

C. DIRECTIONS FOR REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

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In 1977 two papers appeared in the Professional Geographer in which the writers referred to the role of geography in planning process. They referred to the problems of regional geography and suggested that regional geography become applied geography, and a major component in the education of the applied geographer. I suggest that you address yourselves to this as well as to the general role of regional geography in Israel, where regional geography is more developed than in the U.S.

A. MEIR

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I don't think that I can accept the view that we ought to move into regional geography in its traditional structure whereby we emphasize the study of the physical infrastructure of this area (geology, geomorphology, climatology) and adding to it the population aspect, the resource aspect, the transportation aspect, etc. I see this as it relates to my view of geography and to the internal debate between positivism and humanism. I think there is room to introduce more regional study because, in fact, when we try to better understand the way people behave in certain areas or in certain parts of the world we often use some notions from the positivistic geography in order to identify the nomothetic aspect of the particular problem we are studying. Without this nomothetic approach we cannot identify those ideographic aspects of the particular problem we are studying. In other words, we are not supposed to take a comprehensive look at all topics, but to take a specific problem within an area and try to understand it through both positivistic and humanistic points of view. Then, with the humanistic approach, we can better understand the problem we are studying. The regions should be the means and not the end of geographical understanding.

J. LARRONE

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As the only physical geographer present at this meeting, it is my contention that if geography, as some attendees maintain, is strictly a social science, I have no place in this room nor in the research and teaching of regional patterns. I wonder whether the perpetual clash between physical and human geographers is not related to some infatuated attempts to classify geography (and, thereby, to restrict geographical problems) into the social sciences.

As to regional geography, I agree with what Prof. Karmon asserts: that it is essential to describe a region. In fact, it is necessary to describe variables characterizing a region so that these may be used as a collection of data upon which research and conclusions are to be based. Beyond the description of space, whatever may be its peculiarities, I think that our foremost aim should be to understand why the region is thus characterized and why it functions as such. Only with this aim in mind can we expect to succeed in coping with a given region's problems and development.

An understanding of the dynamics within a given region therefore implies a first stage of acquaintance with the area, followed by a second stage of attempts towards systemization, and a third stage of cluster of villages expanding economically and in land use at the expense of other villages. It is essential to incorporate

within the hypothesis logical assumptions, and base it preferably on laws; if these are not available, on theories or trends derived from the various branches of geography and related disciplines. Finally, it is essential to validate or disprove the hypothesis by quantitative methods. Without a systematic layout consisting of both quantitative description of a region and a quantitative analysis of given sets of data, I fear that regional geography and, for that matter, 'modern geography', will settle back into its infancy and, ultimately, to its self-created disrepute.