

## THE "SCIENTIFIC APPROACH" IN GEOGRAPHY\*

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Several points based on my own experience over the last two years are submitted here with regard to two subjects: the scientific approach in geography and a note on the spatial dimension of politics and power. During the last two years I was exposed to two different types of environments. The first was government policy making and the second one was a sabbatical in Europe where I tried to sense what is happening in Western Europe, especially in France and Western Germany. It is substantially different from the geography in the United States.

A first question which we may ask concerns the scientific approach - is it liberation or servitude? From my point of view we have here just one more particular example of the general theory of the limit to growth. I think that the law of diminishing return applies to the scientific approach as well. That is to say, that the application of this approach has limits, both technical and structural. Because of the limits I think that in the

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\* Due to technical reasons the full presentation is unfortunately not available. The paper above is only a summary of the main points and statements made by the author.

long run there is going to be a conflict between policy issues which are increasing in importance and the scientific approach. By restricting ourself to becoming more "scientific" we may lose, for example, track of the important societal problems. We may also, in the long run, narrow down or diminish the envelope of our knowledge, which is a much more serious problem because we may well be entering an era where the most salient issues cannot be tackled with the scientific approach. Issues in humanistic geography like, for example, cultural attitude may also be something we could miss completely by using the scientific approach.

My last brief point concerns the use of space. I think that we are slowly becoming aware of the fact that space has been used as a means to obtain certain social and political ends beyond space and, therefore, we want to know more about the way the political system uses space in order to achieve its objectives. My feeling is that we ought to do much more work in Israel on this topic. I myself, by intuition, find that I am writing more and more on these topics actually, in various contexts which may look like transportation geopgraphy or historical geography, but eventually boil down to geography and politics.