

## Humanistic geography

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Most prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, humanistic geography is a conceptual perspective claiming that a comprehensive understanding of human–environment relationships must consider individual and group experiences and meanings of space, place, landscape, region, mobility, and related geographic phenomena. Partly propelled by 1960s research in behavioral geography and environmental perception, humanistic geography incorporated a wide range of philosophical approaches that included phenomenology, existentialism, idealism, pragmatism, grounded theory, and symbolic interactionism (Ley and Samuels 1978). Geographers most commonly associated with humanistic geography included Edmunds Bunkse, Anne Buttner, James Duncan, J. Nicholas Entrikin, David Ley, David Lowenthal, Douglas C.D. Pocock, J. Douglas Porteous, Edward Relph, Graham Rowles, Robert David Sack, Marwyn Samuels, David Seamon, Yi-Fu Tuan, and John Western. The first geographer to describe humanistic geography formally as a disciplinary subfield was Yi-Fu Tuan (1976). He defined the approach as the geographic study of human beings' experiences and understandings of space, place, and the natural world.

## The development of humanistic geography

Though humanistic geography became an explicit subfield of the discipline only in the 1970s, there were several earlier geographers who, at least implicitly, pointed toward humanistic approaches, methods, and themes. Examples include Alexander von Humboldt's interest in how landscape painting could contribute to the public's awareness of the earth's natural regions; Johannes Gabriel Granö's efforts to develop an experientially grounded cartography that could map sensory and perceptual aspects of natural and human-made landscapes; and Paul Vidal de la Blache's field studies of *genre de vie*, a term encompassing the idea that the "way of life" of a region reflected its inhabitants' psychological, social, and economic identities imprinted on the landscape. Though not a geographer, another significant representative was French historian Eric Dardel, who examined *geographicality* (*géographicité*), the experiential linkages that supported human worlds environmentally and geographically, including ties to places, landscapes, and regions.

In spite of these early researchers' efforts, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that geographical thinking pointed toward a formal explication of humanistic geography. In a 1947 article in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, J.K. Wright called for geographers to include a humanistic perspective in their studies. He advocated a subfield of geographical

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research that would study peoples' subjective geographical understandings and values. He labeled this field of inquiry "geosophy," which he defined as the examination of geographical knowledge in all manner of human forms. In a 1952 article in the *Indian Geographical Journal*, William Kirk, working independently from Wright, extended his call for study of geographical knowledge by developing the concept of *behavioral environment*, which Kirk defined as the environment not as it is known objectively but as it is perceived and understood by individuals and groups. Wright and Kirk's efforts were significant for humanistic geography because both thinkers realized that geographers needed to expand their research horizon to incorporate human consciousness and cognition, since the ways in which individuals and groups structure and make sense of their world play a primary role in how they act in and make use of that world.

In the 1960s, Wright and Kirk's ideas would help spawn a new disciplinary subfield of *behavioral geography and environmental perception*, which largely focused on the cognitive dimensions of environmental behavior. In the 1970s, the development of humanistic geography greatly benefited from this behavioral research, which had shifted the study focus from measurable aggregate analyses of spatial and environmental behaviors to individuals' environmental images, attitudes, preferences, and worldviews. Though much of this research remained quantitative and focused on the consciously grounded dimensions of geographical actions, experiences, and meanings, this work was crucial for the development of humanistic geography because it helped to justify the study of human beings' lived relationships with the places, spaces, and environments comprising their geographic worlds.

## Why "humanistic geography"?

There are at least two reasons for the label of "humanistic geography" rather than "experiential geography," "lived geography," "existential geography," or some similar term. First, the 1970s marked a time when psychology and sociology had already drawn on the "humanistic" label to identify new subfields in their disciplines. Unsettled by the behaviorist and Freudian perspectives that dominated psychology, Abraham Maslow advocated an alternative approach he called "humanistic psychology," which emphasized free will, creativity, human potential, and self-exploration. Similarly, sociologist Peter Berger called for a humanistic approach in his discipline, suggesting that the societal dimensions of human life could be more thoroughly examined not primarily via social structures, networks, and institutions but via the experiences, actions, and understandings of the individuals and groups involved.

A second reason for the label "humanistic geography" related to links with "humanism," a philosophical, ideological, and ethical perspective with a complex intellectual history often incorporating conflicting understandings (Relph 1981). Most broadly, humanism refers to a belief in the unity of humankind and in human beings' potential to improve their own lives and worlds, making careful, critical use of accurate intellectual knowledge and relevant life experiences. Humanist hallmarks include reason, tolerance, individual responsibility, and understanding and action grounded in mature personal experience. "Humanist" originated from the fifteenth-century Italian *umanista*, a scholar of classical Greek and Latin literature. Originally, these scholars used "humanism" to spotlight the core of the Italian Renaissance, which, in

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seeking to revive classical learning, emphasized that human beings themselves, rather than divine power, play an instrumental role in who they are and what they become. Over the centuries, many different modes of humanism arose, often contradictory philosophically and ideologically. In the twentieth century, humanism continued to incorporate a wide range of meanings, though one can argue that its primary philosophical and ethical tenets included: (i) the emancipatory potential of human reason; (ii) the significance of free, open inquiry; (iii) the understanding of things and events mostly as they offer value for human beings and human life; and (iv) the wish to make life better for all people, particularly the less able or less fortunate.

As it developed in the 1970s, humanistic geography generally hewed to these central humanist tenets but reinterpreted them in innovative ways that assimilated shifting philosophical and practical concerns, including earth's ecological crisis. Humanistic geographers accepted the constructive possibilities of human reason but contended that intellectual knowledge grounded only in scientific method too often misinterpreted phenomena and reduced them to inaccurate, piecemeal counterfeits. Humanistic geographers appreciated the possibilities of earnest, open-ended inquiry but looked toward conceptual perspectives like phenomenology and hermeneutics that respected the phenomena being studied and provided descriptive and interpretive methods whereby researchers could more accurately and comprehensively locate and understand those phenomena. Like social scientists, humanistic geographers were keen to use their knowledge to contribute to human betterment, but they emphasized that any practical plans or policies should be grounded in the experiences, needs, and wishes of affected parties rather than unilaterally dictated by outside governmental or corporate decisions and demands.

In relation to environmental and ecological deterioration, humanistic geographers argued that, because humans are earth's most conscious and environmentally exploitive beings, their efforts at betterment must extend beyond the human world to protecting and strengthening the welfare of other sentient beings as well as ecosystems, places, landscapes, natural regions, and the planet as a living whole.

### Key themes in humanistic geography

Broadly, one can identify four central conceptual and methodological themes relating to humanistic geography as it developed in the 1970s and 1980s.

1. Humanistic geographers understood human life and experience to be a dynamic, multivalent structure that incorporates bodily, sensory, emotional, attitudinal, cognitive, and transpersonal dimensions. Humanistic researchers argued that a comprehensive human geography must describe these many dimensions; understand what they contribute to environmental experience, action, and meaning; and seek out integrated frameworks identifying how these many dimensions relate and interact in supportive and undermining ways. For example, Edward Relph (1976) delineated a spectrum of spatial experience that ranged from the instinctive, bodily, and immediate to the cerebral, ideal, and intangible. He probed how the experience of space differs from the experience of place and contended that space becomes place when it gathers human meanings, actions, and identity environmentally and temporally. Similarly, Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) delineated a conceptual structure of environmental attitudes and values

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by consolidating similarities and differences in the ways that human beings respond to their geographical worlds physiologically, psychologically, socially, and culturally. He concluded that every person is, simultaneously, a biological being, a social being, and a unique individual. He demonstrated how environmental perceptions, attitudes, and values arise from and contribute to all three aspects of human being.

2. Humanistic geographers emphasized that much of human experience is opaque, ineffable, or beyond taken-for-granted awareness. To identify and describe these less accessible aspects of human life, humanistic geographers largely turned away from conventional scientific method that required tangible, measurable phenomena explicated and correlated mathematically and statistically. Instead, humanistic geographers turned toward ontological perspectives that accepted a much wider range of experience and presence. They drew on epistemological perspectives that sought to be open to phenomena and to accept all aspects of their constitution. The aim was an empathetic, wider-ranging mode of discovery whereby the phenomenon was given time and space to present itself. The emphasis was on “methodologies of engagement” that allowed researchers to encounter and understand the worlds and experiences of their subjects carefully, accurately, and comprehensively. In working toward a more intimate encounter with the phenomenon under study, some humanistic geographers used directed intuition and self-reflective explication; others carefully studied real-world situations, for example, a specific urban neighborhood or a small number of individuals asked to describe their environmental experiences

and actions as accurately and as thoroughly as possible.

3. Many humanistic geographers argued that, as much as possible, the evidence, general principles, and understandings of humanistic geography should arise from self-knowledge grounded in researchers’ firsthand experiences. Research should work toward a forthright engagement with the experiences of others, whether those “others” are people, places, landscapes, elements of nature, aspects of the human-made environment, or other sentient beings. Humanistic geographers called into question conventional empirical research that defined the topic of research in objectivist fashion as a thing or situation separate from and unrelated to the life or experience of the researcher. Humanistic geographers argued that, by understanding the significance of environmental and geographical experiences in their own lives, individuals might act more responsibly and generously toward other human beings and toward the places and environments that one inhabits or knows (Tuan 1976). In this regard, Edward Relph (1981) advocated for an *environmental humility* – a way of engaging with the world whereby things, places, landscapes, people, and other living beings are all respected just for being what they are and, therefore, are thoughtfully cared for and intentionally protected.
4. Broadly, humanistic geographers grounded their work in two complementary research models, the first of which can be identified as *explications of experience*; and the second, as *interpretations of social worlds*. Explications of experience were most often associated with “place studies” and represented by such geographers as Anne Buttimer, Douglas C.D. Pocock, Edward Relph, David

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Seamon, and Yi-Fu Tuan. Much of this work was grounded in phenomenology and, for its place interpretations, drew on a wide range of descriptive sources that included first-person experience, philosophical argument, archival reports, accounts from imaginative literature, and experiential evidence from photography, film, and other artistic media. Typically, this work emphasized lived commonalities in relation to environmental and place experience, though these humanistic researchers also asked how those commonalities varied in terms of individual and group differences. In the 1980s and 1990s, this work would be criticized as *essentialist* – claiming generalizable, universal structures such as “place” and “home” and largely ignoring lived variations grounded in social, cultural, and historical factors (Cresswell 2013; see “criticisms” below).

The second research model for humanistic geography – interpretations of social worlds – was represented by the work of such geographers as James Duncan, David Ley, Marwyn Samuels, Susan Smith, Graham Rowles, and John Western. This work incorporated a wider range of philosophical traditions than experiential explication and included pragmatism, grounded theory, symbolic interactionism, poststructuralism, and Marxist perspectives. Typically, this research was grounded empirically in a specific place or social situation – for example, David Ley’s work on inner-city subcultures, housing, and gentrification; John Western’s documentation of the impact of apartheid on Cape Town, South Africa; or Graham Rowles’s research on the everyday environmental and place experiences of American elderly populations. These researchers interpreted place and related geographical phenomena as a “social

construction” arising from purposeful actions of people-in-place. Place was interpreted as a negotiated reality via which people facilitated places, which in turn facilitated the lives of people associated with those places. In the 1980s and 1990s, this “social-constructionist” approach to place became one significant bridge to post-structuralist thinking and the “new cultural geography” (Adams, Hoelscher, and Till 2001; Cloke, Philo, and Sadler 1991).

### Humanistic geography, 1970–1978

Though interest in humanistic geography still holds sway today, the most significant work was accomplished in the period 1970–1978. During this time, humanistic geographers produced important substantive research and explored broader conceptual and methodological concerns. Though humanistic research incorporated a wide range of philosophical traditions, phenomenology was most often used because it emphasized the elucidation of everyday human experience and could be readily applied to taken-for-granted geographic phenomena such as place, home, lived space, and environmental experience. The first explicit discussion of phenomenology and geography was a 1970 article in the *Canadian Geographer* by Edward Relph, who gave examples of how the phenomenological approach was appropriate for probing the relationships between human beings and their natural and fabricated environments. A year later in the same journal, Yi-Fu Tuan also considered the geographical value of phenomenology and concluded that the perspective was potentially helpful because it considered neither the world nor human beings in the abstract but, rather, emphasized “human-being-in-the-world” as it incorporated environmental, geographical, and place aspects.

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The next productive year in humanistic research was 1974, marked by four significant works. First, David Ley published *The Black Inner City as Frontier Outpost*, an ethnographic study examining an African American neighborhood in Philadelphia. Second, Anne Buttimer published *Values in Geography*, a work that considered how taken-for-granted personal and professional understandings and values ground scholarly knowledge, often in ways of which researchers were not self-consciously aware. Yi-Fu Tuan published two notable works in 1974, the first of which was an article in *Progress in Human Geography* in which Tuan described two different modes of place: *public symbols*, places of prominence, like New York City's Time Square, that yield their meaning to the eye; and *fields of care*, places like a well-liked tavern or neighborhood only known through prolonged experience and typically undistinguished architecturally or visually. Tuan's second significant work in 1974 was *Topophilia* (Tuan 1974), which delineated an outline for a phenomenology of environmental and place experience. This book became one of the best known humanistic-geographic works for researchers outside the discipline, partly because Tuan introduced the term "topophilia," referring to attachment to and love of place.

The year 1976 marked a number of significant advances in humanistic research, including an explicit formulation of the subfield and two penetrating works that further clarified the relationship between humanistic geography and phenomenology. In a special June issue of the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* devoted to the philosophy of geography, two important articles appeared, the first of which, by Anne Buttimer, examined how the phenomenological concept of *life-world* – the taken-for-granted world of everyday living – might offer insights for research on place, social space, and time-space rhythms.

In the same *Annals* issue, Yi-Fu Tuan (1976) provided the first formal conceptualization of humanistic geography, which he described as a branch of the discipline that leads to a more thorough understanding of the human condition in relation to environmental and geographic concerns.

The most significant humanistic work in 1976 was Edward Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (Relph 1976), a phenomenological study that interpreted place experience in terms of insideness and outsidiness. Relph argued that the most intimate experience of place could be described by *existential insideness*, the lived situation in which a place is experienced and understood without self-conscious awareness yet is permeated with cognitive, sensory, and affective meaning usually unnoticed unless the place is changed in some way – for example, one's home and neighborhood is destroyed by storm. Also in this work, Relph formulated the concept of *placelessness*, which he defined as the fragmentation and elimination of distinct places in the world. Of all the 1970s work in humanistic geography, *Place and Placelessness* perhaps had the most lasting impact because it provided a lucid, applicable presentation of why places are important in human life, what their constitution is experientially, and how they have been undermined in modernist and postmodernist times.

The year 1978 marked the high point of humanistic research in that David Ley and Marwyn Samuels (1978) published *Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems*, an edited collection illustrating the broad conceptual and thematic range that humanist perspectives could provide geography. In their introduction, the editors argued that the humanistic tradition was important for geographers because it offered one conceptual and applied pathway for reconciling such dualisms as objectivity and subjectivity;



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materialism and idealism; agency and structure; and knowledge and wisdom. Chapters focused on such diverse topics as existential geography, alternative cartographies, a humanized economic geography, links between imaginative literature and geography, words for places, landscapes as experienced by tourists, and the phenomenological studies of the natural world produced by the eminent late eighteenth-century German poet and dramatist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In spite of their eclecticism, the 20 chapters of the volume effectively contributed to the editors' main aim: to reconcile the "science and art of geography" (Ley and Samuels 1978, 10).

After 1978 and into the 2000s, important humanistic work continued to appear, including David Seamon's *A Geography of the Lifeworld* (1979); Anne Buttimer and David Seamon's *Human Experience of Space and Place* (1980); Douglas C.D. Pocock's *Humanistic Geography and Literature* (1981); Edward Relph's *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (Relph 1981); Yi-Fu Tuan's *Segmented Worlds and Self* (1982); David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer's *Dwelling, Place and Environment* (1985); Edward Relph's *The Modern Urban Landscape* (1987); J. Douglas Porteous's *Planned to Death* (1989); J. Nicholas Entrikin's *The Betweenness of Place* (1991); Robert David Sack's *Place, Consumption and Modernity* (1992); Anne Buttimer's *Geography and the Human Spirit* (1993); David Seamon's *Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing* (1993); Paul Rodaway's *Sensuous Geographies* (1994); Yi-Fu Tuan's *Cosmos and Hearth* (1996); Robert David Sack's *Homo Geographicus* (1997); David Seamon and Arthur Zajonc's *Goethe's Way of Science* (1998); Anne Buttimer's *Sustainable Landscapes and Lifeways* (2001); Robert David Sack's *A Geographical Guide to the Real and the Good* (2003); Edmunds Bunkse's *Geography and the Art of Life* (2004); and Yi-Fu Tuan's *Humanist Geography* (2012).

Most generally, however, the perspective of humanistic geography largely fell from sight or metamorphosed into the "new cultural geography" molded from poststructuralist, feminist, and critical perspectives. In this regard, many human geographers shifted their attention to the cutting-edge work of philosophers Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Bruno Latour, and other poststructuralist, critical, and relationalist theorists (Cresswell 2013). One example of how humanistic themes shifted in the new millennium is *Textures of Place* (Adams, Hoelscher, and Till 2001), an edited collection dedicated to Yi-Fu Tuan and the humanistic tradition. Overall, the volume's 27 chapters demonstrated how an engagement with critical social theory worked to transform earlier humanistic understandings of place, environmental experience, and geographical meaning. The editors of the volume called for a reconsideration of humanistic geography in the context of "revised assumptions about human subjectivity, the transparency of language, and the use of descriptive categories based upon Western traditions of understanding" (Adams, Hoelscher, and Till 2001, xvii).

### Criticisms of humanistic geography

Beginning in the 1980s, humanistic research faced increasing criticism from quantitative-analytic geographers, on the one hand, and Marxist, feminist, and poststructural geographers, on the other hand (Cloke, Philo, and Sadler 1991; Cresswell 2013). Quantitative geographers largely criticized humanistic work in relation to *research method*: In turning away from deductive theory, predefined concepts, and measurable validation, how could humanistic geographers be certain that their interpretive conclusions were accurate, comprehensive, and

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trustworthy? In response, humanistic geographers emphasized that their approach was generally *inductive* in that it drew on the richness and complexity of human situations and events to locate generalizable descriptions and theories. Humanistic geographers pointed out that the conclusions of any humanistic study were no more or no less than *interpretive possibilities* open to the public scrutiny of other interested parties. Humanistic geographers emphasized that their interpretive sources were wide-ranging and included field notes, focus groups, autobiographical descriptions, accounts from participant observation, and material texts like photographs, films, buildings, landscapes, imaginative literature, and archival documents. One methodological device used by humanistic geographers to better assure accuracy and trustworthiness was *triangulation*, whereby researchers drew on multiple modes of evidence-gathering methods to identify different lived perspectives and to corroborate different information sources.

The criticisms of feminist, Marxist, and post-structural geographers emphasized conceptual, ideological, and ethical concerns. Feminist geographers claimed that humanistic research was *essentialist* in uncritically assuming an unchanging, universal human condition that ignored individual and group diversity, including gender, social, cultural, and economic differences. These feminist geographers argued that humanistic work was *authoritative* in that it appeared to privilege the interpretive powers of scholarly experts who arbitrarily claimed the status to identify and describe the geographical situations of “more ordinary” people. Feminist critics contended that humanistic work presupposed an implicit *masculinist* bias that assumed academically trained men (mostly) could understand all others’ situations – for example, the experiences of women, the less able, gays and lesbians, ethnic and racial communities, and so forth. Marxist geographers

criticized humanistic geography because they saw it as *voluntarist* in that it uncritically interpreted social life as a function of intentional, willed plans and actions of individuals. The Marxist claim was that humanistic thinking gave too much weight to autonomous human *agency* at the expense of entrenched, transparent social *structures* and power relations. Marxist critics pointed out that humanistic geographers gave little attention to the underlying economic and political dynamics shaping places and peoples’ everyday lives.

Humanistic geographers responded to the essentialist, authoritative, and masculinist charges by arguing that, in fact, humanistic work recognized human differences and sought conceptual and methodological ways for thoroughly engaging with the uniqueness of individuals and groups. They pointed to studies that used participant observation and other qualitative methods to understand particular geographical situations – for example, David Ley’s work on how African Americans negotiated their lives in the place context of Philadelphia’s inner city. In regard to the Marxist charge that they neglected the role of societal structures in constraining human freedom, humanistic geographers responded that their perspective could examine phenomena such as power, exclusion, resistance, and conflict, though little work was done in this direction, partly perhaps because most humanistic geographers instinctively favored freedom, creativity, and personal and group autonomy. Humanistic geographers accepted the Marxist claim that structural conditions are critical for understand human action but, equally important, they argued, was the role of peoples’ values, beliefs, worldviews, intentions, and taken-for-granted ways of coping with the world. Humanistic geographers focusing on interpretations of social worlds probed the structural constraints



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of places and social worlds directly but gave equal weight to human agents' being aware of and being able to change their lifeways in relation to limiting social and economic structures.

Poststructural geographers questioned humanistic work in yet other ways. Some poststructural critics claimed that humanistic geographers ethically favored place, insideness, and rootedness over non-place, outsideness, and mobility; place itself was assumed to be centered, static, bounded, and exclusionary. Instead, poststructural critics spoke of a "progressive sense of place" and focused on how places relate and respond to their wider social and environmental contexts. For these critics, places held their importance geographically, but the crucial theoretical and practical aim was finding ways whereby places could better incorporate diversity and partake in constructive interconnections and exchanges with other places. Another group of poststructural critics questioned whether "place" even existed in the postmodern world, claiming that real-world places were becoming marginal and obsolete because of trends toward globalization, non-places, and hyperspace. Some poststructural critics went so far as to suggest that, in our proliferating "hyper-real" world of digital environments and virtual realities, the lived distinctions between "real" and "imagined" places should be critically called into question. These critics challenged the rigid, unchanging stasis of physical places and environments that they claimed humanistic accounts encompassed. These critics spoke instead of provisional, shifting connections and flows among people, spaces, places, nation-states, information, worldviews, and digital representations. Key themes were mobility, flux, hybridity, relativity, relationality, discontinuities, rhizomes, assemblages, hyper-worlds, virtual places, and smooth and striated spaces.

Humanistic geographers responded to these poststructural criticisms by suggesting that, even as globalization eroded some places, it strengthened other places and contributed to new kinds of places. Humanistic geographers pointed out that, even with the growing importance of digital communication, hyperspace, and virtual realities, real places retain their importance because people are bodily beings who always unavoidably live a life in some physical place. This inescapable embodiment-in-place was often ignored by the poststructural critics who aimed for a more progressive sense of place grounded in a dynamic, ever-shifting network of intertwined, porous places. Humanistic geographers contended that a good portion of such dynamic exchange remains grounded in the habitual regularity of emplaced bodies. Humanistic geographers also emphasized that any dynamic interchange among places presupposes a robust integrity of each place itself; this robust integrity is at least partly founded in the habitual regularity of lived bodies inescapably bound to physical place (Seamon 2013).

### Humanistic geography today

Though humanistic geography as an explicit subfield largely disappeared by the early 1990s, interest in humanistic themes continued inside and outside the discipline, particularly on the part of phenomenological philosophers concerned with the phenomenon of place. Humanistic geographers' interpretations of place in the 1970s were largely *subjectivist* in that place was understood as a cognitive or affective representation inside the human being and ontologically separate from the objective environment outside. As phenomenological philosophers Edward Casey (2009) and Jeff Malpas (1999) probed the topic in the 1990s and 2000s, they argued that place is a primary ontological structure

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that encompasses both human experience and the physical world in which that experience unfolds. This argument that human being is always human-being-in-place highlighted an important new way of geographical thinking because it claimed that place is necessarily an integral, inescapable contributor to human existence and life. This understanding meant that places are not material environments existentially apart from the people associated with them but, rather, the holistic unit of human-beings-experiencing-place. Sometimes called *lived emplacement* or *embodied place*, this phenomenon was understood to be complex and dynamic, and to incorporate generative processes via which a place and its experiences and meanings shift or remain the same (Seamon 2013).

Partly because of Casey and Malpas's writings, researchers inside and outside geography brought renewed scholarly attention to the lived qualities of place and to other topics associated with the humanistic tradition. For example, geographers Soren Larsen and Jay Johnson (2012) worked to link a place-grounded ontology with affinity politics, and geographer Sara Johansson (2013) developed a method of "rhythm analysis" to understand how the "lived body" encompasses and is encompassed by the urban environment as experienced. Echoing earlier claims on lived embodiment by French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Johansson argued that the bodily dimensions of environmental experience are as meaningful and as important in understanding place as environmental cognition and intellectual geographic knowledge.

In research by non-geographers, one also finds a continuing body of work involving a humanistic approach to geographical and environmental topics. One example is philosopher Ingrid Stefanovic's efforts (2000) toward a phenomenology of sustainability via an examination

of how place and lived emplacement provide a foothold for grounding environmental responsibilities and actions in relation to particular individuals, groups, and localities. A second example is the research of literary scholar Anna Westerståhl Stenport (2004), who drew largely on Swedish writer August Strindberg's works relating to Paris and Stockholm to examine how the nineteenth-century city shaped imaginative literature and how, in turn, that literature shaped perceptions of the nineteenth-century city. A third example is ethnographer Urzula Woźniak's examination (2009) of at-homeness and placelessness in the context of current global migration. Drawing on Ukrainian, Turkish, and Vietnamese examples, she used the concept of community attachment to understand the contrasting degree of identification that different immigrant groups feel for their place of relocation; she demonstrated how mental associations with immigrants' original home place play a significant role in their understanding of and feelings toward their new place of residence.

These studies and others exemplify a new generation of researchers who continue to be interested in such humanistic topics as place experience, at-homeness, community involvement and identity, out-of-placeness, environmental personhood, lived emplacement, mobility and place, supportive or undermining processes shaping place, and the lived similarities and differences between real places and virtual places (Seamon 2013). All of this work remains grounded in a central humanistic aim: to bring "human beings in all of their complexity to the centre-stage of human geography" (Cloke, Philo, and Sadler 1991, 58).

**SEE ALSO:** Bodies; Cognition and spatial behavior; Emotional geographies; Feminist political ecology; Home; Marxist geography;

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Nature, art and aesthetics; Phenomenology;  
Place; Space

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**Abstract:** First formalized by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan in 1976, humanistic geography refers to a wide-ranging body of research emphasizing the importance of human experience and meaning in understanding peoples' relationship with places and geographical environments. Recognizing that human involvement with the geographical world is complex and multidimensional, humanistic geographers interpret human action and awareness as they both sustain and are sustained by such geographic phenomena as space, place, home, mobility, landscape, region, nature, and human-made environments. Humanistic geography was most prominent in the 1970s and 1980s. Over time, it was largely superseded by more focused conceptual approaches, including phenomenological geography, existential geography, feminist geography, poststructural geography, critical geography, and relationalist geography. Today, there is a renewed interest in a humanistic approach to geographical topics, though much of this momentum arises from outside geography via phenomenological research that emphasizes "lived emplacement."

**Keywords:** behavioral geography; environmental experience; existentialism; feminist geography; humanism; humanistic geography; phenomenology; phenomenological geography; place; poststructuralist geography