponneau 1960). Studies are still being made within a regional framework, but the focus has changed. Juillard in Alsace (1953) studied particular social problems from a regional perspective, while Rochefort in Sicily (1961) studied regional life from the perspective of the social processes at work. Such reorientations have, of course, raised new methodological problems and prospects. Chatelain (1947; 1953), for example, postulates a duality between the geography of social classes (a kind of social morphology) and the geography of social life (a sociological geography). Claval (1964) envisions the latter as the most feasible future direction for the discipline, citing the work of W. Hartke at Munich as an example. It is difficult, however, to see how these two aspects of the field can be separated.

To label the research being done at Munich as sociological geography may be misleading. Certainly the perspective is social: social-geographic differentiation (*sozialgeographische Differenzierung*) implies that social values—as expressed in the occupational structure—are the primary agents of landscape differentiation. Thus, maps of socio-professional structure (*Sozialkartierung*) for a series of periods are collated with a corresponding series of land-use patterns (*Nutzflächenkartierung*), and significant associations are sought. This basic formula has been applied successfully both in rural and urban contexts. Geipel's study (1952) of one German region, for example, demonstrated that the sources of regional unity—which varied at different periods—are found essentially in the collective decision-making mechanism of the regional community. This is quite a contrast to the sources of regional unity commonly sought in the natural (physiographic) or economic (agricultural) landscape. Hartke (1956) demonstrated that regions where this phenomenon existed had similar geographic (regional) characteristics. Associations found in urban studies are even more interesting. Hartke's intraurban corridors (*Pasagen*) suggest some qualifications to the traditional concentric zone and sector theories of urban structure, while his study of urban expansion

patterns provides new bases for the classification of cities (1961).

In marked contrast to the inductive, empirical, and microscopic approach of the Munich social geographers is the more highly developed theoretical and deductive approach found in Sweden. Torsten Hägerstrand (1952) and Sven Godlund (1956) have applied refined mathematical techniques to the study of migration, rural-urban interaction, circulation, and other dynamic aspects of the field. One of the most interesting developments has been the use of simulation models for the analysis and prediction of spatial movement.

This approach has been adopted and modified in the postwar period by a number of American geographers. At Iowa spatial models have been used to study the distribution patterns of schools, churches, and settlements, often with a view to spatial planning. Morrill's study of Swedish towns (1963) exemplifies this approach. Yet, in general, social geography in the United States is not a unified field: on the one hand there are holistic regional studies, for example, Platt's Saarland study (1961) and Broek's southeast Asian study (1944), and, on the other hand, there are a growing number of systematic studies in racial, linguistic, religious, and other spheres. Some interesting associations have been elaborated, for example, between religion, land use, and livelihood (Isaac 1959), between cultural pluralism and political integration (Lowenthal 1961), and between migration and political behavior within ethnic groups (Lewis 1965). However, the exciting developments in the actual social geography of America have been treated mainly by foreigners (Gottmann 1961) or by scholars in other disciplines.

Résumé of contemporary social geography. In general, the empirical record would seem to characterize social geography as a multifaceted perspective on the spatial organization of mankind. The implication is that some important sources of areal differentiation emanate from society, thus reversing the premises of anthropogeography and other deterministic explanations of social differentiation. Analysis of this social dimension in human geography has involved two basic approaches: the examination of the formal distributions of social phenomena as indices of areal differentiation and the interpretation of these distributions in the light of their underlying social processes. A recent development, particularly in northwestern Europe, is the involvement of social geographers in interdisciplinary research and regional planning.

Nevertheless, the social dimension is one of the least studied aspects of human geography. Social

geography lacks definite boundaries and has neither a central unifying concept nor even an agreed content. Instead, there are scattered individual efforts to analyze the changing social patterns of the modern world. Generalizations regarding the nature and potential function of the field, therefore, can only be proffered as suggestions, based on the substantive research directions and ideas of contemporary experts in the field and on the current trends and technical possibilities in other social science disciplines.

The future of social geography

The challenge. Social geography faces a set of challenges that are unprecedented. Revolutionary changes in world social patterns have rendered past analytical techniques obsolete, while philosophical and cultural currents within modern social life tend to increase the propensity to change of both reality itself and its social-psychological significance. Thus, while technological, economic, and commercial evolution tends to produce a certain degree of standardization in society's spatial order, there is a universal tendency to emphasize social, that is, ethnic, religious, or linguistic, differentiation. The philosophical problems of intersubjectivity and coexistence are ubiquitously discussed. "The home of contemporary man," wrote Plattel ([1960] 1965, pp. 1-2) "does not lie primarily in a localized environment, but in his fellow-man." The traditional methods and objectives of social science are being fundamentally challenged. Analysis must somehow be broadened so as to arrive at a more holistic vision of social reality: the classical Cartesian premises underlying accepted research methodology led to the discovery of systems, but mechanics and structures of systems constitute only a partial view of reality. Today both subjective (internal) aspects of reality and objective (external) aspects of reality must be analyzed. Modern psychology and sociology have endeavored to meet this challenge by forging new analytical techniques, and many other social science disciplines have adopted a decidedly behavioristic approach in recent years.

In the light of these developments, the spatial patterns of world society assume a new significance; the immediate challenge for social geographers would seem to be the collaboration with other scholars in the monumental task of describing world society within its geographical setting. For such an endeavor, social geography needs a unifying theme, a conceptual framework that will enable it to contribute toward and benefit from the research efforts of scholars in related social science disciplines. Such a unified framework seems to be

emerging from the work of some contemporary social geographers. Some of its characteristics are described below.

Social space as central theme. Claval's critique of contemporary social geography concludes that "to understand the geography of a place means to understand the social organization of those who inhabit it, their mentality, their beliefs, their 'representations'" (1964, p. 123). Watson's study of Hamilton demonstrates how "The spatial pattern is, in the last analysis, a reflection of the moral order" ([1951] 1965, p. 476). In this article I have postulated that the *raison d'être* of social geography rests on the fact that the social order is distinct from (even if closely interrelated with) the other orders of human activity in space. In order to describe adequately this social dimension or order, contemporary thought would seem to demand the use of both internal and external perspectives. Is this possible?

Sociologists, for example, Chombart de Lauwe (1956) and Gaston Bardet (1951), and human ecologists, for example, Firey (1960), have demonstrated the technical possibility of exploring a society's perception of its geographical milieu. Geographers, for example, Rochefort (1961), Burton and Kates (1964), and Pataki (1965), have also shown that space has different meanings for different societies, and thus distance and spatial movement can no longer be considered in traditional geodesic terms but must be considered in terms of those dimensions perceived by their human occupants. For example, groups of Italians, Poles, Pakistanis, and Negroes may live side by side in one section of a city. Yet each group, because of economic, historical, cultural, or other reasons, may possess an entirely different conception of space. Some groups may have a social horizon that scarcely transcends the block in which they live or the set of stores in which they work or shop, while others may have social contacts with relatives thousands of miles away. Whether contact with distant relatives is frequent or rare does not influence the fact that a bond is perceived which ignores the barriers of space and time. The social geography of urban neighborhoods cannot ignore these differential attitudes toward space.

This illustration, which challenges traditional notions of space, may lead to the impression that only the social-psychological conception of space matters. Rochefort (1963), in discussing this problem, strongly emphasized that the real dimensions of geographic space must always be kept in mind. Therefore, the central conceptual problem in social geography is to define space in such a way that

both subjective and objective dimensions are included.

Sorre's response (1957) to this challenge was the concept of social space: the synthesis of real and perceived dimensions of space. The subjective component of social space in his view is embodied in the distribution of fundamental social groups, while the objective component consists of their concrete geographic setting.

Bobek's concept of social landscape already expressed the main idea that a unit of social space is a region or place in which one or several groups live and have a common set of ideas of their environment (1943; 1948). The fundamental merit of this concept, as a central theme for social geography, is that it incorporates the traditional elements of groups and environment, while redefining them in terms which are relevant to the examination of modern society. Let us see how the methodology of contemporary social geography could be organized around such a central theme.

Subjective component—social groups. Sociology has shown how the dimensions and meaning of space are colored by the beliefs and group affiliations of its human occupants. Sociologists speak of ethnic space, religious space, and other spaces, and social morphology maps the distribution of groups on the premise that their formal spatial configurations imply the values held by the group (Halbwachs 1938). Social geography must go further: these groups, the subjective component of social space, must be studied not only as morphological patterns on the earth but also as formative influences in molding a society's perception of its environment. The relevant groups include those which determine or condition the spatial distribution and interaction of people, for example, language and ethnic groups; those which influence a society's use of space, for example, religious and kin groups; and, most significantly, those which develop as a result of society's mode of material subsistence, namely, the *genres de vie* or livelihood groups. The bonds and values engendered by participation in these groups are not directly observable on the earth's surface, but they are essential to the understanding of the spatial movements and distribution of people on the earth. Classical French geography used such formal categories of relevant groups, but profound transformations in social structure have occurred since the analytical framework of Brunhes, or even Sorre, was first formulated. Even though the choice of relevant grouping will demand close cooperation with sociologists and others, the social geographer does not have to abandon entirely the analytical techniques

of his predecessors. Rather, such traditional concepts should be re-examined in the light of the new analytical possibilities which appear in many social science disciplines. One example which might merit re-examination, for example, is the Vidalian notion of *genre de vie*. Settlements forms, land use, social interaction, and even political integration have been explained by geographers in terms of *genres de vie*. Many feel that the concept has lost its applicability to modern social life (George 1951; Le Lannou 1949), but others argue that it can be reformulated (Sorre 1948; Varagnac 1948). By discounting the various modifications which have accrued through the years and by re-examining the original notion in the light of contemporary developments both in world society and in social science, guidelines for a reformulation may become apparent. A *genre de vie*, in Vidal's opinion (1911), implies more than a means of material subsistence; its geographical significance stems in large part from its spiritual component, the *structures mentales* which persist even after the external modalities of livelihood change. The important point is that both material and spiritual elements are harmoniously integrated in the *genre de vie* community within a particular milieu. Such a conception closely resembles the notion of "community" in rural sociology (Hillery 1950).

Without changing the concept at all, there are some applications in the modern world. Witness the adaptation problems of immigrants from rural to urban areas, the psychological problems involved in the retraining of unemployed miners, the social consequences of colonialism and economic restructuring within the "third world." In the urban industrial world, however, livelihood is a less compelling basis for community consciousness than other similarities, for example, a common racial, professional, or linguistic background or similar consumption habits (Fourastié 1963). But whatever the source, if a recognizable consistency in a group's perception and consequent use of its environment are associated with a common *structure mentale*, why not consider this pattern as a *genre de vie*, for example, that of travel agents, of salesmen, of truck drivers, of commuting students, of social scientists? Chombart de Lauwe (Chombart de Lauwe et al. 1952, p. 243) showed how a deep social rift could prevail in a small dormitory village because the inhabitants belonged to two different *genres de vie*. The same could be said of immigrant ethnic groups in some urban centers (Taeuber & Taeuber 1965). Ideally, within either an urban or a rural region, one could thus identify the component *genres de vie* and see if there is

a hierarchy of importance among them, the dominant one giving a character to the place, as in pilgrimage, market, or university towns. Many other possibilities exist, but much more substantive work, preferably in conjunction with other disciplines, is needed before any formal categories of modern *genres de vie* can be made. Until this is done, the existing formal groupings of language, religion, race, etc., may serve to constitute the subjective component of social space; however, if these sociological categories can somehow be integrated into the more geographical concept of *genre de vie*, the result would be an ideal subjective ingredient for social geography.

Objective component—the social environment. The term “social environment” is used here to connote all the socially significant aspects of the total geographic milieu. Traditionally, geographers have tended to exaggerate the distinction between the natural (physical-biotic) environment and the artificial network of human establishments created by society. This dualistic conception tends to ignore the fact that mankind’s environment-creating apparatus has by no means entirely destroyed the natural framework and that the interplay of natural and artificial assumes very different forms throughout the world. The social environment, as objective component of social space, includes more than these two levels. It includes, for example, the relation of social attitudes and traditions to nature, resource use, and the ethics of group relations.

Social geographers are far from a satisfactory definition of the social environment; they lack substantive studies which would provide the raw material for such a definition. What is the social significance, for example, of purely physical elements, such as humidity, temperature, or altitude? Geographers have added very little to the “findings” of the Huntingtonian environmentalists. Yet the behavioral sciences are interested in knowing the connections, real or perceived, between society and its natural environment. The research challenges proposed in Sorre’s *Géographie psychologique* (1954) remain virtually untouched. In addition, little is known about the “synthetic environment” (Herber 1962): the various consequences of atmospheric and oceanic pollution, or the consumption of medicated foods, stimulants, and sedatives. What are the physiological and pathological consequences of changes in the environment, for example, housing, communication, and diet?

Recently some geographers have viewed the environment as an amalgam of systems (Wagner & Mikesell 1962; Ackerman 1963; van Paassen

1965). This approach is satisfactory from the theoretical and technical points of view, but does it admit of nonsystematic (dysfunctional) elements which often play such an important part in social life? The social geographer must be sensitive to the local exceptions which give special character to individual places, such as Rochefort (1961) demonstrated in her study of Sicilian social environment.

Approaches to the study of social space. We have seen that the study of social groups within their territorial (environmental) framework has constituted the basic traditional methodology of the Dutch, British, and some French social geographers. In theory, this has involved a combination of a morphological approach (mapping of social groups) and an ecological approach (relations of groups to environment). Today, however, the latter (vertical) dimension is perhaps less significant than the horizontal one, namely, the spatial patterns of interaction between social groups, such as Lowenthal’s Caribbean study illustrated (Lowenthal 1961). A psychological approach to group attitudes, such as one finds in the *Revue de psychologie des peuples*, may provide clues to the origins of some spatial discontinuities in social interaction.

In terms of the notions of group and environment, as redefined above, let us see what analytical methods can be used in the study of social space. Two of the many possible approaches are (1) to consider social space as a mosaic of social areas defined in terms of the occupant groups, for example, *genres de vie* or ethnic groups; and (2) to view social space as nodally organized, that is, as a network of spatial relations radiating around certain centers (Sorre’s *points privilégiés*) and permeated by the arteries of circulation.

Formal approach—social areas. Initially, the formal approach examines the spatial patterns and characteristics of social groups in virtually the same fashion as that used by the disciples of Steinmetz in Amsterdam. On the basis of these distributions a series of regions, homogeneous in terms of individual characteristics, can be compared and associations can be sought. Such associations, however, must then be examined in terms of the social environment in which these social characteristics occur, that is, an ecological approach must supplement the more formal “sociographical” stage of analysis. In addition to these two steps, the geographer must endeavor to see how all these elements combine to form the social whole within a particular region and must seek explanations for the variations through space in the incidence and func-

tional character of these social wholes. Jones sees "social regions" within the city of Belfast (1960), for example, as a product of historical and religious forces, while the "social area analysis" tradition in American human ecology (Theodorson 1961) has demonstrated the use of various other indices in the establishment of intraurban social regions.

Functional approach. A more dynamic and increasingly popular approach is to consider social space in terms of its nodal organization. The orbit of group activities and the related horizons of social consciousness can be examined (cartographically) in terms of their use of these nodes, for example, markets, cinemas, and schools (Chombart de Lauwe et al. 1952). The hinterland of each of these nodes varies in scale and significance, and these variations provide crucial insights into the social character of particular places. The study of nodal regions and of circulation are two examples of a functional approach to the study of social space.

Sorre (1961) suggests that settlement units—towns, cities, metropolises—provide a primary set of nodes on a world scale. Within each of these nodes is an internal system of centers (schools, churches, cinemas) whose social significance can also be examined cartographically. Here again the social geographer can collaborate with and utilize some of the existing principles of central place theorists and perhaps somewhat qualify definitions of centrality currently based on commercial and industrial criteria. Edgar Kant's *Umland* studies (Kant et al. 1951), J. Labasse's circulation studies (1955), and Pierre George's studies of the urban fringe (1962) provide orientation for this kind of study. As world society becomes more urbanized, social geographers will concern themselves more with the urban field, and, here, collaboration with other scholars will be imperative.

The essential clue to the internal dynamism of social space can be found in its circulation system. Circulation here includes all kinds of movement of goods, services, people, and ideas—any kind of spatial movement which occasions social communication. As the Paris study (Chombart de Lauwe et al. 1952) demonstrated, the actual and potential use of a circulation system indicates the concrete social horizons of the group it serves; changes within it may indicate or produce changes in the relation between groups and between a group and its social environment.

A vast number of research questions emanate from this dimension of social space, particularly now that the processes of social differentiation and cultural standardization are so closely tied with

large-scale, mass-produced goods and services. Interregional traffic, the currents of the tourist world, pilgrimages, daily and seasonal commuting—these are only a few samples of the many activities the student of circulation could investigate.

To summarize, social geography can be defined as the study of the areal (spatial) patterns and functional relations of social groups in the context of their social environment; the internal structure and external relations of the nodes of social activity; and the articulation of various channels of social communication.

Although the discussion has distinguished between various elements and approaches to social geography, it must be emphasized that one of the fundamental characteristics of the field has been, and must remain, its integral, holistic character. Like social history, it must endeavor to maintain the holistic view, that is, to show how the individual parts and their functional connections integrate to give a specific character to the social whole. French geographers have supplied ample precedent for this kind of holism; so, indeed, have the social anthropologists of the Anglo-American world. The more the field becomes theoretically systematized, the greater will the challenge of integration become.

For social geography to fulfill its potential, the various approaches to the field need to be coordinated into a systematic conceptual framework. Sorre's concept of social space could provide a central theme for such a framework. Its ingredient elements could be considered as bases for systematic subdivisions, for example, geography of language, of religions, and of diet, each of which contributes a valuable perspective on society's spatial order. The definition given here seems to incorporate the various elements which have belonged to the field of social geography and which, given the trends in contemporary social science, could constitute fruitful future directions for the discipline.

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