



Urban Geography: Scope and Behaviouralism: A Review

NAVIN KUMAR, kadianlc@gmail.com

Abstract

Urban geography is the study of urban places with reference to their geographical environment. Broadly speaking, the subject matter includes origin of towns, their growth and development, their functions in and around their surroundings. The subject of urban geography has gradually taken a special place among the various branches of geography in the period after the Second World War in various foreign and Indian universities and colleges. With the increase of population globally, towns and cities have become magnets of economic, social and political processes.

Key words: development, environment, economic, socio, cultural etc.

Introduction

Urban geography as a discipline evolved in the twentieth century. Over the time it has developed into a well-established discipline which deals with the study of urban settlements within the framework of their geographical setting. One can say that the scope of the sub discipline constitutes the study of origin of urban settlements, their morphology and its development, their functions in and around their environs. With the increase of population and these settlements emerging as the magnets of economic, social and political developments; the discipline had gained importance in social sciences. The earlier urban geographers mainly concentrated on the physical aspects of the cities and their situation. The main emphasis was on the relationship that existed between the location and the structure of some particular cities and their surroundings. With time the framework of urban geographers changed and in present times two common approaches are identifiable. The first one mainly deals with cities as



distinct phenomenon located on the surface of the earth. They usually study the distribution, size, function and growth rate of urban settlements along with the spatial interactions between different urban centres. The second viewpoint analyzes cities with respect to their morphology (layout and build up area) and intensity of land use within the city. Within this framework some writers have also started analyzing problems related to urban growth and development.

Scope of Urban Studies and Definitions:

Urban geography studies urban centre in the context of geographical factors. The factors operate spatially to explain processes – economic, socio-cultural and also political. But the subject of urban geography has its limited scope in the sense that it deals with these processes in relation to only one phenomenon, i.e., town or city. Some of the general principles on which a town is based form the subject-matter.

Commonly, it includes in the very beginning, consideration about the origin of an urban place. The genesis about a town is invariably related to its history. Who is behind its origin? What is that which makes a town to take its root where it is, and why it is there? Town site or the ground on which it is sited has some specific and geographic attributes. These need explanation to bring forth personality of a town.

Another point which has been emphasized by D. Stamp to cover the scope of urban geography is the study of the actual town itself, i.e., town as an entity. He further has added that influence of the town on its surrounding area too forms a significant aspect of the study. This means that ‘townscape’ and also hinterland including ‘umland’ are vital issues for studying urban geography.



Dickinson defines urban geography as the study of a city commanding the surrounding region. He describes the city as a king among the surrounding towns. His trait for cities of all ages has been institutional supremacy for their surrounding territory.

Their existence depends upon the resources of the surrounding areas, and also, by virtue of their interaction through their physical, social and economic infrastructure. Their interdependence with their surrounding regions is the spatial reality.

Raymond E. Murphy points out the dual role of urban geographer, i.e.,

- (i) To analyze cities as entities in terms of locations, characters, growth, and relations to the surrounding countryside, as well as,
- (ii) To discuss patterns of the city's interior – land use, social and cultural patterns, patterns of circulation, and above all, natural patterns of environment – all as they exist in interrelation and interaction in the urban area.

Harold Carter opined that since the geographer is concerned with the analysis of the variable character of the earth's surface, and thus, "the populations and the buildings agglomerated together to make up towns constitute the special interest of the urban geographer". Since considerable population of the world live in towns, and the problems of the urban environment are paramount, the study of urban geography is important and its relevance to applied geography needs no further stress.

N. Baransky, the founder of Soviet economic geography, has pointed out that study of cities has a wide scope in the sense that it has now become the subject matter of historians, geographers, statisticians, economists and sociologists. Similarly, planners and plan designers are interacted in cities, each in their own



way, as well as architects, financial specialists and representatives of a number of special fields.

Behaviouralism and Urban Centres:

Berry's contention about city and its growth is related to its consumer's behaviour who are the befitting choice makers for using land. It depends upon three variables, viz.,

- (1) Value of residential unit – buying cost or rent?
- (2) Quality of residence, and
- (3) Relationship with place of work and neighbourhood?

Family income is an important component for the choice of site in the city, and this depends upon the ability of behavior to interact with space by its users. But as a general tendency, it is evident that people of almost the same income group agglomerate make their choice for an even space.

In the context of India, social relationship and behavior are the products of caste-ridden values and culture. These have given rise to 'mohallas' of the same communities. The city, of course, has its geographical base, but nonetheless important is behaviour of its citizens and their socio-cultural background. It is because of this Behaviouralism of the residents that cities have been able to infuse in them their own smell.

Conclusion

Urban geography is more than a mix of different approaches. This is probably near a systematic geographic study rather than multi-dimensional analysis of its



Purpose. Now urban geography has become less unified and so it becomes more difficult to present a neat structure. Whatever the argument may be the fundamental concern is spatial and that also with relation to the description and explanation of pattern is core and that makes it important even for urban geography like other sub disciplines. urban geography is more of an amalgam of different approaches. It is nearer perhaps to a multidisciplinary analysis of its object rather than a systematic geographical study. The town cannot be viewed as an object of study as a geologist would appraise a piece of rock.

Reference

- [1] Abu-Lughod, J. 1965. “Tale of Two Cities: the Origins of Modern Cairo.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2: 429-457.
- [2] Amin, A., and N. Thrift. 2002. *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. Cambridge: Polity.
- [3] Black, D. and J.V. Henderson. 2003. “Urban Evolution in the USA.” *Journal of Economic Geography* 3: 343-372.
- [4] Boo, K. 2011. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*. New York: Random House.
- [5] Charlot, S., and G. Duranton. 2006. “Cities and Workplace Communication: Some Quantitative French Evidence.” *Urban Studies* 43:1365–94.
- [6] Cochrane, A. 2006. *Understanding Urban Policy: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- [7] Glickman, N. J. 1981. “Emerging Urban Policies in a Slow-Growth Economy: Conservative Initiatives and Progressive Responses in the US.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 5, 492-528.