



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA

CONCEPTS, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

ASIF AND HEMANT

An Introduction to the Social Geography of India

This book discusses the significance of social geography, a multidimensional sub-discipline of geography encompassing social health, social security and social ethos. It presents the socio-spatial dynamics of the population in India through an understanding of the various issues related to migration, urbanisation, unemployment, poverty and public health. With a thorough analysis of various social indicators relating to health, education, income and employment, the volume presents a detailed picture of the social geography of India.

It discusses in detail,

- The origin, nature and scope of social geography, its relations with other social sciences and applications
- The nature and importance of social well-being along with welfare geography and the role of welfare state in ensuring social well-being
- The population of India and its attributes
- The status and spatial patterns of various social indicators relating to health, education and income and employment
- The composite indices which aggregate several social indicators such as the Human Development Index, Multidimensional Poverty Index and Sustainable Developmental Goals Index in the context of India.

This comprehensive book will be useful for students, researchers and teachers of social geography, human geography, population geography, demography and sociology. The book can also be used by students preparing for exams like civil services, UPSC, PSC and other competitive exams.

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Concepts, Problems and Prospects

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Abbreviations

AAG:	Association of American Geographers
ABR:	Adolescent Birth Rate
AICTE:	All India Council for Technical Education
AIDS:	Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
AIIMS:	All-India Institute of Medical Sciences
AISHE:	All-India Survey of Higher Education
ASFR:	Age-Specific Fertility Rates
AYUSH:	Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy
B.ED:	Bachelors of Education
BCE:	Before Common Era
BMI:	Body Mass Index
BMN:	Basic Minimum Needs
BPL:	Below Poverty Line
CBD:	Central Business District
CBSE:	Central Board of Secondary Education
CCE:	Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation
CD:	Community Development
CE:	Common Era
CHC:	Community Health Centre
CISCE:	Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations
CMNND:	Communicable, Maternal, Neonatal, and Nutritional Diseases
CWSN:	Children with Special Needs
DC:	District Collector
DHS:	Demographic and Health Surveys
DIET:	District Institute of Education and Training
DM:	District Magistrate
DPSP:	Directive Principles of State Policy
DTM:	Demographic Transition Model
EWS:	Economically Weaker Sections
FLN:	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
GDI:	Gender Development Index
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GER:	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GFCF:	Gross Fixed Capital Formation
GHE:	Gross Health Expenditure

GII:	Gender Inequality Index
GIS:	Geographic Information Systems
GNP:	Gross National Product
GPI:	Gender Parity Index
GSDP:	Gross State Domestic Product
GVA:	Gross Value Added
HCR:	Headcount Ratio
HDI:	Human Development Index
HDR:	Human Development Report
HECI:	Higher Education Commission of India
HEI:	Higher Education Institutions
IB:	International Baccalaureate
ICDS:	Integrated Child Development Services
ICESCR:	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICSE:	Indian Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
IEC:	Information Education and Communication
IGNOU:	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IIM:	Indian Institute of Management
IISER:	Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research
IIT:	Indian Institute of Technology
ILO:	International Labour Organisation
IMR:	Infant Mortality Rate
INC:	Indian Nursing Council
ISM:	Indian Systems of Medicine
JEE:	Joint Entrance Examination
KG:	Kindergarten
LFPR:	Labour Force Participation Rate
LGTBQ:	Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Queer
MBA:	Masters of Business Administration
MBBS:	Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery
MDG:	Millennium Development Goals
MIS:	Management Information System
MMR:	Maternal Mortality Rate
MNC:	Multi-National Company
MOOC:	Massive Online Open Courses
NAAC:	National Accreditation and Assessment Council
NCD:	Non-Communicable Diseases
NCERT:	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NCPCR:	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NCT:	National Capital Territory
NCTE:	National Council for Teacher Education
NEP:	National Education Policy
NFHS:	National Family Health Survey
NHM:	National Health Mission
NHP:	National Health Policy
NIF:	National Indicator Framework

NIOS:	National Institute of Open Schooling
NIT:	National Institutes of Technology
NITI:	National Institute for Transforming India
NMC:	National Medical Commission
NNI:	Net National Income
NNP:	Net National Product
NPC:	National Planning Committee
NPP:	National Population Policy
NPR:	National Population Register
NSO:	National Statistical Office
NTA:	National Testing Agency
OBC:	Other Backward Classes
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OOPE:	Out-of-Pocket Expenditure on Health
OPD:	Out Patient Department
OPHI:	Oxford Poverty Human Initiative
PCA:	Principal Components Analysis
PCV:	Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine
PDI:	Personal Disposable Income
PFCE:	Private Final Consumption Expenditure
PFRDA:	Pensions Fund Regulatory and Development Authority
PHC:	Primary Health Centre
PHD:	Doctor of Philosophy
PLFS:	Periodic Labour Force Survey
PNMW:	Physicians, Nurses and Midwives
PPP:	Purchasing Power Parity
PTR:	Pupil–Teacher Ratio
QOL:	Quality of Life
RTE:	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act
SARS:	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SC:	Scheduled Castes
SCERT:	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SDG:	Sustainable Development Goals
SDSN:	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SEBI:	Securities and Exchange Board of India
SECC:	Socio-Economic Caste Census
SEDG:	Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Group
SHC:	Sub Health Centre
SMC:	School Management Committee
SRS:	Sample Registration System
ST:	Scheduled Tribes
TFR:	Total Fertility Rate
TPDS:	Targeted Public Distribution System
U5MR:	Under-Five Mortality Rate
UDHR:	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UGC:	University Grants Commission
UIDAI:	Unique Identification Authority of India

UIP:	Universal Immunisation Programme
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC:	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNO:	United Nations Organisation
UNSD:	United Nations Statistics Division
USA:	United States of America
WASH:	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO:	World Health Organisation

Preface

Dear Reader,

I feel elated to introduce to you this book on the social geography of India. It is a culmination of nearly ten years of my hitherto experience of teaching and mentoring undergraduate, postgraduate and doctorate students at the university as a faculty of geography. This book has taken several months of meticulous research and detailed deliberations with faculties and scholars to finally attain its present form.

Why social geography? – it is a pertinent question that any learner of geography may be keen to ask. Aristotle, the legendary Greek philosopher said, “(Hu)Man is by nature a social animal”. Human beings live and express themselves in social groups as family, community, society, state, etc. As social scientists, geographers are concerned with the welfare and development of the society and world, at large. When we discuss development, especially in the context of India, most of us would agree that health, education, employment and overall human development are essential for it. We felt the need for introducing a textbook that could acquaint the students, scholars and academicians of geography with the rich tradition of social geography while addressing the pertinent social issues around us, relating to social welfare and development.

The great geographer Wilbur Zelinsky in 1970 stressed for geographers to become ‘diagnosticians, prophets and architects’ of the social reality. By writing this book, our objective is to study scientifically and systematically the social reality around us. In India, the academic tradition of social geography has developed hand in hand with other social science disciplines such as sociology, economics, demography, linguistics, etc. There have been numerous academicians dedicated to its cause, including professors, who taught us and have inspired us to create this book. This book presents a novel perspective on social geography. We have addressed social issues which are considered indispensable and quintessential for the welfare and development of society, which include education, health and employment. This textbook will serve as a ready reckoner for students and readers who intend to understand the reality of these social sectors. Books on social geography are expected to address the cultural aspects of society such as ethnicity, tribe, caste, community, language, dialect and religion. In this book, we have treated these components demographically rather than sociologically, as we believe the existing textbooks discuss these aspects in sufficient detail.

Chapter 1 discusses the origin, nature and scope and development of the discipline of social geography within geography, from the age of the renaissance to modern times along with methods and philosophical themes in the discipline. The development of social geography in India has also been outlined. In Chapter 2 on “Welfare and Social

Well-being”, certain important concepts such as needs, social well-being and social indicators have been discussed along with the development of the discipline of welfare geography and the welfare state in India. Chapter 3 on population discusses the Census of India, population composition and demographic attributes of the Indian population including aspects such as population growth, distribution, sex ratio, literacy rate, age structure, religious composition, migration, linguistic demography and policy on population. Chapter 4 is on education in which the organisations, levels, constitutional provisions and policies related to both school and higher education have been discussed. Essential social indicators like Pupil–Teacher Ratio (PTR), Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI) and Dropout Rate have also been discussed. A detailed discussion has also been presented on the education policy in India and the contemporary issues related to education. In Chapter 5 on health, the principles and aspects of health, organisations of healthcare in India, related constitutional provisions, essential social indicators like Life Expectancy, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), immunisation and expenditure have been discussed. Health-related policy along with the Covid-19 pandemic in India has also been discussed. In Chapter 6 on income and employment, essential economic concepts related to economic activities, measurement of national income, GDP (Gross Domestic Price) have been discussed along with the social dimensions of employment, unemployment and poverty. In Chapters 4–6, social indicators related to health, education and employment have been discussed. Often, in public discussions, composite indicators are used to simplify and compare the state of welfare and development of societies. In Chapter 7, such composite indices have been discussed which are acclaimed globally, namely Human Development Index (HDI), Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index, Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII).

This book attempts to present a research-based detailed discussion on social geography and certain social aspects, which concern us all, with particular reference to the Indian context. Learning is a process and in the pursuit of academic excellence, despite our best efforts, a few aspects of this book may fall short of your expectations. We will look forward to responses from our readers to improve this book in future.

Dr Asif

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Dr Asif
Hemant

Introduction to Social Geography

Introduction

Geography, as a discipline, is concerned with the spatial organisation and analysis of features and phenomena occurring on and in the vicinity of the surface of earth. Conventionally, on the basis of subject matter, two divisions of geography are identified: (i) physical geography and (ii) human geography. Physical geography deals with the naturally occurring features and phenomena on the surface of earth, whereas human geography is concerned with the distribution and analysis of human activities within nature and society.

The exposition of human activities has always been a major pursuit in geography so that in antiquity, Herodotus (485–425 BCE) in Greece presented a descriptive account of the struggle of the Greeks against the ‘barbarians’. Strabo (64 BCE–20 CE), during the Roman period, wrote *Geographica* as a geographical treatise of the known world for better comprehension and training of imperial officers. Such encyclopaedic tradition continued till the ‘Age of Explorations’ which existed till the 17th century, occurring in the accounts of Marco Polo (1254–1324), Bartolome de las Casas (1484–1566), Captain James Cook (1728–1779), Major James Renell (1742–1830), etc.

In the post-Renaissance period of the emergence of modern geography around the 17th century, the concern of geographers was mainly to explore and provide encyclopaedic description of the features and phenomena on the earth’s surface, both natural and social. The description of human activities was in the social context. There was a tacit understanding that humans are social animals, and thus, human activities occur within the society or the social space they are placed within. Hence, in the early days, what is known as human geography was conceived as social geography. Thomas Walter Freeman (1908–1988), a geographer from Britain, in the book *A Hundred Years of Geography* (1961) has commented on the social aspect of geography that “undoubtedly the attraction of human geography was its social interest, its study of ways of life of people in many places, and at many stages of civilisation” (Freeman, 1961). The Irish geographer Anne Buttimer (1938–2017) noted the ontological essentiality of the social aspect in geography, “Since human activities characteristically are group activities, how can human geography be anything else but social?” (Buttimer, 1968).

Definition

Social geography is the sub-discipline of geography that is broadly concerned with the spatial organisation of society. It deals with social phenomena and their spatial components and, in the process, provides the essential linkage between society and space. It can be defined as the study of the spatial organisation of social phenomena as they occur within and across social groups, in the social space they occupy.

The Canadian geographer James Wreford Watson (1915–1990) described social geography in 1957 as, “the identification of different regions of the earth according to associations of social phenomena related to the total environment” and defined, “social geography is not a systematic treatment of society in relation to its environment, but a genetic description of social differences as they are related to other factors and to differences in areas of the earth surface” (Watson, 1957). British sociologist and pioneer of social geography Raymond Edward Pahl (1935–2011) in the essay ‘Trends in Social Geography’ (1965) defined social geography as the study of the pattern and processes in understanding socially defined populations in their spatial setting (Pahl, 1965). In simpler terms, social geography can be considered to be the study of the society from a spatial perspective. This is achieved by the examination of the social groups, social contexts, social processes, social relations and social differences that produce and reproduce space dynamically.

In *A Dictionary of Geography*, Francis John Monkhouse defined social geography as

often used simply as the equivalent of human geography, or in the United States of America (USA) as Cultural Geography, but usually it implies studies of population, urban and rural settlements, and social activities as distinct from political and economic ones.

In the same dictionary, he defined human geography as “the part of Geography dealing with man and human activities” (Monkhouse, 1965). This presents the ambiguity faced in defining social geography as a consequence of the wide range of subject matter included in it. The subject matter of social geography has been so varied that Buttimer, writing in the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (1968), preferred to describe social geography as “a field created and cultivated by a number of individual scholars rather than an academic tradition built up within particular schools” (Buttimer, 1968).

Nature and Scope

Social geography is concerned with a wide range of social features and phenomena in the spatial dimension. Studies in social geography can range from the anthropological origin of humankind to the information societies (Castells, 1996) or *simulacra* shaping social relations in the present-day world (Boudrillard & Glaser, 1981). Naturally, the discipline of social geography is multi-faceted that has a myriad of concepts, some of which are discussed as follows:

1. **Society:** It is the functional unit of individuals occupying a particular spatial environment, interacting with each other and having values and beliefs expressed in the form of culture.

2. **Social Group or Social Community:** It is a set of individuals sharing common values, beliefs or identities and having a sense of unity. They may be occupying real space organised in the form of nation-states, cities, neighbourhoods etc. or they may exist in virtual space in the form of online social communities.
3. **Social Interaction:** It refers to the communication between two or more individuals, which may be religious, economic, political, academic, etc. in nature and is expressed in the form of exchange, competition, conflict, cooperation and accommodation within the society.
4. **Social Relationship:** It is the association or connection between an individual and society or a group of individuals based on their social interactions that are perceived to have personal meaning and provide a sense of community.
5. **Social Values:** Social values are collective standards or rules with which people are expected to follow or act in accordance (Kluckhohn, 1951; Tsirogianni & Gaskell, 2011).
6. **Social Institution:** It refers to the organised grouping of individuals with a common purpose and defined roles following similar norms and having similar beliefs and values.
7. **Social Process:** It refers to the ways and manners in which social interactions, relationships and ultimately social life are constructed and produced.
8. **Social Identity:** It refers to the self-concepts made by people as a member of a social group or functioning within a social structure (Tajfel, 1978). Social identity is strongly linked to space or the 'sense of belonging' to certain places.
9. **Social Structure:** It refers to the stable ordered arrangements of social groups and social institutions in society, which influence the functioning and status of individuals.
10. **Social System:** It is the functional interrelated organisation of individuals, groups, institutions and structure of the society.
11. **Social Change:** It is the transformation or alteration of the state of society. The pursuit of social change may arise due to inequality or oppression. It may occur in two ways, either radically through social revolution or liberally through social reforms.
12. **Social Justice:** It refers to the pursuit of the creation of a more just society by reducing inequalities and ensuring fair distribution of wealth, opportunities and privileges within it. It has been a central theme for social geographers and has found application in the claims of right to the city, right to health, right to education, right to a clean environment, right to fair treatment irrespective of sexuality, gender, disability, race, ethnicity or nationality. Social geographers are concerned with how rights are influenced by the state and corporate actors acting in space.
13. **Social Well-Being:** It is the well-being pertaining to social connections, relationships and personal expressions within one's social setting. It is used as a generic term for various overlapping and broad concepts that include quality of life, welfare and the standard of living etc.
14. **Social Welfare:** It is the social well-being of people ensured by the fulfilment of their basic needs; social goods and social services such as food, health, education, sanitation, etc. by the social institutions (Elizalde, 2014). This may be done entirely by the state or with the help of private institutions, corporations, etc. It

has been recognised as an essential obligation of the society, and particularly the state towards its citizens.

15. **Social Theory:** It refers to the set of statements used for the explanation of social life which may include the spatial distribution of social groups, the social construction of space and the various other facets of political–economic institutions and development.

Social geography as an academic discipline deals holistically with humankind in the context of total geographical milieu. This milieu comprises various categories as they correspond to various types of human activities, such as political, economic and cultural. The scale of these activities or phenomena ranges from the individual to the international level. The range of scale of studies in social geography is discussed as follows:

1. **Individual:** At the individual level, studies in social geography include exploring individual identities, perceptions, discrimination, sexualities, etc.
2. **Family:** At the family level, several issues as discrimination, ostracisation, exclusion, housing, consumption, well-being, intra-family relations, etc. are studied.
3. **Social Group:** Most of the studies in social geography relate to understanding the perceptions, attitudes, activities, distributions of social groups or communities. These social groups derive their identities on the basis of (a) the physical space they share such as urban community, forest tribes, gated community, (b) the values and beliefs they share such as religious communities, digital communities, (c) the social identities they share such as caste communities, queer communities or combination of these factors.

The spatial range of social geography studies can vary at the following levels: (1) **Neighbourhood Level**, e.g. the ‘ghettos’ or the neighbourhoods of the Afro-American community, gated communities, slums, etc.; (2) **City or Village Level**; (3) **Regional Level**, e.g. Himalayan region; (4) **National Level**; and (5) **International Level**, e.g. South Asia, Nordic region. Research in social geography may also pertain to unreal or virtual spaces, i.e. spaces which may not exist on the map but shape the social interactions of individuals such as digital spaces. Social space is the central theme in social geography. French geographer Paul Claval (1932–) highlighted the importance of social space “to understand the geography of a place means to understand the social organisation of those who inhabit it, their mentality, their beliefs, their representations” (Claval, 1964).

Comprehension of the socio-spatial organisation is the prime motivation in social geography. This process often begins with exploring the origins of society. In social geography, social groups become actors or the agency that construct and transform social interactions and social networks which find manifestations in the space they occupy. The society is organised in the form of a socio-spatial structure and functions as a social system. This organisation and functioning are influenced by the political distribution of power, economic distribution of resources and cultural expression of values, beliefs and attitudes. Very often, the interlinked political, economic and cultural factors, acting in cohesion, create an unequal social order in which resources, power and opportunity become concentrated in the hands of few, that is, inequality

in socio-spatial distribution occurs. For instance, in the social structure defined by the presence of the caste system in India, few higher castes appropriated power, resources and knowledge, whereas the majority of the population of the lower castes were deprived of it. Similarly, the society in France prior to the French revolution of 1789 was marked by stark inequalities in possession of wealth, resources and political power. In Russian society, for instance, on the eve of the October Revolution of 1917, the society had clear divisions between the aristocracy that had all the power and wealth and the working class and peasants who were condemned to penury.

The unequal distribution of power, resources and knowledge is created through social processes making those social groups disadvantaged which are (i) placed at the lower levels of the social hierarchy or social structure or (ii) situated (relatively) away from the centres of political, economic or cultural power in society. This is elucidated with an example from India: as explained earlier, the social order marked by the caste system has historically led to the deprivation of the communities belonging to the lower castes, for instance, the Scheduled Castes (SC) who are placed at the bottom in the social hierarchy of caste. Similarly, the tribal people or Scheduled Tribes (ST) have been disadvantaged because they have occupied spaces at the fringe of political and economic power. In this way, inequality is perpetrated by social and spatial processes acting together. The general concern of social geography is with the issues related to equity, oppression, and justice and understanding how differences and inequalities are produced and reproduced in space and the ways in which they are experienced and challenged.

Spatial analysis in social geography is based on interrelated political, economic and cultural factors acting with material reality and producing social contradictions. Such analysis is motivated by the need for social change (Asheim, 1979; Johnston, 1981). Social geography considers social structure from an interactionist perspective and aims to study how social life is constituted spatially through the structure of social relations (Jackson & Smith, 1984). Social theories are powerful tools that are constructed and utilised to explain the organisation and functioning of society and the resulting consequences. Social geographers are placed in a perplexing position with regard to social theory because they are placed in the social space they observe, and hence, it is challenging to remain disinterested. So, the British geographer Derek Gregory (1951–) referred to social theory as ‘an intervention in social life – it is an intervention because social theory does not take place in some isolated laboratory, not applied from outside, but worked with to make social life intelligible’ (Gregory, 1994).

Evolution of Social Geography

During the early period of modern geography, social geography was synonymous with human geography. In fact, what is considered to be human geography in the present day was originally known as social geography because human activities occur within a socio-spatial context. This is evident in the work of German geographer Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), particularly in the essay ‘The Island of Cuba’ (1856) in which he described the social conditions and slavery prevailing under the imperial rule on the island (Humboldt, 1856). This was preceded by the inquisitive cynical essay of Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834), *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) where he warned of the catastrophic consequences societies that would become liable

to deal with if population growth occurred uncontrollably (Malthus, 1798). Earlier, in 1725, Italian philosopher Giovanni Battista Vico (1668–1744) postulated that the development of human societies everywhere followed an identical series of stages (Joyce & Burgess, 1966). German geographer historian Johann George Kohl (1808–1878) examined the significance and social function of various types of settlement in his works. Eduard Hahn (1856–1928), an ethnologist from Germany, in 1896 traced the evolution of livelihoods and presented an exposition of the religious and social origins of several economic activities. In the 18th and 19th centuries, thinkers in the Western World had begun to develop a distinction between nature and society as humans organised themselves into societies to fulfil their needs and thrive in the natural world.

The conceptualisation of democracy in France (1789), the rise of national consciousness due to the unification of the German Empire in Germany (1871) and the foundation of the first modern democratic republic state in the USA (1776) are accompanied by the dominance of liberal and rational thought that resulted in the development of the ‘scientific’ approach to knowledge. This scientific approach was concretised in the works of the French social philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857), notably *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1829). He was a proponent of the application of scientific methods of the natural sciences, which were empiricism and positivism, to the study of social phenomena. This would result in (a) the formulation of rationally explicable laws and theories in social sciences based on sound scientific methods and (b) the application of such laws and theories to usher in the desired monitorable changes in society through social-economic planning (Dixit, 1997).

The consciousness of the ‘social’ was present in the minds of geographers whether, Carl Ritter (1779–1859), Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833–1905), Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), Paul Vidal de La Blache (1845–1918), Alfred Hettner (1859–1941) or Halford Mackinder (1861–1947). Social geography has a tradition that has a history dating beyond a century (Dunbar, 1977). The first person in the Anglo-American tradition to use the term ‘social geography’ was George Wilson Hoke, whose paper ‘The Study of Social Geography’ was published in 1907 (Hoke, 1907).

Social geography did not receive much attention till the beginning of the 20th century primarily due to two reasons: firstly, the realm of physical geography was still largely being explored and developed scientifically so the majority of geographers accorded only secondary importance to the study of society in geography, attending primarily to the description and explanation of ‘diverse natural phenomena as they occurred in interrelation on the surface of the earth’ (Richthofen, 1903) and secondly, to lend scientific calibre to geography as an academic discipline in the same manner as that of physics or chemistry, geographers addressed natural phenomena which could be dealt through empirical, mathematical and cartographic methods while largely eschewing the study of socio-spatial organisation and functioning of society which required qualitative research as well. What existed as social geography, with the passage of time, then became human geography, so as to analyse human activities from a disinterested ‘value-free’ position. Thus, the first reason corresponds to the lack of interest in subject matter, whereas the second reason indicates the methodological issues presented by social geography.

The term ‘social geography’ originated in France as *géographie sociale* in the works of anarchist geographer Elisee Reclus (1830–1905). The first known occurrence of the ‘social geography’ is in *Nouvelle Géographie Universelle* (Universal Geography) of

Reclus written in 1884. He used this expression in several of his letters and in his last work *L'Homme et la terre* (Man and Nature) written in 1905 (Reclus, 1905). Social geography found expression in the works of the sociologists of the Le Play school inspired by the French sociologist Frederic Le Play (1806–1882), who discarded the prevalent *a priori* explanations of society and used case study as a method for investigation of the actual social conditions of families of workers and peasants in France. His technique of writing monographs and producing a descriptive encyclopaedic inventory of social facts was used later by Vidal de La Blache and his students in France and Herbert John Fleure (1877–1969) in Britain. Le Play's conceptualisation of *lieu-travail-famille* was later reformulated by the British sociologist-geographer Patrick Geddes (1834–1932) into 'place-work-folk' and discussed in Chapter 2.

Germany: German geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) in the monumental work *Anthropogeographie*, Volume I, published in 1882 described society from the classic ecological perspective within its natural environment and the role of human agency in transforming nature and dealing with physical barriers. In the second volume of *Anthropogeographie* (1891), based on his study of the tribes and the evolution of society in North America, he noted that every human migration was characterised by (a) an area of origin, (b) a specific cause and (c) a particular route to destination. The societies created by migrants at their destination were expressions of their memories, skills, traditions and culture. Such migrant societies in the newly inhabited spaces resulted from two spatial forces: (a) the local geographical environment of destination, and (b) the culture and technology that had been produced in the geographic environment of origin (Ratzel, 1891).

France: In European traditions, social geography developed as an approach to human geography rather than a sub-discipline, especially in the French school of geographical thought (Bartels & Peucker, 1969). The pioneer of geography in France, Paul Vidal de La Blache (1845–1918) and a leading thinker of possibilism, noted that geography was a science of places and not a science of men (Blache, 1913). His conceptualised *genre de vie* (way of life) as a product, sets of techniques, cemented through tradition, continuously being produced as a result of the interaction of society with nature, expressed spatially in the form of 'pays'. The *genre de vie* of different societies varied spatially and assumed the form of functional social order to fulfil material necessities of life (Blache, 1911; Sorre, 1948). Vidal de La Blache (1903) summarised this process as:

It is man who reveals a country's individuality by moulding it to his own use. He establishes a connection between unrelated features, substituting for the random effects of local circumstances a systematic cooperation of forces. Only then does a country acquire a specific character, differentiating it from others, till at length it becomes, as it were, a medal struck in the likeness of a people.

(Gregory et al., 1986)

Camille Vallaux (1870–1945), a student of Vidal de La Blache, wrote the book *Geographie Sociale*, published in 1908 and 1911 in two volumes. The leading disciple of Vidal de la Blache, Jean Brunhes (1869–1930), synthesised the Vidalian concept of *genre de vie* with the Schluterian tradition of *Kulturlandschaft* (cultural landscape) the 'visible landscape' (Brunhes, 1924). He considered the physical and cultural phenomena to be in a state of perpetual change to be studied on the temporal scale. He