

Introduction

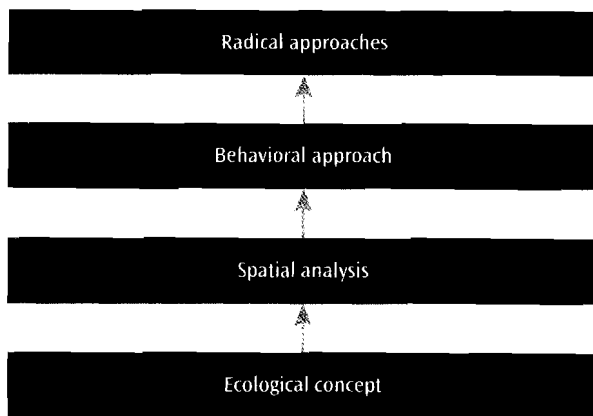
*Cities are the engines
of economic development
and industrialization.*

As with contemporary human geography, the study of cities is characterized by a diversity of approaches. This diversity is well noted by Knox and McCarthy (2005, p. 3), who observed that “urban geography has evolved to encompass several approaches to its subject matter.” This evolutionary trend reflects a more general intellectual evolution in geography and the social sciences, and can be attributed in part to the quests for intellectual rigour and social relevance. This chapter discusses the main perspectives in human geography and provides an analytical framework for identifying and discussing the trends in Professor Mabogunje’s works on urbanization and development.

Although urban geography was his launching pad, Professor Mabogunje broadened his study of cities to include the environment, regional development, population, and other issues linked to urbanization. This move to a more comprehensive perspective was a natural progression for this doyen of urban geography and planning. Cities are the engines of economic development (Knox and McCarthy 2005) and industrialization, both of which impact the environment. Cities can also generate regional development and trigger rural-urban migration, an important population dynamic. The interconnectedness of these issues is compelling.

There is a vast literature on the multiplicity of approaches, traditions, or paradigms in human geography (see, for example, Cloke et al 1991 and Johnston and Sidaway 2004). Although different authors use different terminology, there is some agreement on what the paradigms entail. Three decades ago, Blunden et al. (1978) identified four paradigms of human geography: ecological, spatial, behavioural, and radical or structural (See Figure 1.1). Since then other approaches have been added and urban studies reflect these different paradigms in varying degrees.

Figure 1.1 Concepts in Urban Geography



Ecological approach. The ecological paradigm is probably the oldest tradition in geography and has its roots in the descriptive and regional approaches in the discipline. The ecological paradigm is based on the idea that natural and human phenomena in an area are closely interrelated and interact with one another.

The nature of the interaction between human and natural (or physical) phenomena was a contentious one and the concept of environmental determinism was put forth as one interpretation of this interaction. Environmental determinism suggests that nature is the dominant factor in the production of landscapes of human activity. This concept hinges on a sim-

plistic interpretation of the geographical patterns of human activities and has been discredited and subsequently modified. However, the idea of close interrelationships and interactions between phenomena in an area remains strong in contemporary geography. In urban geography, the ecological tradition is associated with the location of cities in relation to their immediate physical environment. As Kaplan, *et al* (2004, p. 6) observe, “the human-environmental tradition in urban geography brought about an interest in the sites of cities, that is, locations of cities at deep harbours for oceangoing vessels, on rivers for navigation, at the base of mountain ranges for gateway positions, and at mining locales for mineral and resource extraction.”

The ecological tradition in urban geography went beyond an interest in the location of cities to encompass their morphology and the natural conditions that favored their growth. As Knox and McCarthy (2005, p. 4) point out, some studies in urban geography “. . . saw towns and cities as adaptations to natural physical circumstances. Attributes of settlements were interpreted as responses to local sites, regional resources, and the opportunities and constraints surrounding them.” The focus was on how topography and other physical attributes influence the layout of streets and neighbourhoods as well as the direction of their growth. The regional study of cities was another aspect of the ecological tradition. This category

of urban studies was essentially descriptive, not analytical, using individual cities as case studies. These studies described how cities evolved and grew, and highlighted the important physical and human-created features of cities.

Spatial analysis. The spatial analysis paradigm is essentially a post-World War II development and marked the advent of the scientific method in geography. The emphasis is on developing theories based on the formulation and testing of hypotheses. Quantitative methods are central to this approach, using statistical techniques and mathematics for building models (Johnston and Sidaway, 2004). Spatial patterns are not regarded as unique, but as one aspect of a more general relationship between spatial pattern and spatial process. In urban geography, the spatial analysis tradition became widely accepted in the mid-1950s. Its practitioners focused on urban spatial organization and spatial relationships—for example, the relationship between social classes, land value, and distance from the central business district. Other studies examined the relationship between urbanization and economic development. A city's internal structure also attracted the attention of urban geographers. Urban structure was regarded as the outcome of competition among different land uses for the most convenient and accessible locations. These studies constructed testable hypotheses and models.

Behavioural approach. The behavioural approach is described as modifying the intent of

spatial analysis and, to this extent, they are somewhat interrelated. In the words of Blunden, *et al* (1978, p. vii), both approaches are “. . . closely interrelated in practice, though not necessary so in principle. . . .” In particular, both approaches employ the positivist methodology. Spatial analysis assumes that decision makers pursue economic goals and are economically rational. The behavioural approach posits that even though economic goals are sought, many decision makers lack the information and ability to make optimal decisions. In addition, some decision makers are satisfiers, not optimizers, and are therefore not concerned with the best decisions or outcomes. Thus, one of the many criticisms of spatial analysis is that its assumptions regarding human behavior are unrealistic.

The behavioural approach incorporates cognitive and decision-making factors that are not always driven by economic concerns. As Johnston, *et al* (2003, p. 42) state, the defining feature of behavioural geography is “an emphasis upon the psychology underpinning individual spatial behavior that has emphasized the role of cognitive and decision-making factors that intervene in the relations between . . . environment and human action. . . .” This approach focuses on how individuals make decisions in urban environments and how attitudes and expectations about the city influence their decision making. The focus is on the individual, for as Kaplan *et al* (2004, p. 9) observe,

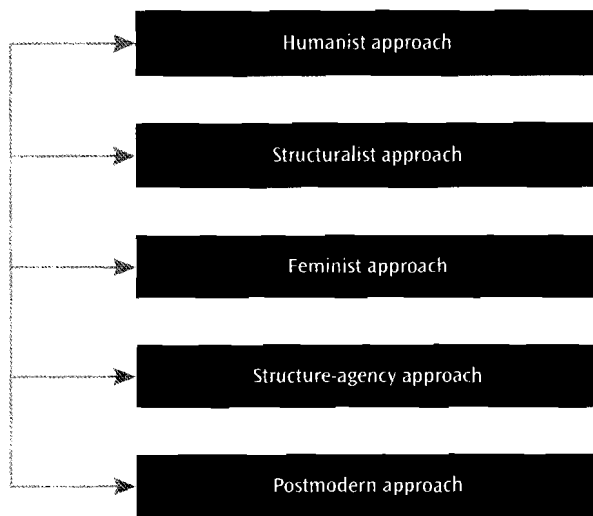
“... the aggregate-level analysis used by most spatial analysts was too broad to explain how actual individuals and groups of people selected, say, an apartment, an industrial site, or a public library location.”

Radical approach. The radical or structural approach is generally regarded as a Marxist interpretation of the geographic landscape. This approach began as a reaction to the crisis of capitalism evident in pockets of abject poverty in affluent Western countries (Johnston and Sidaway, 2004). The radical approach was inspired by the need to address important

social problems such as uneven development, poverty and inequality. Proponents believed that the imperatives of capitalism are the hidden mechanisms responsible for these problems. Urban decay and deprivation, urban poverty, and unequal access to urban services were studied in the context of capitalist production and labor relations.

Today, the radical perspective is referred to as the critical perspective and includes the humanist, structuralist, feminist, structure-agency, and postmodern approaches described below:

Figure 1.2 Components of the Radical Approach



- The *humanist approach* focuses on subjective experiences and how they influence actions and the meanings attached to those actions. In urban geography, studies under this rubric examine individuals' feelings about different neighbourhoods and how these feelings affect decisions about where to live. Another important concern is how the presence of facilities, factories, etc. in a neighbourhood is viewed by different groups.
- The *structuralist approach* focuses on constraints on decision-making and behavior, and the importance of broader economic and political forces. In the words of Knox and McCarthy (2005, p. 5), "this approach is cast ... at the scale of macroeconomic, macrosocial, and macropolitical changes." The emphasis is on the implication of these changes, particularly the opportunities and constraints

Contemporary human geography is characterized by a plurality of paradigms.

they present for different groups in the city. Some studies in this genre linked job losses, the decline of manufacturing, and neighborhood deterioration to government policies and global forces such as corporate restructuring which results in deindustrialization.

- The *feminist approach* focuses on the inequalities between men and women, and the manifestations of unequal gender relations in urban spatial structure. Feminist urban geographers have studied how inadequate child-care facilities in cities limit employment opportunities for women. For example, it has been suggested that “suburbs, in particular, reflect a male-paid work and female-home/children ethos. The suburban structure works against women by confining them to a place and role in which there are very few meaningful choices” (Yeates, 1997, quoted in Fellmann, *et al*, 2005, p. 422).
- The *structure-agency approach* combines the structuralist concern with macro level forces with the humanist concern with individual and human agencies. However, operationalizing this approach has been difficult and empirical investigation is limited. The study of gentrification in urban neighbourhoods offers one entry point. Gentrification can be conceptualized as a product of the interactions between human agents (e.g. landowners, mortgage lenders, planners, realtors, urban managers, etc.) and social structures

(e.g. zoning laws, building codes, etc.). In the gentrification of inner city neighborhoods, the human agents involved do not and cannot act independently. Their actions are either enabled or constrained by zoning laws and other regulations.

- The *postmodern approach* is the most recent of the critical perspectives, although it is not widely embraced by urban geographers. Postmodernism has been described as a concept with many meanings, including a “rejection of the idea that there is one superior way of understanding the world . . .” (Knox and Pinch, 2000, p. 420). Instead, the postmodern approach celebrates diversity and difference. One possible application of this approach is to study the ways in which metropolitan governments, especially in the West, use language and communication to project positive images of cities to attract investments and residents in an era of deindustrialization. This is perceived as indicative of the power of symbolism and images, which is one of the primary concerns of postmodernism.

In summary, contemporary human geography is characterized by a plurality of paradigms, beginning with the ecological (or regional) paradigm. The shift from the ecological approach to the current poststructuralist approaches occurred sequentially, but all the approaches remain active. The shifts in para-

digms were partly a result of the quest for social relevance whereby human geographers (including urban geographers) addressed pressing social and economic issues such as uneven development, sustainable development, and the environment. These shifts also represent important steps toward more theoretical, analytical, and nuanced geographical analysis.

Professor Mabogunje's works reflect these quests for more social relevance and strengthened intellectual rigour. He is regarded as being in the *avant garde* of the spatial analysis paradigm in Nigerian geography (Okafor, 1989). His 1980 work on the development process provides a good example of how he employed the structural approach, although he has been criticized for the apparent contradiction between his conclusions and the structural approach. Slater (1989, p. 272) observed that "Mabogunje (1980), in his attempt to outline certain spatial dimensions of the development process, includes a treatment of state and class structure, and also a brief incursion into the literature on imperialism."

This apparent contradiction is due to the fact that Professor Mabogunje worked essentially within the liberal tradition of the radical paradigm, with a welfare (rather than a radical or Marxist) orientation that reflected his concern for poor regions and cities, and for distributive equity. As early as the 1970s, he pointed out that "the system of cities . . . was not effi-

cient for the distribution of welfare, especially health care and educational services" in Nigeria (Okafor, 1989, p. 211). Most of the prescriptions that emerged from his works were designed to alleviate social and economic problems without tampering with the basic Marxist structures of society.

Professor Mabogunje's works cover a very wide range of issues, but development is a common thread that runs through most of them. The dominant themes in his works reveal the different angles from which he tackled the issue of development. They include:

- Urbanization and urban development
- Regional development
- Environment and development
- Governance and social issues

These categories are not mutually exclusive and there is some overlap. For example, his works on rural development are discussed under regional development, while some of his works on regional development focus on the role of cities and urbanization. The diversity of themes in Professor Mabogunje's works does not mean that the themes are treated equally. The first two themes best define his scholarship, but he also made significant contributions in the other areas. The following chapters discuss a selection of his works according to these four major themes.