

Population Geography: Concepts and Approaches

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I. INTRODUCTION

Population Geography as an independent sub-field of human geography is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Geography of the population is one of the most well established branches of general Geography. As it had been suggested, growing availability of population statistics has played an important role in the emergence of population geography. The purpose of this article review is to identify the challenges that facing population geography.^[1]

The most significant authors who worked on defining population geography were French geographers P. George (1951, 1959), Beaujen-Garnier (1965, 1966); North-American geographers: G. Trewarta (1953, 1969), W. Bunge (1962), J. Clance (1965, 1971), W. Zelinski (1966); in Great Britain: J.I. Clarke (1965); in USSR: (1950), (1966), (1973); in Poland V. Ormotski (1931), L. Kosinski (1967) A. Jagelski (1980). Those authors and their works had the significant influence on the development of population science in the world Development of population geography from Antropogeography to spatial-analytical approach.^[2,3]

1. Concept of Population Geography

According to Ogden and Philip, population geography is concerned with the understanding of the regional differences in the earth's covering of people. Moreover, population Geography had been defined as the branch of Geography that studies the distribution of the human population over the terrestrial surface.^[4]

Geography is in charge of the distribution of facts and phenomena over the surface. In a more concrete sense, Geography consists of the "study of the terrestrial surface and of the phenomena that mutually affect it".^[5]

Like most disciplines, Population Geography has had a pre-scientific stage as long as human history. Human beings have always felt curiosity to know who their neighbors were, how they were organized and what they could expect or to fear from them.^[6]

The discovery of America and the great explorations of the eighteen and nineteen centuries allowed us to know of the existence of towns and cultures ignored. As time passed the observation and study of the diversity of populations that occupy the earth and their peculiar way of being organized to live and to exploit the territory has given rise to a multitude of scientific disciplines and, among them, to human geography.^[7] It was argued that it is crucial that population geographers bring to bear their influence in the planning of censuses and other standard population data collections to ensure that they adopt appropriate and flexible spatial systems. It was argued that in many countries, especially in Asia, the systems adopted do not allow data to be made available for spatial units which are socially, economically and environmentally meaningful.^[8]

On the other hand, ecology is usually defined as the study of live beings in their environment. In their condition of being alive, man is unwrapped in a certain natural atmosphere, for which man's natural ecology exists. But contrary to what happens to other species, the bonds that are given between humans and their means are not fixed.^[9]

The main concern of population geography revolves round the following three aspects of human population:^[10]

1. Size and distribution, including the rural-urban distribution of population.
2. Population dynamics – past and present trends in growth and its spatial manifestation; components of population change, fertility, mortality and migration.
3. Population composition and structure. It includes a set of demographic characteristics (such as age, sex structure, marital status and average age at marriage etc.), social characteristics (such as caste, racial/ethnic, religious and linguistic composition of population; literacy and levels of educational attainment etc.), and economic characteristics (such as workforce participation rate and workforce structure etc.).

Top 10 Reasons to Study Geography

Some researchers pointed out 10 reasons for studying geography, that include:^[11,12]

1. To understand basic physical systems that affect everyday life (e.g. earth-sun relationships, water cycles, wind currents).
 2. To learn the location of places and the physical and cultural characteristics of those places in order to function more effectively in our increasingly interdependent world.
 3. To understand the geography of past times and how geography has played important roles in the evolution of people, their ideas, places and environments.
 4. To develop a mental map of your community, province or territory, country and the world so that you can understand the “where” of places and events.
 5. To explain how the processes of human and physical systems have arranged and sometimes changed the surface of the Earth.
 6. To understand the spatial organization of society and see order in what often appears to be random scattering of people and places.
 7. To recognize spatial distributions at all scales — local and worldwide — in order to understand the complex connectivity of people and places.
 8. To be able to make sensible judgements about matters involving relationships between the physical environment and society.
 9. To appreciate Earth as the homeland of humankind and provide insight for wise management decisions about how the planet’s resources should be used.
 10. To understand global interdependence and to become a better global citizen.
- One of the most challenges that facing population geography is migration.

What is migration?

Migration is the movement of people from one geographical location to another, involving permanent or temporary settlement.^[13]

One noticeable aspect in the society today is the rate at which people migrate from rural to the centers. While urban centers are increasing in population, rural areas are decreasing in population. For these reasons, there is a widespread concern that the rates of rural-urban migration should be slowed. But more importantly to policy makers is that urban unemployment and high rates of urbanization pose strong social and political challenges for reducing the flow of migrants to urban areas.^[14] This work highlights the challenges that face rural-urban migration.

It analyzes migration theories that provide theoretical reasoning behind rural-urban migration. This paper draws from the empirical literature review of studies on rural-urban migration through collection of secondary data and reviewing information that has been gathered from various studies and reports in research and academic institutions, as well as from internet sources in and outside Sudan.

Why do people move?

based on the data from various sources in the literature, some authors concluded these reasons as follow:^[15,16,17] People move for improvements; improvements in living and safety, economy and resources, and political and religious reasons. For Americans most “moves” are due to job relocation, family connections, and retirement. However, for immigrants coming into America or other benefiting nations the reasons are primarily for economics, safety, or political justice.

The greatest reason to move in today’s world is safety. Whether it is because of hurricanes or genocide, safe living is man’s main reason for moving. Natural disasters such hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, or landslides are a big reason for humans to relocate. Safety can also be threatened by other people rather than just nature. War, genocides, and other life threatening occurrences can also cause migration. People flee from their home regions to other safe places in fear of their own and their family’s lives.

Another reason for why people move is economics and resources. When people are struggling to come up with money to support their families or to put food on the table, they look for new opportunities to do so. In most cases this results in temporary or permanent relocation. For a person to find new ways to make money they move to places where the economy is stronger resulting in a larger income for themselves and their family.

The immigrant will usually stay in the new country for a couple of years, but it is very common to move their family and remain in the new country. The other reason for people to move in this category is resources. When people have no food, water, or any other essential good they move to other places where they can find these resources. People living in regions stricken with famine or drought tend to move away to places where they can access food and water easily.

The last main reason for moving is political and religious problems. Living in regions where governmental ways affect a person’s living in a negative way cause people to migrate. Countries with inhumane or unjust political ways to their people or sects of people in their nation have many emigrants flee to nations of more suiting ways.

Religion is the other reason for moving. Religious persecution and religious acceptance are major points in migration. People will flee places where they are persecuted and tormented for their beliefs and move to regions accepting of their beliefs.

People move for many reasons, however, most if not all reasons have to do with these three categories: safety and living, economics and resources and politics and religion.

II. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

The linkages between geography and migration promise to be a rich area for population geography research which has as yet been little investigated. Therefore, still some questions remain to be investigated, including:

- Do migrants change their permanence of their move as a response to their past experiences at the places?
- Do migrants select immigration entry categories which are accessible to them regardless of whether it fits their initial movement or not?
- Is temporary migration seen as a substitute for permanent migration?
- To what extent are governments facilitate the transition between permanent and temporary movement?
- Is there a gender dimension to understanding the transition?
- To what extent is the transition linked to globalization
- What is the role of migration networks in the transition?

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IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

Dr. Wafa Khalil Elfaki'' Population Geography: Concepts and Approaches'' IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 23 no. 10, 2018, pp. 25-27