

**THE PRINCIPLES OF
ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY**

FROM THE SAME PUBLISHERS

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

By JOHN MCFARLANE, M.A., M.Com.,
*Lecturer in Geography in the University
of Manchester.*

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THE PRINCIPLES OF
ECONOMIC
GEOGRAPHY

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PREFACE

THIS volume attempts to give little more than an outline of the principles of economic geography in a readable form. The scope of the subject is liberally interpreted in the belief that the deeper and wider the foundations the surer the edifice that can be built. For this reason several matters are touched on which are not often dealt with in works on economic geography. Statistical matter, as far as possible, has been avoided as out of keeping with the aim of the book. Moreover, statistics for recent years, even when available, do not illustrate the normal features of production and trade, owing to the dislocation caused by the war.

It is hoped that the following chapters, by indicating that there is more in the subject than the description of places and their products, will help to justify the inclusion of economic geography in the higher branches of modern study. Properly understood and appreciated, economic geography is a help in the solution of many of the political problems of the time.

The book should be read with the help of a good modern atlas, without which no volume on geography is complete.

It is impossible to acknowledge all the sources to which I am indebted, but the list of books at the end, although not exhaustive, includes the principal works consulted. It may be added that an intelligent use of the daily and periodical press is the best way to keep abreast of developments in economic geography.

R. N. RUDMOSE BROWN.

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INTRODUCTION

SCOPE OF ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

ECONOMIC geography is that aspect of the subject which deals with the influence of the environment, inorganic and organic, on the economic activities of man. As Mr. G. G. Chisholm has pointed out, it embraces all geographical conditions affecting the production, transport and exchange of commodities. These conditions must be studied in the past as well as the present in order that their changing nature may be appreciated and future possibilities foreseen. Unless the subject is to be narrowly limited it includes that aspect of geography which deals with the settlement of lands, migrations of people, and the economic problems involved in the meeting of diverse races.

It is obvious that in a subject like geography which considers the distribution of many different kinds of phenomena, facts must be borrowed from other studies. The sciences of geology, meteorology and biology are of chief importance, but metallurgy, economics, anthropology and history give their contributions, and even physiology helps. It remains for the geographer to treat these facts geographically. In this volume many facts are recorded which are not in themselves geographical, but their geographical bearing is shown. An adequate knowledge of the tributary sciences is helpful but not essential to the geographer : it is their conclusions which he requires.

Economic geography, like other branches of the subject, must be treated scientifically : cause and effect must be studied. Thus the facts fit together and the structure of the science is built. It promotes clear thinking to distinguish between the science and its application. Facts are recorded, explanations traced and tendencies indicated. The application of the principles deduced may or may not follow. The facts of the conditions of the growth of cotton, involving considerations of soil, climate, labour, transport, markets, and perhaps tariffs can be discovered

**Scientific
Treatment
Necessary**

by an examination of existing cotton lands. This knowledge may then be applied to the extension of cotton growing areas. The facts of colonization can be gathered from a survey of past and present colonies. It remains to apply this knowledge to the settlement of new lands. The aim of the study is to discover the facts and laws of economic geography and not primarily to promote commerce or to make money. These facts are like all other knowledge, an asset in practical affairs, but their value in this respect depends on the intelligence with which they are applied.

MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

Wherever man lives he has to adapt himself to his surroundings in order to get the two fundamental necessities of food and shelter. The need for clothing, which is a form of shelter, is decided by the climate. Physically an unequal match for the larger and quicker animals at whose mercy he was, primitive man had to fight these with brains or the human race would have been lost. The adaptations to his conditions of life which man exhibits are not structural but intellectual and occupational. These in their turn react on his mental activities and influence his thought. Each primitive occupation develops its own characteristics in man. There is a human nature for each and not one for all in common. The hunter's nature is to destroy, and death becomes his ideal. The shepherd conserves and so idealizes life: age and experience rather than youth and physical prowess are respected. Hence his veneration for tradition, birth and lineage. The agricultural nature is one of construction and development. It idealizes peace because war is incompatible with the fixity of agricultural life and is destructive of resources. In a similar manner the urban nature with its detachment from the soil tends to instability, new departures and a lack of attachment with the past. It is no mere coincidence that agricultural England in the main follows one line of political thought, and industrial England another, or that the Scottish highlander and lowlander from time immemorial have taken divergent points of view and seen little good in one another. It is not an accident that Australia and British Columbia take similar attitudes towards Asiatic immigration, and it was no chance that made the northern and southern states of America take opposite

views on the question of slavery. These are but a few examples of political problems which have their roots deep in the environment and can be understood only by a study of geographical relationships.

Human society is not an abstraction that can be studied apart from the *milieu* in which it lives and works. Any attempt to do so by ignoring the agencies which mould it tends to invalid conclusions. Man, his work and the place where he lives, are parts of a single study of much complexity. The human community is a growth of the region it occupies.

In the subtler forms of its influence the impress and influence of the environment may be overlooked. Man speaks of his conquest of Nature and imagines himself entirely a free agent. His conquest of nature means that he has found in some measure how to utilize the forces of nature to his advantage and how to escape their detrimental influences. He gains a certain mastery over energy and the power to direct it to his well-being. Man is discovering nature's laws, but he cannot make himself an exception to their operation. The tropics are still the tropics for all he can do. It is still impossible to cultivate bananas in Ireland or vines in Lapland. Man discovers the conditions of life required by banana and vine, but his cultivation of them is still confined to those regions which have the necessary climatic conditions.

Influence of Environment

Railway routes in a mountainous district follow more or less the lines of former traffic by valley and pass although they tunnel under the summits. Africa still stands athwart the ocean route from Europe to the East and the narrow isthmus of Suez still focuses traffic: the Suez Canal is merely an improvement on the old overland route. In some ways mankind is more dependent on his environment than of old. Coal enters much more into the economy of civilized man year by year. Dependence on imported food gives the inhabitants of Britain less freedom of movement, than use of local supplies. This was impressed on all during the period of severest rationing in war.

At most it may be said that man, among the more favoured classes of civilized communities, has escaped the servitude of Nature. Among more primitive people, whether in the African forest or in the fields and cities of western Europe, man is still in the grip of his environment and responds closely to its influence,

It must be borne in mind that material environment does not embrace all the moulding influences. Less obvious and more subtle are the traditions and social heritage of a people. Escape from one material environment to another is possible but emancipation from the traditions of childhood and the social code of schooldays is singularly difficult. These intangible influences, for better or for worse, are at the root of education in its widest sense. In the formative years of childhood and adolescence the imprint of the mental atmosphere makes a deep and lasting mark. The problems of human migration are complicated by the problems of the migration of tradition, social codes and culture as a whole.

Influence of Traditions

No doubt to a great extent the mental equipment of a people, as expressed in their beliefs, traditions, and prejudices, is the outcome of the material environment of the past. It is the social heritage of the nation. That is why the social code is so full of anachronisms. Overloaded with the influences of the past it has never caught up on the existing conditions of life. It binds the community to a bygone era, and the results of the physical and mental environment of to-day will be absorbed into the social heritage only when the age is past. If man has to struggle in the grip of physical nature he can at least discover the road of least resistance and pursue it to his advantage. His social environment is a more domineering master. A mountain range can be crossed by a path, a narrow strait can be tunnelled, and an arid land can perhaps be irrigated, but a breach of the social code, an offence against the traditions of a people or an attack on the fabric of society brings swift retribution in its train. It is beyond the province of the geographer to analyse and estimate the force of the social environment but its existence and importance are factors which he must bear in mind.

There is surely another side to all this: "That man, like any other vigorous organism, is a forceful agent, full of effort and endeavour, often with a bow slightly bent." That is true, but it applies rather to the individual than to society as a whole. A community of human beings lacks the initiative of the few mentally active individuals it includes. Mankind in bulk expresses the type and not the exception. The mean level in mental freedom and intellectual force of any community lags far behind the few,

The geographer has to deal with groups and not individuals: to him it is the type or mean level of the community which counts. A forceful personality is a rebel against his social environment which often succeeds in crushing him: he becomes an organizer and leader only in measure as he escapes from one social environment to another in which his exceptional mental activity finds favourable surroundings.

At the same time the reaction of man on his environment must not be overlooked. In the reclamation of waste land, the irrigation of deserts or the sane planning of towns are examples of the application of geographical control to human well-being and advantage. Geography can find an ampler justification than academic research when it becomes formative and constructive. The utilitarian side of economic geography has been too much emphasized solely as an aspect of commercialism. The function of geography is to explain and interpret. Later comes the application of its principles to the betterment of mankind, not merely to the furtherance of money-making. If geography teaches anything it is the insanity of the reckless exploitation of the world's resources, organic and inorganic.

It is a prevalent habit to attribute to races, or supposed races, traits and characteristics which in all probability are not inherent but are merely expressions of the imprint of the environment, and in that respect are not peculiar to one race rather than another. The geographer must go deeper and seek the explanation of so-called racial characteristics.

Human races are biologically merely varieties of one species. There is a tendency to exaggerate the differences between them. It is not certain to what extent racial characteristics are germinal variations in the species or modifications which occur in response to environment.¹ In any case there is little evidence that racial differences are of much importance as adaptations to environment nowadays, except as regards acclimatization. Under these circumstances race has comparatively little geographical significance. On

¹ For a further consideration of these problems reference should be made to some work on biology, *e.g.*, *Heredity*, by Prof. J. Arthur Thomson, London, 1919, or *Evolution*, by Prof. P. Geddes and J. A. Thomson, in the Home University Library.

the other hand there is the abundant proof of environment having a moulding influence on man quite irrespective of race. Sections of the same race differ widely in mental characteristics under different conditions of life. Moreover, in a continent like Europe intermingling of races has gone on to such an extent that the task of disentangling them is most perplexing and controversial. It is doubtful if any sure ground can be reached in an attempt to correlate the racial elements of Europe with the mental attributes of its various peoples.

At the same time it is idle to deny that certain races are mentally higher than others, and the differences appear to be inherent. No change of environment suggests that the negro can be raised to the level of the white man or that the Australian aborigine can develop intellectual powers. Variations in these human stocks, to cite only two, do not appear to be in the direction of mental prowess.

There is much need to revise the long accepted assertion that nationality is an expression of race. In the United States the diverse racial elements of Europe in one or at most two generations lose their old and assume a new nationality. Canada, Australia, and other self-governing dominions each evolve a nationality distinct from those of their component races. The various states of Central America have strong national feelings despite the races common to all. Slight racial differences cannot explain the diversity in nationality of Scotland and Ireland. And the wide difference in outlook and nationality between north Germany, Holland, and eastern England is far greater than can be explained by the small racial distinctions between those countries. A nation is born of the land in which it lives.

Nationality and Race

Language less than race is a criterion of nationality. There is no attribute a people gain or lose quicker than language. Linguistic frontiers are unstable.

Recent events have brought into prominence the whole question of nationality. Various writers have tried to find its basis. Not only race and language but history, tradition, and religion have been suggested, and no doubt all are contributory factors. Dr. M. Newbigin has probably got nearest to the truth in admitting all these factors but laying stress on a community of economic interests. This is perhaps at the root of nationality, and if so it suggests that

nationality is not an immutable quality but may change from age to age. Economic interests may even overrule tradition, which is the strongest of all other fibres in the fabric of nationality.

The geographer sees in the diversity of communities in the modern world a reflection of the diversity of physical and other conditions which it is his task to recognize and study. He realizes that any attempt to impress uniformity on diverse communities is doomed to failure because it ignores the fact that physical environment cannot be changed. Geography emphasizes the individuality of every community. This individuality has a need for expansion, which is admitted when the principle of self-determination is recognized. The difficulty in the application of this principle is the common human difficulty in knowing where to draw the line. Nationality is but one degree in regional consciousness. Despised parochialism, county patriotism, national sentiment, and pride in imperial heritage are various steps. While the smaller unities are very real the larger ones become somewhat abstract, and the larger the unities the looser the bonds. Powerful motives, whether in war or in commerce, may bind smaller into larger unities temporarily and strengthen loose bonds for a time, but under changed conditions the ties dissolve. An empire may hold together when the daughter nations are linked solely by ties of sentiment to the motherland, but is more likely to split asunder if the shackles of a central bureaucracy try to bind it. The nations of an empire grow more diverse in each generation and resist attempts to order the lines on which their growth is to proceed.

A common interest bound together most of the nations of the world in the European war, but the League of Nations which seemed so real in those days, lacks vitality in time of peace. Political and commercial interests divide and subdivide communities when no common purpose unites them. The immediate interests of nation, province, region, and city then find expression. Geography teaches that regional consciousness in all its degrees is a function of mankind, and that internationalization, in so far as it attempts to stifle regional expression, is a fallacy.

APPENDIX

REFERENCES TO BOOKS

THIS list, in addition to some of the chief works consulted, contains mainly volumes that will prove useful for reference. It is, of course, far from exhaustive, and in the main cites only volumes in English.

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