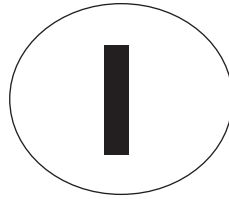


A STUDENT'S INTRODUCTION TO
**GEOGRAPHICAL
THOUGHT**



Introduction: Geographers at the Beach

1.1 Before we get there: Introducing philosophy and theory

We begin in late autumn, with a geography field trip to the beach. The students climb into the bus, which then leaves the university and threads its way through the countryside towards the coast. Looking out of the bus window, Nikki says to Adam, ‘The leaves are really turning brown now.’

Nikki’s simple statement is a claim to knowledge, a claim to know something about the leaves on the trees. It is the kind of knowledge claim that we all make in our everyday lives, but it provides a good starting point for thinking about the more specialised knowledge that we develop within geography. At the broadest level of generalisation, geographers seek to know the world around us. If we want to have confidence in our knowledge – of glaciers, transport systems, flooding, poverty, biodiversity, pollution, inequality, landscapes and all the other things that geographers are interested in – then it is important to interrogate how we develop such knowledge. In effect, the question at the heart of this book is ‘How do we know?’

A simple response to that question is to make reference to sources of evidence. We know something because we have evidence of it; we have seen (or heard, or measured) it for ourselves, or we have read it somewhere and accept that someone else has evidence of it. We know what the weather was like yesterday because we experienced it for ourselves. We know the Earth is spherical because we have seen satellite images of it. We know that health and wealth inequalities in the UK have

increased since the 1970s, because we can read research that provides evidence of this (Dorling, 2010, 2013). Geography students everywhere are taught to acknowledge their sources of evidence early in their studies through conventions of academic referencing, and this is an important part of the *discipline* of geography. Being clear about evidence, though, is only the first step in answering the question 'How do we know?'

Every claim to knowledge involves making assumptions. These are assumptions about things such as: what exists; what knowledge is; how we can know; and what counts as 'evidence'. In our everyday lives we usually take these things for granted without really thinking about them. Nikki's observation about the leaves turning brown is one example. This is a claim that the colours of the leaves on the trees are changing. There are some broader, unspoken implications, but if we leave those aside for a moment and focus just on the spoken claim to knowledge it is possible to identify at least three assumptions hidden in it:

1. That leaves are 'real' objects, existing independently of us.
2. That our senses – in this case, sight – provide us with knowledge of leaves.
3. That Nikki's memory that the leaves have not always been brown is accurate.

It would probably be difficult to live our lives if we did not take these kinds of things for granted. If we spent all day worrying about whether objects are real we would find it quite difficult to do anything, including eat and drink. But it does not take too much effort to realise that we can be mistaken in our assumptions. If ever you have forgotten something (as we all have), you know your memory is not infallible. If ever you have waved at somebody thinking it was a friend and then realised you were waving at a complete stranger, you know your senses are not infallible. There may seem less reason to doubt whether objects really exist, but many people have experienced hallucinations, seeing or hearing things that are not really there. Each of the three assumptions above could be unfounded. These issues – about what exists, what we know and how we know – fall within the realm of **philosophy**.

There are three philosophical terms that are often used in literature relating to how we do research. These are:

Metaphysics, the branch of philosophy concerned with the 'first principles' (or, broadly speaking, the fundamentals) of things like existence, time, space and identity.

Ontology, which is about what exists and what it means to exist.

Epistemology, which is the study of how we know.

Metaphysics therefore encompasses ontology. Philosophy texts often refer to metaphysics, whereas geography texts use the terms ontology and epistemology more often.

If we look again at the three assumptions identified in Nikki's comment about the leaves, the first (that leaves exist independently of us) is an ontological assumption. The second, that our senses provide knowledge of the leaves, is an epistemological position. The third is more complex. Nikki is relying on her memory of the leaves, and this involves an assumption about herself; that she is a discrete entity (a 'self') whose existence has been continuous over the timescale in which the leaves have changed colour. In other words, she is assuming that she was not just invented yesterday, with things that seem like memories programmed into her mind. (This may seem far-fetched, but films like *The Matrix* and *Avatar* play on this kind of idea.) Nikki is also relying on her memory to store 'true' knowledge of the leaves. The third assumption is therefore a metaphysical assumption, containing both ontological and epistemological claims.

Although Nikki's statement referred only to the observable colour of leaves, she was really commenting on something bigger. The implication of her comment is that the seasons are progressing and autumn is turning to winter. There are assumptions here too, but these are of a different kind. Rather than being assumptions about what exists or how we know, the implied meaning of Nikki's statement involves ideas about how the changing colour of leaves is connected to the seasons. These ideas are along the lines of the following:

As the autumn turns to winter, daylight hours shorten and the temperature falls. The potential for photosynthesis is reduced and chlorophyll within the leaves breaks down, causing the leaves to lose their green colour and turn yellow and brown before falling to the ground. The changing colour of leaves is therefore an indicator of changing light and weather conditions, letting us know that winter is coming.

This brief explanation is a **theory**; a generalised, abstract idea about the relations between phenomena. Nikki has applied this generalised idea to the particular trees she can see through the bus window.

Trying to move beyond a simple answer to the question 'How do we know?', then, takes us into the realms of philosophy and theory. If the knowledge that we rely on in our everyday lives is dependent upon philosophical and theoretical assumptions or ideas, then it follows that our claims to specialist geographic knowledge also involve such assumptions and ideas. The study of 'geographic thought' is the study of the philosophical and theoretical assumptions we make in developing geographical knowledge, and how different philosophies and theories have become dominant within geography at different times.

Students often find studying 'geographic thought' difficult, not least because philosophy and theory are, by definition, rather abstract. Many geographers are more interested in doing 'proper' geography, learning about society, culture and the natural environment. Concrete issues such as wealth inequalities, flooding or habitat conservation can seem far more interesting, and more *relevant*, than abstract

philosophy and theory. There are at least two good reasons for persisting with the difficult abstract ideas though.

Firstly, as we have seen with Nikki's comment about the leaves, there are hidden assumptions in all claims to knowledge. Ignoring philosophy and theory does not make these assumptions go away; it just means that we are oblivious to them. As geomorphologist Colin Thorn pointed out in 1988, learning and thinking about philosophy and theory puts us in a position to make choices about what philosophies and theories we use. The alternative is to blindly rely on assumptions without being aware of them.

Secondly, assumptions about what exists and how we can know, and ideas about how phenomena are (or could possibly be) related to each other directly connect to the ways we do research. In choosing to use a particular method of data collection, we are implicitly, perhaps subconsciously, making a decision about what counts as knowledge. Our own methodological practices and our ability to judge the reliability of evidence presented by others are enhanced by an awareness of philosophy and theory.

The first of these reasons provides a justification for books such as this one, examining the key philosophical and theoretical positions that have been significant in the development of geographical knowledge. The second reason guides the particular approach taken here: the aim of this book is not just to consider philosophy and theory, but also to make the connections between these philosophical and theoretical positions and research **methodology**, the specific practices by which geographers produce knowledge.

The rest of this chapter returns to the beach to reveal some key differences among philosophical approaches. This chapter is designed to be read before the others in the book. Chapters 2 to 8 then address ideas that have been significant in the development of geographic thought since the '**Quantitative Revolution**' of the mid-twentieth century. Each chapter seeks to establish what the ideas are, where they have come from and how geographers have used them. In each we then return to the beach to consider what kinds of research questions might be asked and what kinds of methods might be possible, making the connections to research 'in practice'. These chapters are organised in roughly chronological order, in that those appearing later in the book address ideas that became influential in geography more recently than those appearing earlier. However, none of these chapters assumes prior knowledge of the others, so each can be read on its own.

Finally, Chapters 9 and 10 address issues that cut across all of the others. Chapter 9 makes the move from questions of how we know (epistemology) to how we judge right from wrong, examining moral philosophy and ethics. Chapter 10 summarises all the different ways of looking at a beach covered in the book, and considers the connections and tensions between human geography and physical geography. Some prior understanding of the different approaches to geography covered in Chapters 2 to 8 is probably useful for these last two chapters.

Geographic thought is sometimes alternatively referred to as ‘history and philosophy of geography’ (as, for example, in the Royal Geographical Society’s research group of that name). This book is intended as a ‘philosophy of geography’ rather than a ‘history of geography’ book. Really the two are entangled, but other histories of geography, such as those by Unwin (1992) or Holt-Jensen (2009), already exist and their coverage extends further back in time than this text. The aim here is to take up the significant ‘-isms’ (ways of thinking) referred to in books such as those, and explore what they are, where they come from, and what they mean for geographical research. Without further ado, let us return to the beach.

1.2 On arrival: What are we studying?

The geography students arrive at the beach, but what, exactly, are they studying? What is a beach?

The question ‘What is a beach?’ might seem trivial. Just the mention of the word ‘beach’ probably conjures up some image or idea of a beach in your mind, whether this is a memory of a specific beach you have been to or a more general idea of ‘beach-ness’. But the geography students on our field trip could each have a very different focus to their studies. We will explore five different responses to the question, ‘What is a beach?’ to illustrate some different assumptions about what is real and how we can know. These assumptions lend themselves to different research questions and the use of different methods to address those questions.

1. *A beach is a coastal deposition of sand and gravel particles lying between mean tide and the inland extent of the highest storm waves.*

This defines a beach in terms of what we can see, where. It recognises only the existence of physical, or material, features (as opposed to, say, spiritual dimensions of the beach). This means it is a **materialist** response. It would give rise to questions about the form of the beach and its constituent sediments – in other words, questions that also focus on what we can see, where. We might, for example, seek to identify and delineate patterns of fine and coarse sediments such as those in Figure 1.1.

The methods necessary for this kind of study would be likely to involve observation, including surveying and measuring the material objects forming the beach. The whole focus, then, from research question to methods, is on the evidence of our senses (and predominantly the sense of sight). It is worth noting here that even when we use instruments, such as remotely controlled cameras flown over the beach for an aerial view, or laser range-finders to measure long distances, these are extensions of our senses. The assertion that our senses provide our only secure source of knowledge is known as **empiricism**. So our first definition of the beach is both materialist and empiricist.



Figure 1.1 Sediment sorting in beach cusps at the eastern end of Seaton Beach, Cornwall, UK (Photograph by Kevin Couper)

2. *A beach is an active part of the **morphodynamic** coastal system of energy transfers and sediment movement. As the boundary between water and land, a beach is the transitional area between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, where continual change creates hostile environments for life.*

Here we again have a definition that depends on observable, material phenomena, but this time prioritising the relations between them, and the functioning of geomorphological and biogeographical processes. This perspective lends itself to questions about what happens, where, when, at what rate, and how the different components of the beach interact. Looking at the beach in Figure 1.2, we see there are three possible sources of sediment in the picture: the sea to the left, the cliffs in the background, and the river cutting across the beach in the centre of the photograph. So we might ask questions about the relative influences of these on sediment supply to the beach, and to different parts of the beach. Subsequent processes of sediment transport and the resulting changes in beach form could also be of interest.

Some processes are (more or less) directly observable. We could, for example, paint some beach clasts (rock fragments) to mark them and then track their movement across or along the beach by re-locating them regularly over a period of time. Empiricism and materialism are still relevant here then. However, some processes, or the causes of processes, are not directly observable. We know that

things (sediments, water) move downhill, yet we cannot actually see gravity, we can only observe its effects. In such cases we use reasoning to infer the existence of processes or mechanisms, and the idea that knowledge can be legitimately based on reason is known as rationalism. In practice, geographers' theories are then tested against empirical evidence, so we still retain an empiricist approach.



Figure 1.2 Three sources of sediment: sea, cliffs and river at the western end of Seaton Beach, Cornwall, UK (Photograph by Kevin Couper)

3. *A beach is a place that people visit primarily for recreational purposes (e.g. sunbathing, swimming), often in social groups. Beaches are busiest in the summer months, when people may travel considerable distances to visit.*

The obvious difference between this response and the first two is that we have switched from physical geography to human geography. However, philosophically there is little change. The focus is still empirical phenomena, such as numbers of people and their observable behaviour, the things they are physically doing. Other observable phenomena associated with humans at the beach would include visitor input to the local economy, the informal economy that can develop around beaches (Figure 1.3) and material impacts on the beach such as littering. Research questions might focus on identifying relations between empirical phenomena. A simple (and rather dull!) example would be whether people who have travelled furthest spend the longest on the beach.



Figure 1.3 The informal economy in operation at Charlestown, Cornwall, UK

It might seem odd to include travel distance among ‘observable phenomena’. It would not be possible for an individual researcher to physically watch the journey of every beachgoer on any given day. However, we noted earlier that our senses can be extended by research instruments. The examples given were remotely controlled cameras and laser range-finders, but, for the social sciences, questionnaire surveys serve a similar purpose. Somebody’s travel distance is, in principle, observable even if we did not see it directly for ourselves (we might say it is ‘empirically verifiable’, in a sense that is explained in Chapter 2).

So far, then, our third response assumes that society can be studied in the same ways as the natural world, using methodological approaches identical to those in the natural sciences, albeit with different methods of observation and measurement. This is sometimes referred to as **naturalism**, although it is specifically a form of methodological naturalism (as the word ‘naturalism’ is used in many different ways by philosophers).

More complex questions arising in human geography might again focus on relations between phenomena. Some beach resorts are patronised predominantly by wealthy visitors, and so we might be interested in identifying any disparity in household income or socio-economic class between visitors and local residents, and the degree of dependency of the local economy on beach tourism. Examples of such locations within Britain would include Padstow and Rock in Cornwall. Internationally, many of the island beach resorts in the Caribbean would be of interest, marketed as ‘paradise’ holiday destinations for American and European tourists.

This kind of study would probably lead us to consider the economic and political structures of society, and how these structures shape relations between beach visitors and local residents. This would, then, become a **structuralist** analysis such as those addressed in Chapter 4 (though noting that this is distinct from Saussure's linguistic Structuralism, which is discussed in Chapter 7 and denoted in this book with a capital 'S'). The starting point, though, is the empirical economic conditions of the two social groups.

Like Nikki's comment about the leaves on the trees earlier in the chapter, these first three responses to the question 'What is a beach?' all assume that a real world exists, independently of us as individuals. This means they are all **realist**, broadly speaking. However, there are many variations of realism, and this can lead to confusion – indeed, it does appear to have led to confusion in geography at times. Box 1.1 explains some of the different versions. These three descriptions of a beach also prioritise empirical data, at least as the 'acid test' of our theories, if not as the source of all of our knowledge.

BOX 1.1 REALISM AND SOME OF ITS VARIANTS

Realism in its broadest sense is the assumption that we know objects really exist, independently of us. The directly opposing view is **idealism** which, strictly defined, is the view that nothing exists outside of our minds (although see Box 1.2 for more on this).

Scientific realism is a particular form of realism, and a central topic of debate in the philosophy of science. Scientific realism involves commitment to three ideas:

1. That there are 'real' observable and unobservable objects, which exist independently of our minds. This is a **metaphysical** commitment. In other words, the beach is real.
2. That our scientific theories about observable and unobservable objects are true – that is, they correspond to how the world really is. This is a **semantic** commitment (semantic being associated with meaning). In other words, the theories geographers hold about beaches really reflect the nature of the beach.
3. That we can know the truth about these observable and unobservable objects, and so we can know that our theories are true (or, at least, that our best theories are approximately true). This is an **epistemological** commitment. In other words, we can know what the beach is really like.

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Scientific anti-realism involves the rejection of one or more of these commitments (Ladyman, 2002). Some people claim that we have no grounds for assuming that a mind-independent world exists (as it is impossible to step outside of our minds to find out), and so they reject the metaphysical commitment. Historians and sociologists of scientific knowledge have long pointed out that our theories have been found to be wrong in the past, and whether or not a theory is accepted by the scientific community is influenced by social factors as much as 'scientific' factors (see Chapter 6 for an example). This raises doubts about the semantic commitment. Some people argue that we can never know the world as it really is, but only as it appears to us; the point of scientific theories is not that they are 'true', but that they seem to work (for example, enabling us to make predictions about things as they appear to us). This is an **instrumentalist** view, and challenges the epistemological commitment. It is perfectly possible for a scientist – whether physicist, chemist, biologist, or geomorphologist, hydrologist or glaciologist – to doubt the claims of scientific realism. So in our discussion of the beach, the first three responses to the question 'What is a beach?' can be seen as broadly realist, but it would be wrong to assume that they adopt the position of scientific realism.

Structural realism is a response to two key arguments in debates about scientific realism. On one hand, if scientific realism were not true, it would be a miracle that our scientific theories are so successful. On the other hand, many of our scientific theories have been proven incorrect in the past, so it is perfectly possible – or even probable – that our current theories will be proven incorrect in the future. Structural realism offers a way out of this stalemate by arguing that our best theories describe real relations between phenomena (structures), rather than being correct in every detail. Approaches that seek to describe relations between phenomena are **structuralist**.

A point of confusion in the geographical literature is that the term 'realism' is often – but not always – used to refer to Bhaskar's **critical realism** (Chapter 4). This is a specific form of structural realism that has become popular in the social sciences, with some advocates in physical geography too.

4. *A beach is sand between your toes, the sound of the surf surging towards you, the smell and taste of sea salt, momentary weightlessness as each wave lifts your body and rolls past, hot sunshine on your skin, cold water. It is a place for relaxation, or for adrenaline-fuelled, surf-induced excitement; splashing out through the shallows, watching the incoming surf, launching yourself ahead of the wave. A beach is escape, banishing everyday pressures from your mind. For some, though, a beach is a place of fear (eremikophobia is a fear of sand).*

This depiction of a beach is significantly different from the first three. Rather than assume a beach is a mind-independent object, it defines the beach solely in terms of our senses, experiences and meanings as individuals. Here the focus is on our perception of the beach, rather than the object of our perception (the beach itself).

In the eighteenth century, German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) distinguished between things as they are in themselves, which he called ‘noumena’, and things as we perceive them, or ‘phenomena’. Kant argued that we can never know things as they are in themselves. Our knowledge is restricted to phenomena. In Kantian terms, all geographers – even physical geographers – study phenomena. Through the twentieth century, though, a philosophical movement known as **phenomenology** (the word derives from ‘phenomena’ and ‘ology’) developed to specifically focus on studying human experience and things as we experience them. Our fourth description of a beach fits with this perspective, which is explained further in Chapter 5.

For geographers one of the key questions arising from a phenomenological perspective is about place and sense of place: what does the beach mean for us, and why? A phenomenological study might encompass the things we do at the beach, the embodied experience of being at the beach and meanings associated with the beach. Such issues are best addressed through qualitative research methods, which could include capturing and reflecting on our own beach experiences as well as using methods such as diaries or interviews to provide insights into the experiences of others.

5. *A beach is a ‘liminal’ place, where normal rules – such as rules about dress – do not apply. But a beach can also be a regulated space. Behaviour may be formally controlled by ‘safe swimming’ flags and sun-lounger hire rules, constantly under the surveillance of lifeguards and vendors, but also informally controlled as we conform to social expectations of what is normal. A beach is a site in which identities of gender, health, wealth and fitness are performed, exhibited or inhibited.*

Like response 4, the focus here is on our experiences and perception of beaches. However, there has been a shift in emphasis. Response 4 was about personal, subjective perceptions and meanings. Our fifth response pays attention to social rules and expectations that are external to us as individuals.

EXERCISE 1.1

Things not to do at the beach

There are some things that it would just seem wrong to do at the beach. Setting up a drum kit and practising for an hour or two would certainly be rather odd. We do not expect to see suit-clad insurance company representatives trying to sell us their insurance policies at the beach. Those are quite extreme examples. Try to think of other things that would seem wrong to do.

If there are socially defined rules or expectations about what a beach is for, and what behaviour is acceptable or unacceptable at a beach, then the kinds of research questions we might pursue relate to how these rules or expectations come about. We could look at how beaches are represented in the media. We might be interested in who (or what) 'polices' these rules, and how deviation from the expected norms – looking or behaving out of place – is rectified. Questions of inclusion, exclusion and power arise, and these are associated with issues of identity, difference and representation. We could also examine the unwritten rules around space, for example in the way that British families delineate beach territory through the use of wind breaks and sun shades (Figure 1.4).



Figure 1.4 Beach territory defined through the erection of wind breaks and sun shades. Bantam Beach, Devon, UK (Photograph by Kevin Couper)

Responses 4 and 5 share a concern with our understanding and experiences of the beach. The emphasis is on meaning, rather than on empirical phenomena. The fourth focuses primarily on individual perceptions, while the fifth pays regard to social context. This means there is a subtle difference in the metaphysical assumptions. Response 4 does not make any assumptions about whether or not a 'real' world exists independently of us. Its sole focus is the world as it appears to us. In response 5, the 'social facts' of appropriate or inappropriate behaviour and appearance at a beach derive from human thoughts and actions,

but they appear as ‘objective reality’ to each of us as individuals. This is inherently a **social constructionist** position (see Chapter 6), though it is a theme that also runs through **poststructuralist** and **postmodernist** theories (Chapter 7). Human geographers (and other social scientists) often refer to this as idealist. As with realism, the term **idealism** offers scope for confusion, and Box 1.2 provides more detailed information on this.

BOX 1.2 INTERPRETATIONS OF IDEALISM

Human geographers and social scientists use the term ‘idealism’ in the sense that there are aspects of society that appear to each of us as external, independent objects or facts, and yet are defined solely by human agents, by our ideas and actions.

For philosophers, idealism is mostly understood to mean the doctrine that all that exists is mental or spiritual in nature (Ladyman, 2002). This is an ‘immaterialist’ metaphysical perspective, opposed to the belief that material objects exist. This kind of idealism is particularly associated with philosopher Bishop George Berkeley (1685–1753).

Redding (2012) points out that this is not the only kind of idealism, and not all forms are against the possibility of a mind-independent reality. ‘German idealism’ is a movement among German philosophers of the 1780s to 1840s. Beginning with the ideas of Kant, the German idealists focused on things as they appear to us. Their work (and particularly that of Georg Hegel) was an important influence on the French theorists of the mid-twentieth century, who in turn have had substantial influence on the development of social theory (McQuillan, 2012).

When we use or come across the term ‘idealism’ we thus need to be clear about which kind of idealism is meant.

1.3 Conclusion: -isms and geography

The development of knowledge in geography, as in any other subject, always involves assumptions about what exists and how we can know. In this chapter we asked a simple question: ‘What is a beach?’, and considered five possible responses to that question, to examine the metaphysical assumptions associated with them. This has entailed an encounter with lots of ‘-isms’, and a glance at the contents list of this book reveals that there are more to come. Box 1.3 lists them all. In the context of philosophy and theory, the suffix ‘-ism’ simply denotes a doctrine or way of thinking (although we come across other kinds of ‘-ism’ in geography, such as tourism).

BOX 1.3 -ISMS ENCOUNTERED IN THIS BOOK

Listed in the order (or at least, roughly in the order) in which they appear, the -isms mentioned in this book include:

Empiricism
 Materialism
 Rationalism
 Naturalism
 Realism
 Structuralism
 Idealism
 Positivism
 Social constructionism
 Feminism
 Poststructuralism
 Postmodernism

EXERCISE 1.2

Revising -isms

From the -isms above, list those which appear in this chapter and (without looking at the glossary) try to summarise each of them for yourself.

It can be helpful to think of '-isms' as points of similarity. Any approaches to geographical research that are empiricist, for example, will share an assumption that we can know the world through our senses. Any materialist geographies pay attention to physically (materially) existing objects. There are two important (and related) points to make here. Firstly, not all '-isms' are mutually exclusive and conflicting. Any research project could fit with, or draw on, multiple perspectives. The ways in which '-isms' are discussed in the literature can sometimes make it seem as though one or another must be 'right', but it is a mistake to think that way. This is probably another reason that geographic thought can seem confusing and difficult.

The second point is more broadly about philosophies and theories in geography. When you read chapters on **positivism**, **critical rationalism**, Marxism and the other positions introduced in this book, it is tempting to think of these as fixed, static, unchanging things that underlie (implying 'come before') our research practices. But research is a messy and unpredictable business. Ideas are developed,

borrowed and adapted by living, breathing people, each individual bringing their own interpretation, within the context of their particular research project, prior experience and the other ideas they are working with.

It is perhaps more useful to think of philosophies (and maybe theories too) as more like musical genres. Songs within any single genre, such as urban, reggae, blues, folk or punk, do not sound exactly the same but there are commonalities between them. These commonalities make up the genre, but musicians find room to do their own thing, develop their own interpretation, and bring their own ideas. In the same way, researchers may take inspiration from particular philosophies or theories, perhaps more than one, and develop their own interpretation and add their own ideas. Some researchers are committed to a particular philosophical or theoretical outlook. David Harvey's longstanding association with Marxist geography is a prominent example. But many do not start with a distinct philosophical position, and this is perhaps particularly true among physical geographers. Just as it can be difficult to place some songs within any given musical genre, some research can be difficult to place within a particular philosophical movement.

This book, then, aims to explain some of the key ideas that have influenced geography and what they mean for research in practice. Like all geographers, take note of the ideas, decide which you find convincing or relevant to your interests, and see if you can use them for yourself.

Contribute to the Companion Website!

Chapters 2 to 8 of this book include examples of research (journal articles) to illustrate the research practices associated with the philosophy or theory being discussed in that chapter. They also include an exercise that directs you to read a specific journal article and answer some questions about it. For all of these exercises the journal article can be accessed via the book's companion website, along with some answers to the questions so that you can check whether you were along the right lines. Go to <https://study.sagepub.com/couper>

Do not stop at this though. The 'secret' to academic success is reading, so try to find more examples for yourself.

If you come across a recent journal article that you think is a good example of research fitting with a particular chapter, let me know. I will look at it and (if I agree with you) will add the reference to the website, along with an acknowledgement that it was your suggestion. Tweet a web link, or preferably the article's Digital Object Identifier (doi), along with the relevant chapter number (e.g. 'C4' for Chapter 4) to @DrPaulineCouper, using the hashtag #Geothought.

FURTHER READING

For further explanations

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