

FORMATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL LITERACY THROUGH SYSTEMS OF CONCEPTS

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Atanas Dermendzhiev¹

Tamara Draganova²

¹ St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, **Bulgaria**

² St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, **Bulgaria**

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the development of social geography, its relationship with the school geographical education and the sciences of the humanities sector.

It is argued that the place of social geography in the system of social geographical sciences is in the scope of the social sphere, including both the economy and social, spiritual and cultural activities.

The statement is argued that the socialization of geography is a multifaceted process, corresponding to global trends in social development and the logic of scientific development based on the differentiation and integration of the spheres of human knowledge.

Emphasis is placed on the structure and specifics of territorial communities.

The research uses general scientific (interpretation, summary, synthesis, analysis) and private scientific methods (chronological, social modeling, etc.).

Keywords: social geography, geographical education, territorial communities

INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s and 1970s the emphasis was on the unity of geography, on the search for direct influence of the approaches of the scientific researches on the field of social and natural geography.

In the beginning of the 1980s the „curiosity” of geographers transferred to other topical questions, such as what is (or what is the structure of) the geographical science.

The indicative lifestyle of the individual provokes also other questions, topical during the following years: what is the structure of social geography and of its attendant social sciences, what is the pace of their transformation and etc.?

The first attempts for definition of social geography are referred to Elisee Reclus (1875) (Reclus, 1873-1893), Paul de Rousiers (1884), Albert Demangeon (1896). Within the range of their limited (at that time) abilities, was the inclusion of the suggested programme for socio-cultural studies of certain territories. It has a multi-dimensional character, because it covers issues of social nature such as life satisfaction, pressurized interethnic relationships, problems of sacredness, as well as elements concerning the psycho-social consolidation and framing (geographically substantiated) of the contradictory peculiarities of man. Issues which have been discussed in the studies of Paul Vidal de la Blache (Vidal de la Blache, 1926). The last years are beneficial for social geography, because of the natural opening of the „geographical windows” and because of the „approach” attitude of the science to it.

In the sense of its scientific survival we highlight the following features of manifestation: The first one is connected with the clarification of the etymology of the term „social geography”.

The numerous publications on this issue are not unanimous. We can mention some authors with not so traditional ideas: E. Jones and J. Eyles (Jones and Eyles, 1977) [3], F. Ratzel (Ratzel, 2008) [4], L. Mazurkiewicz (Mazurkiewicz, 1992) [5], D. Harvey (Harvey, 1996) [6], G. Benko and U. Strohmayer (Benko and Strohmayer, 2004) [7], P. Gould and U. Strohmayer (Gould and Strohmayer, 2004) [8], P. Claval and N. J. Entrikin (Claval and Entrikin, 2004) [9], G. Benko and A. J. Scott (Benko and Scott, 2004) [10], M. Bassin and V. Berdoulay (Bassin and Berdoulay, 2004) [11], P. J. Taylor and H. Van der Wusten (Taylor and Van der Wusten, 2004) [12], C. Philo and O. Soderstrom (Philo and Soderstrom, 2004) [13], D. Ley and M. Samuels (Ley and Samuels, 1978) [14], M. Samuels (Samuels, 1978) [15], A. Buttimer (Buttimer, 1978) [16], I. Wallace (Wallace, 1978) [17], C. Harris (Harris, 1978) [18], Yi-Fi Tuan (Tuan, 1978) [19] and others.

The studies of E. Jones and J. Eyles are aimed at determining the nature of social geography, at the concepts, models and approaches in its development, at defining the group framework and decoding of the space-model-process relation.

F. Ratzel discusses issues about the interaction between the social base and culture, and L. Mazurkiewicz – about the factors, that have led to the accelerated development of social geography and especially to its entry into the Eastern European science. He relates this „boom” to the processes of economization and regionalization.

Much profound and detailed are the studies of D. Harvey. In the context of development of social geography, he studies and analyzes the correlation between time and space, the cultural-political responses to their variable dimension, the factors and the dynamics for development of social geography, ... the geographic imagination.

Our opinion differs from that of the doyen of Russian economic geography. N. N. Baransky (Баранский, 1980) about the sameness of social and societal geography. [20] We consider the first one to be leading, but still a composite segment of societal geography.

The second feature rejects the existence of social geography as a self-dependent science. The studies in this sphere are considered to be fragmented manifestations of the socio-geographical attitude.

If we turn again to Russian geography, we have to note the different approach in recognizing the „private” geographical sciences, influencing the visualization of social geography.

E. Alaev (Алаев, 1983) [21] and V. Gohman (Гохман, 1984) [22] consider it a part of the triune methodological approach, studying economy, society and ecology.

Too indicative is the statement of U. G. Saushkin (Саушкин, 1973): „Social geography is not a new „branch” of science like geography of industry, of population, of services, but socio-geographical aspects should be present in all branches and fields of our science.” [23]

In some of the studies social geography is considered a self-dependent science, but it has a different role in the hierarchy of socio-geographical directions. Probably because of this, many authors note its tight relation with the geography of population and with the interdisciplinary character of socio-geographic studies. Even some of them consider social geography part of the geography of population, studying the social development of territorial social communities (A. Dolinin and others) (Долинин, Бугаев, Шипунова, 1984). [24]

Others classify it as being equal to economic geography, giving it the status of a leading geographic field (S. Y. Nimmick (Ныммик, 1984) [25]; T. B. Ratviyr (Ратвийр, 1984) [26]; A. I. Alekseev, S. A. Kovalev, A. A. Tkachenko (Алексеев, Ковалев, Ткаченко, 1983) [27], N. S. Mironenko (Мироненко, 1990) [28] and others).

It is often suggested that social geography is a branch of socio-economic geography, studying the norms and factors for development of traditional social structures, the rates of their manifestation and the objective social proportions of „coexistence”.

Actually, the object of research of this science is society (Figure 1), while its subject we refer to the territorial organization of social sphere.

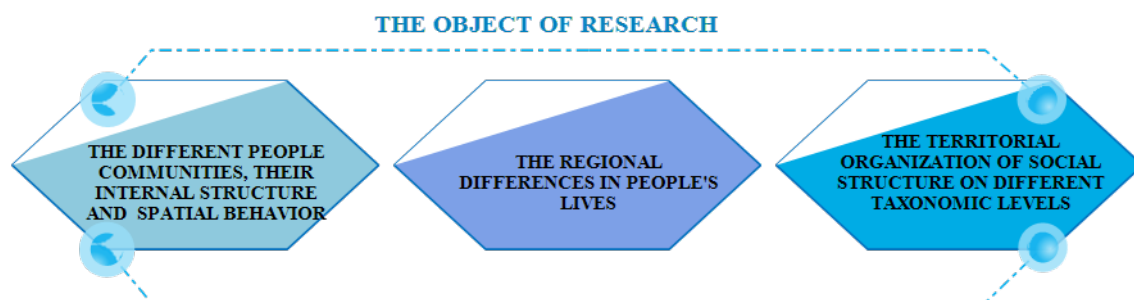


Figure 1. The object of Research of Social Geography

By definition the place of social geography in the system of social geographical sciences is within the scope of public sphere, including economy, as well as social, spiritual and cultural activity (Figure 2).

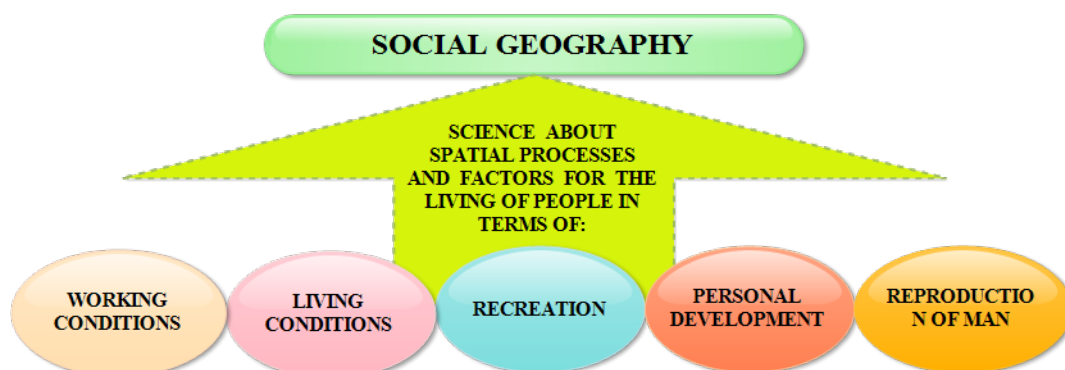


Figure 2. Nature of Social Geography.

Each one of them has responsible functions. For instance, the economic sphere aims to provide the necessary living conditions through the production and providing of resources for living.

Social sphere is directed to qualitative demographic elements of society, the spiritual – to the formation of moral values, revealed in the process of making of geographic decisions defending the personal, as well as the „regional” collective priority, and the political – to the creation, cultivation and reproduction of the political ideas.

The many attempts for separation of social geography from the geography of population and social culture have always led to the initial question concerning its objective scientific content.

T. Ratviyr suggests an approach, consisting in the consideration of the issue how to reach the real collaboration between geography and sociology through the prism of the „synthesis-integration” relation. He claims that „in social geography are included not the

already established socio-geographic scientific directions, but only the socio-geographic segments of the geography of population, cultural geography, geography of education, as well as the socio-geographic body of economic geography” (Ратвийр, 1984). [26]

The sociologization of geography is a multidimensional process, corresponding to the global trends of social development and to the dialectical logic of development of the science based on the differentiation and integration of the spheres of human knowledge.

„The inspirer” of social geography in Russia – V. Maksakovsky, appeals for such a science, that should be facing man, his goodwill to the natural habitat, to his social comfort (Максаковский, 2007). [29]

The logic of territorial organization of society leads to the outlining of the main stages in its development (Table 1).

Table 1. Stages of development of social geography and the idea of territorial organization of labor.

№	NAME (CONTENT) OF SCIENCE	MAIN TYPES OF TERRITORIAL SYSTEMS	LEADING SUBSYSTEM	IDEA ABOUT THE PLACE OF MAN
1.	ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY	Territorial- productional systems	Production	Man as means of development of production, basic productive force
2.	SOCIO- ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY	Territorial socio- economic systems	Production system of distribution	The human factor as a base for economic development
3.	SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY	Territorial social systems	Socio-demographic (territorial community of people)	Human development is a social aim of social development
4.	HUMAN GEOGRAPHY	Geo-education in the age of the Noosphere	Socio-ecosystem	Sustainable environmental and social development, consensus in the system „nature-man-economy”

Note. Source of information: L. P. Bogdanova (Богданова, 2006) [30]

In socio-geographic studies territorial communities have a focusing social character. They are a resource group of social geography and the geography of population, provoking researches on urban inequality, social positioning, the way of perceiving social processes and etc (Fig. 3).

The territorial community is usually considered as one of the social groups, designated on the base of territorial feature, having the freedom of social communication.

The outlining of borders and the revelation of the nature of territorial communities is a socio-geographic problem. Undeniable contribution for its solution, according to us, have A. I. Alekseev and others (Алексеев, Ковалев, Ткаченко, 1983) [31], N. S. Mironenko (Мироненко, 1990) [32], A. I. Trofimov and others (Трофимов, Чистобаев, Шарыгин, 1993; 1993a) [33, 34]. At the same time they act as self-dependent socio-territorial systems or as a core of the functioning territorial systems (А. Tkachenko) (Ткаченко, 2001; 2002; 2002a) [35, 36, 37].

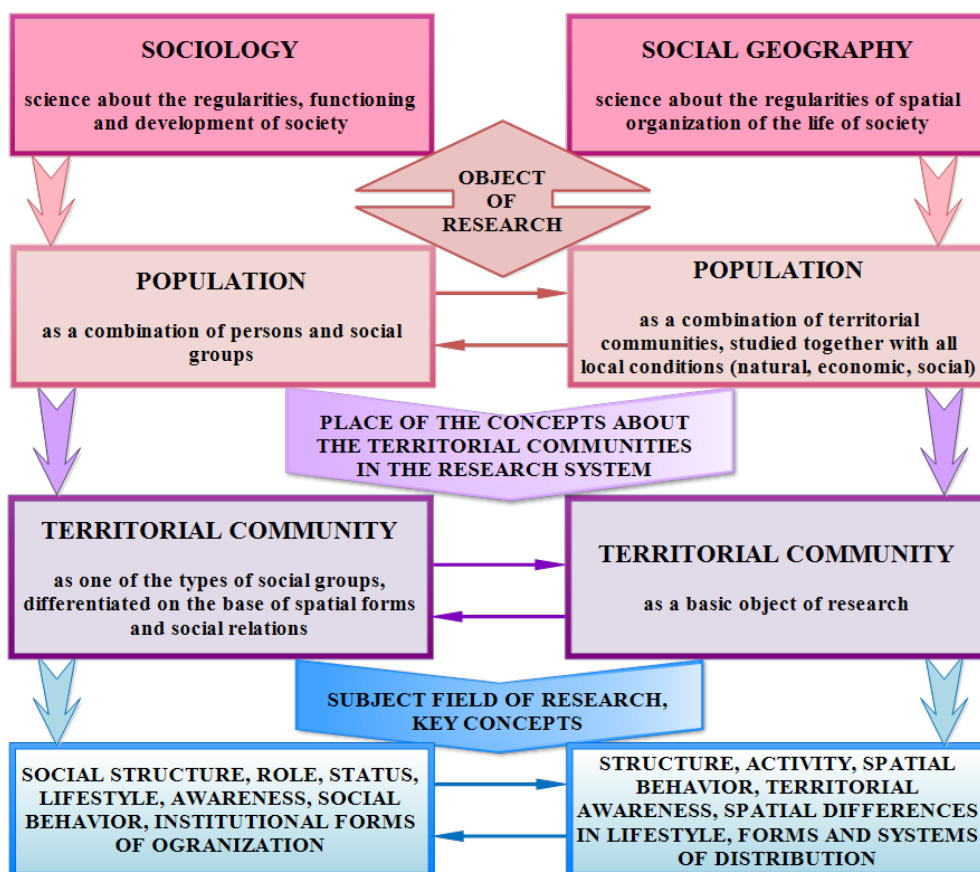


Figure 3. Territorial communities in the system of concepts and the sphere of research in sociology and social geography.

In social geography the taxonomy of the different territorial communities is analyzed through the prism and within the framework of social regions, which (although there are many contradictions in their ordering) have the following levels:

1. Territorial communities on national level. We consider them the largest, historically developed territorial community, which survived due to social relations, as well as to the nostalgic feeling for preserving of the national.
2. Territorial communities in the large socio-economic areas. Their heterogenic origin „boldly” contrasts with their homogeneous social behavior. It has been prompted by the sense for political, cultural and ... personal survival and self-preservation.
3. Territorial communities on district, municipal and lower taxonomic level. Their differentiation is the most objective transitory image of the ethno-demographic diversity. But also the most inconstant and unstable. Because of the social psycho-geographical process, documenting the almost invisible social relationships.
4. The community, encoded in the cognition of each one of us, looking at social processes with some expectations. We consider it primary, initial, irreplaceable. This is the family, generic community. From which every one departs along the path of his ambitions. But to which he comes back in times, deeply hidden in his individual peace of mind. This community fixes that psycho-geographical core of cognition and behavior, which ordinary man cannot go around, and which is possessed by him. It has a secondary root – either the memory of its creation and localization, or the romantic taste of what has been shared by the predecessors, concerning the possibility for the memories to “be present” at the moment of their sharing.

The interaction between geography and sociology led to the appearance of the theory of T. Parsons (Парсонс, 1996) [38], which outlined four structural categories – value, norm, community organization, manifestation (a public role, that physiognomizes territorial communities).

The studying of their psychology and the territorial aspects of geography lead not only to its sociologization, which is necessary for every „open” society, but also to the further shaping of its multidimensional scientific spectrum.

* * *

The territorial settling of population is a process, provoked both by the individual’s being and by his way of thinking. He is participant in that type of activity, where his geographic being is part of the social process. Under the influence of the socio-reproductional approach, in unison with the understanding of R. Кабо, geography sets itself the task to “study the social person and his image (and behavior), his versatile characteristics and actions” (Кабо, 1947). [39]

With the researches by R. Кабо and the following publications by N. Baransky (Баранский, 1980; 1980a; 2001) [40, 41, 42], S. Kovalevsky (Ковалевски, 1979) [43] and V. Pokshishevsky (Покшишевски, 1978) [44], conditions were created for the „birth” of socio-economic geography, for its curious insight into the problems of the „non-productive” sphere.

The first scientific meeting, discussing these problems in Russa (1962) set the official scientific „directive” – the studying in „territorial aspect of the population and the production forces as producer of material and spiritual goods, as well as their replicator.” On the border between the 1960s and 1970s „started” such geographic directions of socio-economic geography as geography of services, geography of recreation, cultural geography, geography of religions and others. Subsequently these aspects found their place in regional studies, aimed at the formation of the socio-economic image of certain territories (S. Lavrov, A. Anohin, N. Agafonov) (Лавров, Анохин, Агафонов, 1984). [45]

From this point of view, we consider social policy as „helper” of social geography, and the last one – as a registrator of the materialized social successes.

During the stage of humanitarian geography in the development of social geography and the idea of the territorial organization of labor, the main type of territorial system is geoeducation in the era of the noosphere. The leading subsystem is localized in a socio-ecosystem in which the idea of human place is in the context of sustainable development of nature and society, for evolutionary balance, consensus and interaction in the system „nature - man – economy”.

In the school geographical education in the field of competence „Geography of society and economy” of the state educational standard (DOS) several content areas are studied, which are based on the expected results for junior high school students: population, demographic indicators, forms of settlement, problems of the population and settlements, political map and international organizations, nature of the economy and grouping the economic activities. [46] The expected results are linked to only 4 of the 9 groups of key competences, which are aimed at acquiring mathematical competences, learning skills, social and civic competences, as well as skills to support sustainable development and a healthy lifestyle and sports.

DOS for the first high school stage is deployed at the level of expected results for each of the content lines - population, settlements, political map, world economy. Additional structural and content accents are the problems of demographic and social development,

nature and forms of urbanization, as well as its consequences, forms of political organization of society. The most numerous are the spirally upgraded and expanded requirements at the level of expected results related to the economy: factors for economic development and territorial location, features and mechanisms of the market economy and indicators of economic development, structure and territorial organization of the economy. [46]

In DOS the connections of the expected results with the groups of key competencies have been increased - a total of 6 groups. The same 4 interactions and integrative connections have been preserved since the junior high school stage, as they have been further developed with the improvement of the competencies in the field of the Bulgarian language, initiative and entrepreneurship.

The content and the situational analysis of expected results in the field of competence for geography of society and economy and their interrelation and interaction with the groups of key competencies reveal several problematic lines for social geography: discrepancy in terminology for the two educational stages ; the simultaneous presence in the DOS of economy; knowledge of the political map of the world and its changes to explain the changes and reveal the reasons in the modern political map; from grouping economic activities to the characteristics and mechanisms of the market economy by analyzing indicators of economic development.

Another problematic point in the state requirements is the unfinished and strategically ill-considered vision of the connections of the expected results with the 9 groups of key competencies and the absence of significant and causal groups to public geography, which in conditions of digital transformations in education and science and in people's lives they are a necessity.

The specific difference in the school's geographical education compared to the scientific foundations of the social geography in the conceptual model of the system „nature - society – economy” against that of the humanitarian geography „nature - man – economy”.

A specific problematic issue is the lack of explicit and clearly defined relationships of the expected results with the concept of sustainable development and the 17 goals as an integrative symbiosis between natural and social geography.

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