

PHYSICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMICAL AND REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY: CONVERGENCE OR DIVERGENCE?

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SUMMARY

Prevailing differentiation of Czech geography is preventing from social relevance of it. The convergence of physical, socio-economical and regional geography is offered as a base for the effective cooperation in theoretical and applied geography. The global, regional and local problems solving has become research frontier in geography. Orientation in theoretical object and semantic interpretation is a challenge for all the geographers. Contemporary geography studies process, forms, decisions, management-information systems, manland adjustment, functional organization not only in spatial attributes but in their development, temporal ones. Methods as identification, recognition patterns, information retrieval, conflict or games theory, situational and contingency approaches, case studies, perception, innovation in social processes, regional studies, etc. linked with certain techniques and applied in problems solving represent very important means for geographical knowledge, for the convergence of physical, socio-economical and regional geography.

1. INTRODUCTION

If we are judge according to the programme of symposium on Geographical Research in Czechoslovak Academy of Science 1952—1982, held in Liblice, January 1983, it is presumably divergence. That is to say geography is not mentioned among those sections as single geographical disciplines and cartography: physical geography, historical geography, economic geography, cartography. Traditional structure has remained. Situation of this kind is reflecting very sharply the state of Czech geography when the effort for synthesis made by M. Hampl, J. Demek, V. Häufner remains the exception.

Therefore it is not a surprise that relations between single geographical disciplines and neighbouring non-geographical ones are stronger than those with other geographical disciplines. And so geography adopts methodology from other disciplines as well facts and laws, mostly not respecting object of geography, its attributes, the essence of own geographical thinking. And there is a relevant question: will this divergence in geography lead to social relevance of geography? finding sophisticated theory? applications? big science of geography? Hardly so!

To fulfil the tasks of scientific research that are formulated in the Directions for Further Economic and Social Development of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, accepted by the XVI. Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and sponsored by the Federal Government most geographical departments in the Academy of Science, universities etc. worked up into practical steps in research, education.

The need of general theory for modern geography, theoretical geography, a base for convergence in geography is going on. It cannot be reached however only by means classifications schema of geographical disciplines, as it is usual, but working out the functional integration of them, a synthesis. The whole is not a mechanical conglomeration but the functional structure, system, organization. The trouble is in very wide object of geography, nearly like philosophy, or too narrow, e.g. man's environment. The problem is in different forms of objective reality, different laws which has to be respected by scientific, geography including, disciplines. Social relations, society is a decisive level in priority of laws, their investigation and applications for world's change, for purposive social activity. What is the object of geography?

2. PROBLEM ORIENTATION OF GEOGRAPHY

One of the functions of science, the index of its social relevance is the ability of solving social problems. Lately many problems arose to mankind solving of which undetermines social progress. According to N. N. Inozemcev (1981) people face the necessity of dealing with the following global problems: preventing nuclear war and ensuring peace, making conditions for suppressing backwardness of under-developed countries, suppressing social injustice-hunger, poverty and stress, ensuring equal development of demographic increase and dynamism of production, supply mankind with energy, raw materials and food, complex and rational use of the ocean resources, opening space (cosmos) for mankind necessity of effective protecting of environment, environmental management, ensuring dignified development of man in future.

Global problems are in relation to the whole mankind and project themselves into regional and local level when other specific problems join them, such as problems of traffic in Europe, problems of industrial urban nodes in the C.S.S.R etc. And this is where arises the field for cooperation of both geographical branches with non-geographical ones and the possibility of convergence of physical and socioeconomical geography, their cooperation.

3. REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY — THE CONVERGENCE FIELD OF PHYSICAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Renaissance of regional geography is now being talked about with hopes, puzzlement and scepticism. Puzzlement and scepticism follow from the former development of regional geography, which lagged behind in consideration with the development of physical and socioeconomic geography in the 60's and 70's. After the period of repressive advancement of physical geography comes an upward of up to date socioeconomic geography.

At the same time the development of regional geography a great reserve in applying the results of physical and socioeconomic geography-which have also their own regional subdisciplines. Nevertheless, regional geography needs its own paradigm which cannot be only traditional system beginning with location, area, border through landforms, climate, settlements, industry, agriculture subregionalisation, etc. The question keeps to be which paradigm should be the wise one.

A certain way of solving the vagueness of theoretical object of regional geography may be its participation in solving regional problems. As there are global problems

of mankind which are regional problems as well, so there are problems of over-settled regions and a lot of unsettled ones which are necessary to be solved by the society. We can mention problems of urbanized industrial territories, management, adjustment protected landscape areas, development of recreation areas, problems of agricultural regions, but also territorial development of administrative units, suburban zones etc., as examples within the C.S.R. Not all above mentioned regions fulfil the criteria for recognizing as geographical regions, but in fact they operate as undivided territorial units. For the sake of their geographical research there is a very constructive conception of geography according to V. M. Gochman and J. G. Sauškin (1971) as a science dealing with the laws of development of dynamic spatial systems being formed in the process of society and nature interaction and control these systems. Even before F. A. Ackerman (1963) supports the study of areal functional organisation and later P. Haggett (1975) drafts geography as science inquiring spatial organization of human society and its environmental interaction.

As mentioned, however, the problem of environment is one of more global problems of mankind and therefore a question must arise whether geography should not deal with all these problems as well as other regional and local ones. Physical, socioeconomic and regional geography should join, force to solving these problems. The region represents an organised space, generated by social process. Solving regional problems consists in ability of society to manage, adjust these processes. For the effective functional management the goals, management criteria and information are necessary. There is a chance for geography to build up information systems with using effective methods of gathering data and computer processing for the needs of processes management, which minimizes social problems operation, functioning. We can also understand a region as an interaction between temporal process and spatial form. It is not a black-box of various partial objects but a network of matter, energy and information flows — a network of natural processes which are carried through by conscious human activities and by interaction of natural and social processes in which man's position has two aspects: biotic nature and social essence. Even here there is then the reason for convergence — rapprochement, unifying with preserving differences between physical, socioeconomic and regional geography.

4. CONVERGENCE OF GEOGRAPHICAL DISCIPLINES — THE TREND OF FURTHER GEOGRAPHY'S DEVELOPMENT?

At the VIII. Congress of the Slovak Geographical Society in Prešov we presented a contribution "Quo vadis, geographia?" in which we made an analysis of geographical trends in the past, at present and in the future and also the forecast of its further development.

It showed the fact that one geography entirely lacks critical analysis of behavioral, humanistic, radical and other geographies, and under constructive geography we mean, with R. Hartshorne, what geographers do. And yet are there other disciplines dealing with these trends and states of scientific branches. As an example the critical analysis of behavioralism in american politology by I. Masopust (1980) can be mentioned.

It is a tradition in our country to speak of integration and differentiation

Geography: the past and future prospect

social relevance

the 70' s the 80' s	traditional geographical subdisciplines analytical and synthetic	synthesis explanation geosystems regional social socioeconomic physical g.	behavioral radical constructive humanistic environmental theoretical applied	interdisciplinarity spatial organization prediction information systems social relevance management adjustment organizations
the 60' s	quantitative theoretical geography	physico- geographical subdiscip- lines	remote sensing regional geography	spatial analysis differentiation models
the first third of the 20th century	physico- geographical disciplines	aerial photographs regional geography	socio- economic geographical subdiscip- lines applied geography	analysis regionalization
the 19th- science century	physical .	technical revolution GEOGRAPHY regional .	antropogeography economic geography human geography	observaton measuring analysis
ancient medieval ages	EUROPEAN EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY			
	GEOGRAPHY'S EMERGE			
	knowledge synthesis on people and nature information on "where" and "what"			
	places description			

processes in geography. On the Czech geography, however except the above mentioned exceptions, differentiation of geography is dominant. We presume that the suitable first step to implement a sort of integration would be the convergence, cooperation of geographical disciplines first of all when solving social problems, a lot of which has negative impact also on natural processes, above all on the society and nature interaction. The asked for semantic interpretation should include "the problems view" of geographical subject and consequently it should be explicitly named in the theoretical object of geographical study. It will reinforce social relevance of geography. In this context it is necessary to agree with V. Gardavský and M. Hampl (1982) who call our attention to the danger of overestimation of methodology and epistemology aspect of geographical research. It has become nearly a custom even in our geography especially within the quantitative geography, to consider model testing and construction in relation to a null and research hypothesis to be one of the peaks of geographical knowledge. Of course it is necessary to render quantitative aspect of processes, but semantic interpretation of models must be done according to causal schema that express the reality, not the abstraction above model.

But even the list of methods mentioned in our introduction into geography is incomplete. Shall we wait to understand knowledge as the reduction of variety? To see models synthesis? Shall we go further than to the method of black box? To identification as a method of scientific understanding, recognition pattern, information retrieval? Shall we appraise duly the conflict theory in solving problems? Using computers in data processing and solving complex tasks? These questions are also connected with further development of theoretical geography in the world and with the construction theory integrating single geographical disciplines. We present here, as a basis for discussion, the scheme of geographical development that was discussed in Prešov in 1982.

An example of physical and socioeconomic geography convergence in interdisciplinary cooperation in the fields of landscape and social ecology is the next contribution in this number. During the landscape and environment research we made sure of dominating role of decision — making processes in solving problems of society and nature interaction. In keeping with this situation we started to deal with organization development, goal management, situational and comparative approaches, case studies, perception, motivation, innovations.

5. CONCLUSION

We suggest for further development of the Czech geography among others to strengthen convergence of physical, socioeconomic and regional disciplines of geography, holding their independence and difference.

There are two possible ways of realisation: developing theoretical geography due to deal with this task, and a concrete cooperation of geographers when solving regional problems of the C.S.R. It should be taken into account, it would be consideration to divide this territory into individual regions within the framework of which single geographical departments could participate in the research aiming at the help to solve these regions' problems. The research of this kind does take place, but mutual information is lesser. The aims for geography are clear: to improve its level and achieve higher social relevance. One of the ways is the suggest convergence of physical, socioeconomic and regional geography.

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