

SCHOOLS IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

ECOLOGICAL SCHOOL

An ecological conception of geography had appeared much earlier, of course, but it failed to attract many enthusiasts at any point in the development of geography as a discipline. There are some geographers who consider human geography as human ecology and stress on the ecological school which is concerned with the vast man – earth interacting system. **Ratzel**, taking his cue from the biological use of the term 'ecology,' once suggested that anthropogeography is human ecology and should be studied under the school of ecology. From his point of view, as from that of biology, human ecology would be defined as the study of the interaction of man and environment. The doctrine was further strengthened by **Barrows** in 1922 when in his presidential address before the American Association of Geographers he emphasized that in geography human ecology is the guiding concept. In the words of Barrows (1923) – “Thus defined, geography is the science of human ecology”. Human ecology is a relatively current development; the first use of the term in the literature was in 1921. The first book with title as ecology appeared in 1935 and interestingly was the work of a botanist. In this brief span of time, the discipline of ecology has evolved quite rapidly. When concerned with human ecology one can relate to Mackenzie’s (1931) definition which states that Human ecology deals with the spatial aspects of the symbiotic relations of human beings and human institutions.

Ecological school is receiving increased attention as a research focus for geography and other academic disciplines. Geographers are concerned with the identification and explanation of the spatial patterning of earth phenomena. The ecosystem concept, with an emphasis on structure, networks of interaction, and function, is quite useful for conducting such geographical investigations. Ecological school is thus viewed as a methodological approach with significant applications for geographic research.

The interactions between man and nature in different cultures are studied in the school of ecology. School of Ecology combines the ideas and methods from several disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, biology, economic history and archaeology. Ecological school of study is a multidisciplinary approach enables geographers to comprehensively address issues of environmental justice, sustainability and political ecology.

Ecological school studies human life and human activity in different ecosystems and different cultures in the present and in the past in order to gain a better understanding of the factors which influence the interaction between humans and their environment. The aim of ecological school to achieve a more complete view requires an integrated perspective that transcends traditional boundaries between the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and technology.

A fundamental issue in ecological school is how people's cultural beliefs about the nature affect and are affected by their livelihoods and the social order. While cultural beliefs come into focus in the influential modern sciences like economics, human ecologists examine the modern concepts of economic growth and technological development from an anthropological perspective. By comparing those concepts with other scientifically insights about environmental degradation, climate change and global inequality, human ecology challenges the ideas that perpetuates an unsustainable and unequal global society.

Studies in Ecological school give a broad and theoretically deep understanding of the interactions between man and nature in different times and in different parts of the world. Of central importance is to understand how the human relationships with the environment are influenced by their history and their place in the world system.

Ecological school is an interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary study of the relationship between humans and their natural, social, and built environments. The philosophy and study of school of ecology has a diffuse history with advancements in ecology, geography, sociology, psychology, anthropology, zoology, epidemiology, public health, and home economics, among others. School of ecology, which is also interested in the relations of man to his geographic environment, fastens its attention upon the human interdependences that develop in the action and reaction of a population to its habitat. In other words, while geography views the adjustment of man from the standpoint of modifications of the earth's surface, ecological school makes a detailed analysis of the process and organization of relations involved in adjustment to environment. This brings us to a second point of distinction between the two disciplines. Geography involves a description of things as they are at a point in time; its interest is in distribution rather than development. Ecology, on the other hand, is evolutionary. It undertakes to describe the developmental process as well as the form of man's adjustment to his habitat.

This specialized field of study **investigates problems of man's relation to his environment**, both individually and in groups, such as

- (1) The effects of climate upon human health and energy;**
- (2) The influences of resources and topography upon human occupations, homes, institutions, and inventions;**
- (3) Influences of natural routes and barriers upon social isolation and contact; and**
- (4) Possible effects of natural surroundings upon customs, attitudes, and beliefs.**

Thus these human geographers, who define ecological school as a specialized field of science, obviously disagree with Bews who regards it as an inclusive synthesis. Human ecology, like other specialized sciences may be defined and delimited in terms of the basic abstractions it makes. In particular, school of ecology abstracts

- (i) A distinctive type of **ecological inter- action** and
- (ii) A distinctive aspect of **community or regional structure** that arises out of this interaction.

To sum up school of ecology may now be defined tentatively as a specialized field of analysis which investigates

- (i) Those impersonal sub-social aspects of communal structure- both spatial and functional- which arise and change as the result of interaction between men through the medium of limited supplies of the environment, and
- (ii) The nature and forms of the processes by which this sub-social structure arises and changes. The value of human ecology depends upon the validity and significance of its own specialized abstractions and not upon its service in supplying indexes of social life.