

My two hometowns remind me that space is essential in understanding the lives of modern societies. Imagine the beautiful snow-capped active volcano of Mt. Fuji, surrounded by green tea fields and hordes of tourists that contribute to a thriving economy. Conversely, envision empty factories, a crumbling theatre and visible poverty; the current reality of Oradea or Nagyvarad, a once thriving Hungarian city that gradually lost its cultural importance. My environments growing up helped pave the path to my interest in geography. I lived in five different cities in three countries, was raised by a grandmother who was a pioneer chemical engineer and ecological activist, and experienced the earthquake in 2011 first-hand in Japan.

These influences solidified into an academic interest during the national qualifiers of the International Geography Olympiad, where I placed in the top ten. Here, I was tasked with creating a plan to revitalize a district in the southern Hungarian city of Pecs, built for uranium miners in the mid-late 20th century. In order to understand the theories behind planned towns and thus better reflect on the decay left behind by Hungary's socialist urban planning, I compared Ebenezer's Garden City, Le Corbusier's Radiant City, and Wright's Broadacre City. To breathe new life into the area, taking my cue from models of gentrification that start with a younger demographic, I proposed to refurbish previous worker accommodation for university students studying in the nearby district. Connecting these two districts required an investment in public transportation. However, during my time spent in Williamsburg, Brooklyn this summer, I realized that I failed to account for some of the negative social impacts that gentrification can cause.

My interest in geography, in particular in our physical environment, has been fuelled by visits to the geysers in Iceland or the salt mines in Transylvania, but also by experiencing the fragility of nature through pollution caused by industries in Romania. Despite the strict laws on environmental protection in Romania, many rivers are still highly polluted due to human ignorance and lack of water purification technology. I am currently working on a project with my grandmother, analysing five pollutants in samples taken at three sites along the Koros, to determine the efficiency of water purification technologies in Nagyvarad.

This summer, I attended Yale University's summer school on International Affairs and Security on a full scholarship. Out of the eight seminars I attended, I particularly enjoyed the one focusing on the change of statehood throughout history, comparing Aristotle, Hobbes, and Schumpeter's philosophy. The latter's theory, likening democratic politics to a marketplace of political ideas, relying on manipulation and creating citizens' wants by political persuasions, seemed to fit well to explain the success of Hungary's ruling party in recent elections.

Last year, I organised a half-day school event with two of my classmates, where we held an interactive presentation to over 60 students on the cultural geography of Ireland, presenting on a comparison of Irish Travellers' to Hungarian Romanis'. In addition, I was selected to represent my school at an annual international student conference in Germany to discuss the migration crisis in Europe. Our team surveyed 150 peer's opinion on Hungary's migration policy and compared that of other countries' policies. I also help prepare younger students who will attend next year's conference. Coming first in the Euroscola national competition in 2017, our team was given the chance to explore the working of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

I believe that studying geography at a top UK university will allow me to further develop my interdisciplinary interest and better understand the increasingly complex relations between the human and physical environment.