

Chapter 1 – Geography Matters

Why Places Matter

- Human Geography: the study of the spatial organization of human activity and of people's relationships with their environments.
- Various Canadian magazines such as Canadian Geographic, Harrowsmith, and Equinox are popular because they draw on the endless wonder and fascination that Canadians have for Canada
- Places are dynamic, with ever-changing environments.
- Dynamism and complexity are what make places all over earth interesting to those who read geographical magazines.
- Places draw the environment for everyone's daily lives
 - People learn about who and what they are and how they should see the world
- Though places around the world also creates different values, attitudes and behaviours, it also makes it difficult for people raised in different settings to understand and appreciate one another.
- People from different cultures will often have very different attitudes to spirituality, human relationships, religion and other factors.

The Influence and Meaning of Places

- Places exert a strong influence on people's physical well-being, their opportunities, and their lifestyle choices.
- Small towns dominated by large petrochemical industries (example) means
 - higher probability of being exposed to various forms of pollution
 - limited range of job opportunities, limits career development
 - limited range of lifestyle options because of a lack of amenities
- In comparison, living in central neighbourhoods of a large metropolitan areas means:
 - having a wider range of job opportunities
 - greater choice of lifestyle options because of the variety of amenities accessible within a short distance
- Places ususally are treated as symbols; some places could carry deep emotional meaning to some people
 - It only leads to a formation of our beliefs and values – giving meaning to groups for different purposes.
 - Leads to how each place is created there for a certain purpose.
 - Example: Your neighbourhood would have a deeper meaning to you since you grew up there whereas if another person would see the neighbourhood as just another area.
- Places are the sites of innovation and change, resistance and conflict
 - Unique characteristics of specific places can provide the preconditions for new farming practices
 - New modes of economic organization
 - New cultural practices
 - New hairstyles

- It is from certain places that important events happen and it is from those places that significant changes spread.
- Influence of places is by no means limited to the occasional innovative change
 - Due to distinctive characteristics, places always modify and sometimes resist the imprint of even the broadest economic, cultural and political trends
 - Example: Reggae in Jamaica is a modified version of Rock and Roll from America, yet in Iran, rock and roll is forbidden since it interferes with traditions/not accepted by the people.
- Summary: Places are settings for social interaction which:
 - Structure the daily routines of people's economic and social life
 - Provide both opportunities and constraints in terms of people's long-term social well-being
 - Provide a context in which everyday, commonsense knowledge and experience are gathered
 - Provide settings for socialization
 - Provide an arena for contesting social norms

The Interdependence of Places

- Most places are interdependent – each place plays its own specialized roles in complex and changing geographies
- Example: Manhattan, NY is seen as a specialized global centre of corporate management, business and financial services.
 - It depends on thousands of other places to satisfy its needs
 - It depends on analysts, managers from the nation's top business schools, blue/pink collar workers from neighbouring boroughs and skilled professional immigrants from around the world.
 - It draws on fruits and vegetables from all over the world, bringing in the world's top agricultural products.
- The interdependence means that individual places are tied into wider processes of change that are reflected in broader geographical patterns
- Recognize another kind of interdependence: the interdependence that exists between different geographical scales of geographical analysis

The Interdependence of Geographical Scales

- Some of the most important aspects of the interdependence between geographical scales are provided by the relationships between the global and the local scales
- Global effects are widespread effects which have an adverse local effect
 - Example: Widespread clear-cutting in BC forests affect the wood and pulp & paper industries.
 - Economy of any local towns dependent on those industries will fall rapidly
 - Workers will be laid off due to the contraction of the industries.
 - Conversely, locally induced factors designed to stimulate the local industry could have global environmental effects if tree replanting was not practiced to the extent where the forest cover could not maintain existing levels of carbon dioxide absorption.

Interdependence as a Two-Way Process

- Places are not just distinctive outcomes of geographical processes; they are part of the processes themselves
- Example: city neighbourhoods
 - Essentially, a mix of houses, apartment complexes, community centres, parks, schools, etc
 - Created due to a mix of processes – from real estate development, city developers, urban planners, groups who continually come into the community, services provided by the city
 - These processes lead into the formation of the community's culture, population profile, social atmosphere, image and reputation.
 - Example: Jane & Finch, Toronto
 - Reputation for crime, unemployment levels, low education
 - Seen as a low class residential area; dangerous
 - Characteristics influence further real estate development, housing market dynamics and migration in and out of the neighbourhood
- Places are dynamic
 - Created by people responding to the opportunities and constraints presented by their environments
 - People gradually accommodate both to their physical environment and to the people around them
 - Thus, a *continuous two-way* process in which people create and modify places while being influenced by the settings in which they live and work
- Always incomplete and ongoing, occurs simultaneously at different scales
- Processes of geographic change are constantly modifying and reshaping places and places are constantly coping with change.

Why Geography Matters

- Geography matters since it enables us to understand our world and Canada's relationship with it.
- Because of this understanding, it is possible to appreciate the diversity and variety of society and the world's places. This allows us to create relationships to one another and to make positive advances in local, national and global development
- Example: Chinese practice of feng-shui paid attention to the location of sites in the landscape and of “energy lines” across its surface
- Example: Australia's Aborigines have celebrated their landscape in songs that record its sacredness and mythological meanings which can only be understood through a specific order of places visited.
- Example: The Polynesians traveled around the Pacific Ocean with the use of star navigation.
 - They also used the behaviour of waves, clouds and birds to help find nearby land.
 - They utilized “stick charts” which indicated the particular pattern of waves and swells caused by winds, and the shells marked the position of the islands.
 - Proof of their achievements can be seen in the discovery of Hawaii between AD300 and AD600.

- Example: The Inuit used an instinctive approach to navigation across the Arctic; often using environmental features such as the snowdrifts to check their position and orientation.
 - Also check every environmental sign and circumstance including wind direction, landmarks, vegetation, sea currents, clouds, and various astronomical bodies (such as the Aurora Borealis)
 - Snowdrifts are commonly used since they are only formed by winds blowing in the prevailing west-northwest winds.
- Directional information is instantly interpreted within the people's overall geographical knowledge of the local area to provide an exact location
- Geographical knowledge, in most early societies, is not the exclusive domain of either sex.
- Ancient Greeks – first to demonstrate detail the intellectual importance and utility of geographical knowledge
 - After the fall of the Roman Empire, the most significant advances in geographical knowledge came from Chinese and Middle Eastern scholars
 - Geographical knowledge shifted back to Europe with the rise of exploration and colonization in foreign lands.

Geography and Exploration

- **Cartography**: the body of practical and theoretical knowledge about making distinctive visual representations of Earth's surface in the form of maps
 - Essentially, the science behind the creation of maps; how maps are formed
- Dom Henrique established a school of navigation and cartography; began to explore the Atlantic Ocean and the coast of Africa
- The success of the Portuguese in geographical exploration fueled the age of exploration, all in pursuit of economic gain and commercial advantage
 - This led to John Cabot in his exploration in Canada as early as 1497
- Explorations enabled European navigators to develop an invaluable body of knowledge about ocean currents, wind patterns, coastlines, peoples and resources
- This geographical knowledge was key to political power in Europe
 - Societies had become more profit conscious and commercially oriented, exploration and geographical control was a major factor towards power
 - Every region began to be opened up to the influence of other regions as a result of the economic and political competition that was created by geographical discovery
- Overseas resources expanded trade; new crops were introduced from Europe into new lands, changing local economies and ways of life.
- Growth of a commercial world economy meant that objectivity was common in cartography and geographical writing
- Accuracy was a key factor; so was impartiality
- Success in commerce depended on clarity and reliability in describing the opportunities and dangers presented by one region or another.
- The Renaissance saw an explosion of systematic mapmaking and development of new map projections
 - **Map Projection**: a systematic rendering on a flat surface of the geographic coordinates of

the features found on Earth's surface

- Important advances in cartography took place in France, when Louis XIV appointed an official cartographer, Nicolas Sanson, to produce a set of accurate maps of French territory
- Geographical societies became common worldwide; by 1899 there were 62 geographical societies worldwide
- Geography was interpreted first simply as the discipline of exploration and an extension of European expansion
- Geographical thinking was usually linked to European commercial and political ambitions
 - Places and regions were portrayed from a distinctly European point of view and from the perspective of particular national, commercial and religious matters
- Geography mattered but mainly as an instrument of colonialism
- Began to develop a disciplinary tradition that was strongly influenced by **ethnocentrism, imperialism, and masculinism**
 - **Ethnocentrism** – the attitude that a person's own race and culture are superior to those of others
 - Common in colonialism; many explorers saw themselves as superior than the original owners of the land (the Natives)
 - **Imperialism** - the extension of the power of a nation through direct or indirect control of the economic and political life of other territories
 - Every country that had claimed parts of the New World demonstrated a high level of imperialism. The country would claim the new land as an extension of their own land and would apply the same regulations on the new land as they would on their homeland.
 - **Masculinism** – the assumption that the world is, and should be, shaped mainly by men for men.
- Trends became more and more explicit as European dominance increased, reaching a peak in the late nineteenth century
- **Environmental determinism** – a doctrine holding that human activities are controlled by the environment.
 - Connected to a belief that the physical attributes of geographical settings are the root not only of people's physical differences but also of difference from place to place in people's economic vitality, cultural activities and social structures
 - This means that the environment we live in plays a key role in who we are, physically and mentally
- Environmental determinists think in terms of the influence of the physical environment on people
 - We end up creating the world we live in today, because of our own influence.

Interdependence in a Globalizing World

- Theme: Interdependence of people and places
- **Globalization** – the increasing interconnectedness of different parts of the world through common processes of economic, environmental, political and cultural change
- Globalization ties together the world's economies; any reorganization changes the global

geography and the character and fortunes of individual places

- World Bank: “these are revolutionary times in the global economy”
 - People in developing countries and developed countries experience the same economic futures, even though the wages may be different or the standard of living may be vastly different.
 - Lives of all workers in different parts of the world are increasingly intertwined

Geography in a Globalizing World

- New telecommunication technologies, new corporate strategies, and new institutional frameworks have all combined to create a dynamic new framework for real-world geographies
- New information technologies have helped create a chaotic international financial system
 - This is due to rapid innovation and interdependence between markets all over the world
- Locational flexibility has meant that a high degree of functional integration now exists between economic activities that are increasingly dispersed
 - products, markets and organizations are spread around the world
- Governments are seeking new ways of dealing with the consequences of globalization
- The interconnection of the world economy means that humans are able to greatly influence it and alter the environment on a global scale
 - Pollution created through mass manufacturing processes
 - Environmental deterioration through rapid growth
- New mobility of money, labour, products, and ideas increase the significance of place since:
 - More retention of national culture and lifestyles, as identities continue to be assimilated into one global culture.
 - The internet will only push people into communities created for those certain types of people
 - Transnational corporations such as Nike, will continue to respond to variations in labour markets all around the world and respond in such a manner where it can affect the economic geography of that particular country. Companies may switch production of products from country to country based on currency exchange rates.
 - Greater integration of transnational governments and institutions = the more sensitive people have become to accepting cultural differences. Some will attempt to break off from certain cultures as part of the resurgence of nationalism and regionalism.