

Energy flows: why do things move?

A lot of geographical investigation, particularly in physical geography, is concerned with energy. This is because so much geography is about movement. For example:

- the effect of flowing water
- people's journeys
- the transfer of heat, by ocean currents and wind
- the trade of food and manufactured goods.

All these movements take energy – derived ultimately, in most cases, from the sun. So the idea that 'energy flows' is literally a useful one. It is epitomised by the surfer in this dramatic shot, catching the energy transmitted through the wave. This crashing wave has other impacts too, such as coastal erosion.



The idea of energy flowing through a system can also be a useful metaphor. So just as geographers (after W.M. Davis) used to talk about youthful landscapes, which had a certain pedagogic power, we can also apply gravity models in human geography: it is not uncommon to hear about the entrepreneurial energy associated with universities as a location factor for research-led industries like biotechnology.

Why do things move? This is a *great* 'big question', and one that geography helps us investigate.