

DISCUSSION

A. THE RELEVANCE OF GEOGRAPHY TO CURRENT NEEDS OF SOCIETY

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I think that we can find national influences on the thinking in geography. If we talk about geography in Germany, you can also talk about the German geographer. We should often look for the original cultural and historical background of geographical thinking in a certain area. To be less abstract, I would like to present a few examples. For instance, if I try to analyze a great deal of American geographical theory, I find that they are all based on one assumption, the high mobility of population. But this is typical only for the USA and not to be found in any other place in the world. I have read of how often an American, during his lifetime, changes his place of residence. This means not only the mobility of persons, but also the mobility of installations, and of factories. This mobility may be the cause of urban problems in America, because very few Americans have real attachment to a place which is temporary. They are also thoughtless of urban planning and development. If we look at the books appearing in America, we find titles like: "The Urban Disaster", "How to Save our Cities", "What Should Happen to our City". I think this is something very special to

America because of missing elements: the element of history, the element of attachment to places, of a mobility restricted not by economic reason, but by feelings of history and belonging. This also applies to the mobility of industry. Industry in Europe is less mobile because of ancient traditions which have created not only the spatial location of certain industries, but have created around this industry a social contact with that industry. You cannot transfer an industry without destroying the complete structure of social and economic tradition. Theories based on rapid mobility may be admissible for the USA or Americans, but should be regarded differently for Europe. So I think that a very strong regional element exists in geographic thinking and it should include historical thinking, which may not exist in a young society. It may be the same with other subjects. I am dealing especially with the subject of ports around the world. I have found that of all existing ports in Europe and the Mediterranean about eighty percent already existed in the Middle Ages; that only about twenty percent of all the ports have been built in the last seven hundred years; and that only 5% of the ports have been built in the last hundred years. So if we talk about tradition, we cannot deny that the main reason for the existence of the ports has been persistence of location. We cannot therefore apply models based only on present day behavior, or a present day statistic as an explanation of

spatial behavior of peoples or society. You can find behavior and institutions which are typical for a social environment or historical tradition which cannot be explained by quantitative methods. The landscape of American ports in the USA shows no cranes. All the American ports were founded during the last two hundred years by private owners who didn't want to waste money on equipment for loading and unloading. Instead, they forced the shipowners to have their own cranes on board ship. Most of the quays in New Orleans still have wooden linings. The New York Port Authority was established in 1927, not 1627, and when it was set up it did not control a single dock of the port. The entire port of New York was in private hands, so that in order to build bridges, tunnels, etc., they had to purchase everything from private owners. This doesn't exist in Europe. Every port is based on a social situation, a certain historical development of a certain attitude, not only of the people, but also of the government. This is why the German geographer does not want to accept so completely the quantitative approach. He stresses the qualitative difference.

If you take a small town in the Middle West of the USA, it looks exactly as all other small Middle West towns. Its mobile population has had no time to develop a distinctive surrounding

area. And so, what interests the American geographer is a system of diffusion and centrality. He cannot use any other but the quantitative way. But when you come to Europe, you see various cities with very strong Baroque or Renaissance planning; each city has a completely different character. You cannot find the common elements by a quantitative approach. There are two approaches usable for every region. One is to look at the differences and to explain them; the other is to look at the common things and to explain them. And for each of these, there is an approach: if you want to explain the common things you use the quantitative approach; and if you want to explain the differences you have to use the qualitative approach. A geographer wanting to extend the research to other regions should use the qualitative approach. We should also look at the origin of the geographer himself, lest he apply the assumptions from his own background to other areas. Geography is influenced by the common people but not made by them.

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Where do the clients, for whom we do the actual planning, fit into the planning procedure? I think it is here where geographers move in strongly, because in all planning procedures taken until recently, the clients had not been considered at all. The planner has been planning using concepts, models, and theories that didn't really reflect the special needs of the people for which he was planning. This is why in the 1960s, all new planning schools in the U.S. were emphasizing Advocacy Planning procedures which they started from below rather than from above. In other words they began to consult people about their own needs, aspirations, the way they viewed and perceived the world, and only then came up with some kind of consensual view of what is good for people. This is where the geographers ought to move in using the phenomenological approach.