**Population Geography: Definition, Nature and Subject Matter:**

Population geography as an independent sub-field of human geography is a comparatively recent phenomenon. In the expression ‘population geography’, the term ‘population’ signifies the subject matter and ‘geography’ refers to the perspective of investigation**. Thus, population geography can be interpreted as the study of population in spatial perspective.**

According to Trewartha, **population geography is concerned with the understanding of the regional differences in the earth’s covering of people** “**Just as area differentiation is the theme of geography in general, so is of population geography, in particular**. Trewartha proposed a very comprehensive outline of the content of the sub-discipline, which many subse­quent geographers seem to have adhered to.

John I. Clarke, who is credited with bringing out the first textbook on the sub-discipline in 1965 suggested that **population geography is mainly concerned with demonstrating how spatial variation in population and its various attributes like composition, migration and growth are related to the spatial variation in the nature of places.**

W. Zelinsky, a contemporary of Clarke, takes a similar view regarding the definition of population geography. He defines the sub-discipline as **“a science that deals with the ways in which geographic character of places is formed by and, in turn, reacts upon a set of population phenomena that vary within it through both space and time as they follow their own behavioural laws, interacting one with another, and with numerous non- demographic phenomena**” (Zelinsky, 1966).

Daniel Noin in 1979, in his book Geographie de la population, while agreeing with the scheme of Trewartha, expressed that distri­bution of population, components of its growth and characteristics are the main concerns of population geography. More recently, while discussing the methodological problems in population geography, R.J. Proyer suggested that population geography deals with the analysis and explanation of interrelationship between population phenomena and the geographical character of places as they both vary over space and time.

# Development of Population Geography

Population geography is a sub-discipline of Human geography and studies the distribution, concentration and density of population over the terestrial surface, as well as differences in population size, changes and characteristics, like structures, migrations, activity etc, among some places present compared to others. Population geography has had a perscientific stage as long as human history. First modern scientific treatis of population in geography was the F. Ratzels book Antropogeography in 1882. During the first half of the XX century, French geographer Vidal de la Blanche gave a capital importance of population studies in his work Principes de Geographie Humaine. In interwar years, various aspects of population were studied. After The Second World War started the renovating movement of geography and new tendencies appear in human geography and, consequently in population geography. Attempts were made to define population geography as a separate sub-discipline.

The early works of George (1951) and the influential statement of Trewartha before the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers in 1953 are often considered as the turning point in the emergence of population geography as a separate field within geographical studies. Growing availability of population statistics has played a crucial role in the emergence of population geography. The UN agencies began publishing demographic statistics on a regular basis soon after the end of the Second World War.

The UN also played a significant role in making the census data uniform and comparable across different countries by issuing guidelines and principles for census taking. The political and societal conditions, both during and after the wars, necessitated a geographical study of the ethnic compo­sition of population of different regions.

The need for a more detailed account of other demographic characteristics resulted in a switch over from macro to micro level studies, which, in turn, facilitated population mapping. Population mapping has a long tradition in geography. In the earlier periods such maps were largely confined to distribution and density aspects. The growing availability of population data after the Second World War facili­tated mapping of the other demographic attributes pertaining to different regions of the world.

Further, increasing use of quantification, aided by access to computers helped geographers handle large data sets.

The most significant authors who worked on defining population geography were French geographers P. George (1951, 1959), Beaujen-Garnier (1965, 1966); North-american geographers: G. Trewarta (1953, 1969), W. Bunge (1962), J. Clance (1965, 1971), W. Zelinski (1966); in Great Britain. Those authors and their works had the significant influence on the development of population science in the world and also in Serbia. Although the development of population geography was different in different countries and scientific research centers, we can clearly defined **four stages**.

**First stage lasted untill 1960s** and was characterised by works of G.Trewarta, H. Doerres Ju.G. Sauškin, D.N. Anučin, J. Beaujeu-Gariner. G. Trewarta argued that the population is the point of reference from which all other elements are observed and from which all derive significance and meaning. This view was adopted and shared by authors dealing with population items, explicitly or implicitly.

**Second stage lasted from 1960s till 1970s** and the most significant authors dealing with population problems were W. Zelinsky, W. Bunge; H.Bobek, W. Hartke, K.Ruppert, F.Schaffer; D.I. Valentej, K.Korčak. This phase was characterized by the application of quantitative methods and efforts for understanding the spatial structure of the population. Many scientists see this development phase as a particularly prosperous period, because it carried more intensive relations of geography and demography through the introduction of statistical, mathematical and demographic methods and techniques in studies of population geography.

**Third phase lasted from 1970s to 1980s,** and was characterized by close relations between population geography and formal demography. Development and application of GIS and computer data, have made population studies more complex and applicable in practice, through population policy and population projections. The most significant authors in this period were L. Kosinski, A. Jagelski, Hägerstrand.

And at last**, fourth stage started in 1980s and in many countries lastes until present days**. In population geography appeared new tendencies associated with the critique of positivism, the establishment of humanistic approaches and modifications of general geographic concepts. In this period, spatial analysis and quantitative scientific methods were reaffirmed, and because of that some population studies were redefined in spatial demography, a time dimension advocated in historical demography. In this context, we emphasize the work of D. Plane and P. Rogerson. Population geography is viewed differently from one country to another. Its definition differs from too narrow to overly broad. But two research areas were of particular interest to geographers - population distribution and migration. Both items acquired an international dimension. Recently, eminent population geographers exchanged various view points in an attempt to provoke new thinking on subject and define the answers of new fields research in population geography. Population geography in the XXI Century is no longer a field comprised of spatial applications of fertility, mortality and migration only. Contemporary population geography is theoretically sophisticated, integrating spatial analysis, GIS and geo-referenced data. Future progress in the field of population geography will derive from more research at the intersections of population processes and societal issues and concerns.

**Subject matter/ scope of population geography**

**Population** [**geography**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography) is a division of [human geography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_geography). It is the study of the ways in which spatial variations in the distribution, composition, migration, and growth of populations are related to the nature of places. It focuses on the characteristics of population distributions that change in a spatial context. Population geography receives important primary data from demography, which reveals the geographic aspects of natural and migration population change. Population geography also uses field teams for observation and investigation. It studies the physical forms of inhabitance (types of residences according to spatial differences, the nature of planning and engineering for populated points, and so on), because all of these features are reflected in the regional characteristics of the physical makeup of cities and rural settlements.

Population geography studies systems and structures—the forms of settlement in relation to the spatial nature of production, the characteristics of the geographical environment, the economic-geographical condition of population employment, and population migrations. Together with differences in the natural growth of population, migrations determine the course of territorial redistribution of population. A prominent place is given to the classification and typology of populated points.

**Broadly speaking, the concerns of population geography, according to Trewartha, can be grouped into three categories:**

(1) A historical (pre-historic and post-historic) account of population;

(2) Dynamics of number, size, distribution and growth patterns; and

(3) Qualities of population and their regional distribution.

**To conclude, the main concern of population geography revolves round the following three aspects of human population:**

1. Size and distribution, including the rural-urban distribution of population.

2. Population dynamics – past and present trends in growth and its spatial manifestation; components of population change, viz., fertility, mortality and migration.

3. Population composition and structure. They include a set of demographic characteristics (such as age-sex structure, marital status and average age at marriage etc.), social characteristics (such as caste, racial/ethnic, religious and linguistic compo­sition of population; literacy and levels of educational attainment etc.), and economic characteristics (such as workforce participation rate and workforce structure etc.).

In addition to the above, as government policies and measures in a country have significant bearings on population and its various attributes, a population geographers also concerns himself with policies and programmes designed to regulate population size and its attributes. There exists a very intimate association between population size and economic development. Expanding population is generally viewed as a deterrent to economic progress in a country. Of late, deteriorating environmental quality the world over is also being attributed to rapid growth in population.

However, the nature of the precise link between population growth and environmental degradation, on the one hand, and economic development and environmental degradation, on the other, varies a great deal from one part of the earth to another depending upon various social and economic parameters. These and similar other issues, therefore, also form part of the overall concern of a population geographer.