

1

Cultural Geography: An Introduction



Aboriginal painting of Arnhem Land,
Northern Territory, Australia.
(Penny Tweedie/Corbis.)

Most of us are born geographers. We are curious about the distinctive character of places and peoples. We think in terms of territory and space. Take a look outside your window right now. The houses and commercial buildings, streets and highways, gardens and lawns all tell us something interesting and profound about who we are as a culture. If you travel down the road, or on a jet to another region or country, that view outside your window will change, sometimes subtly, sometimes drastically. Our geographical imaginations will push us to look and think and begin to make sense of what is going on in these different places, environments, and landscapes. It is this curiosity about the world—about how and why it is structured the way it is, what it means, and how we have changed it and continue to change it—that is at the heart of human geography. You are already geographers; we hope that our book will make you better ones.

If every place on Earth were identical, we would not need geography, but each is unique. Every place, however, does share characteristics with other places. Geographers define the concept of *region* as a grouping of similar places, or of places with similar characteristics. The existence of different regions endows the Earth's surface with a mosaiclike quality. Geography as an academic discipline is an outgrowth of both our curiosity about lands and peoples other than our own and our need to come to grips with the place-centered element within our souls. When professional, academic geographers consider the differences and similarities among places, they want to understand what they see. They first find out exactly what variations exist among regions and places by describing them as precisely as possible. Then they try

to decide what forces made these areas different or alike. Geographers ask *what? where? why?* and *how?*

Our natural geographical curiosity and intrinsic need for identity were long ago reinforced by pragmatism, the practical motives of traders and empire builders who wanted information about the world for the purposes of commerce and conquest. This concern for the practical aspects of geography first arose thousands of years ago among the ancient Greeks, Romans, Mesopotamians, and Phoenicians, the greatest traders and empire builders of their times. They cataloged factual information about locations, places, and products. Indeed, **geography** is a Greek word meaning literally “to describe the Earth.” Not content merely to chart and describe the world, these ancient geographers soon began to ask questions about why cultures and environments differ from place to place, initiating the study of what today we call geography.

What Is Cultural Geography?

As its name implies, *cultural geography* forms one part of the discipline of geography, complementing physical geography, the part of the discipline that deals with the natural environment. To understand the scope of cultural geography, we must first agree on the meaning of *culture*.

Many definitions of culture exist, some broad and some narrow. We might best define **culture** as learned collective human behavior, as opposed to instinctive, or inborn, behavior. These learned traits form a way of life held in common by a group of people. Learned similarities in speech, behav-

ior, ideology, livelihood, technology, value system, and society bind people together. Culture involves a communication system of acquired beliefs, memories, perceptions, traditions, and attitudes that serve to supplement and channel instinctive behavior. In short, as geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has said, culture is the “local, customary way of doing things; geographers write about ways of life.”

Cultural geography, then, is the study of spatial variations among cultural groups and the spatial functioning of society. It focuses on describing and analyzing the ways language, religion, economy, government, and other cultural phenomena vary or remain constant from one place to another and on explaining how humans function spatially (Figure 1.1). Cultural geography is, at heart, a celebration of human diversity, or as the Russian ethnographer Leo Gumilev wrote, “the study of differences among peoples.”

In seeking explanations for cultural diversity and place identity, geographers consider a wide array of factors that

geography The study of spatial patterns and of differences and similarities from one place to another in environment and culture.

culture A total way of life held in common by a group of people, including such learned features as speech, ideology, behavior, livelihood, technology, and government; or the local, customary way of doing things—a way of life; an ever-changing process in which a group is actively engaged; a dynamic mix of symbols, beliefs, speech, and practices.

cultural geography The study of spatial variations among cultural groups and the spatial functioning of society.



Figure 1.1 Two traditional houses of worship. Geographers seek to learn how and why cultures differ, or are similar, from one place to another. Often the differences and similarities have a visual expression. (Left: Rob Crandall/Stock Connection/Alamy; Right: Peter Adams/Alamy.)

Thinking Geographically In what ways are these two structures—one a Catholic church in Honduras and the other a Buddhist temple in Laos—alike and different?

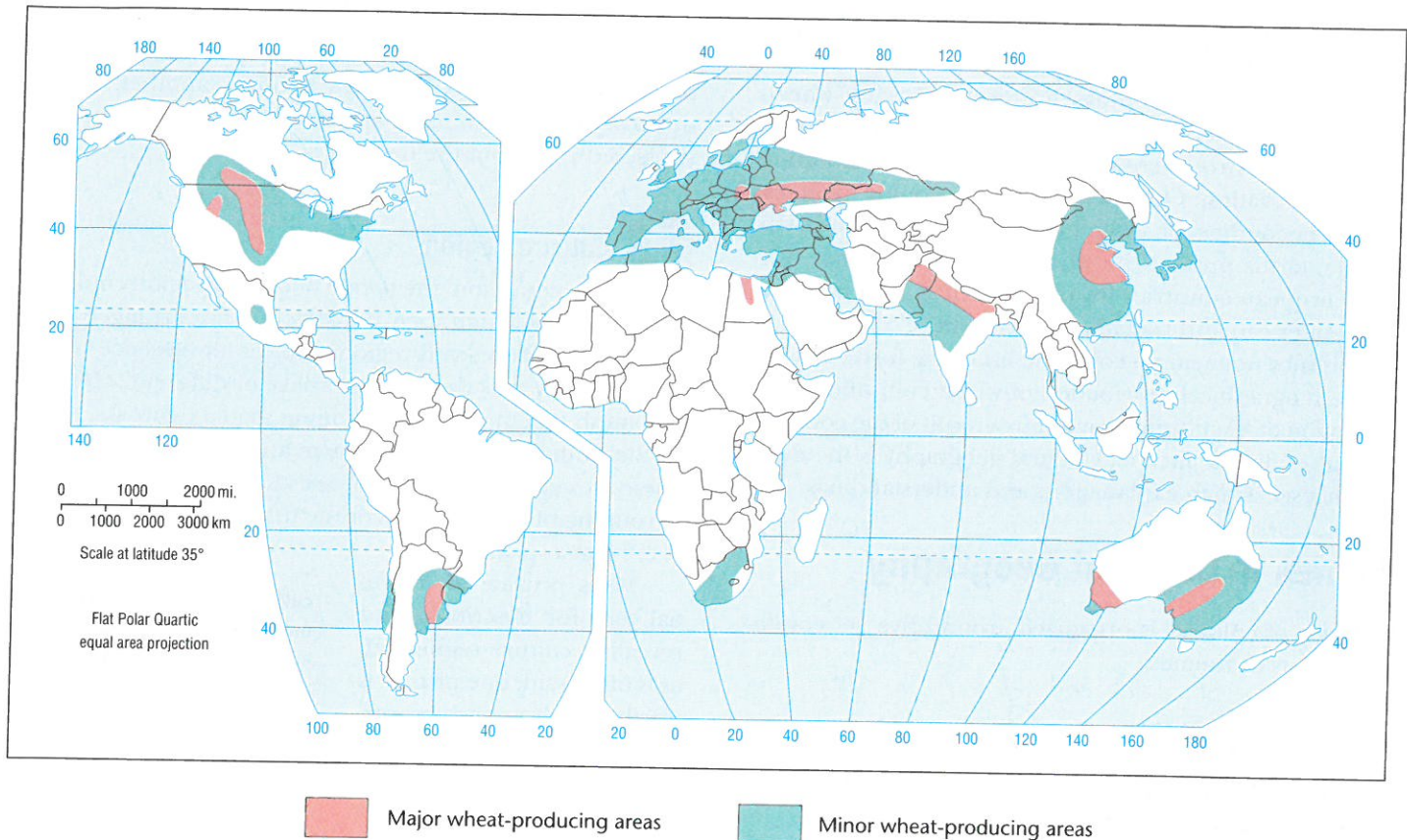


Figure 1.2 Areas of wheat production in the world today. These regions are based on a single trait: the importance of wheat in the agricultural system. This map tells us what and where. It raises the question of why.

Thinking Geographically What causal forces might be at work to produce this geographical distribution of wheat farming?

cause this diversity. Some of these involve the **physical environment**: terrain, climate, natural vegetation, wildlife, variations in soil, and the pattern of land and water. Because we cannot understand a culture removed from its physical setting, human geography offers not only a spatial perspective but also an ecological one.

Many complex forces are at work on cultural phenomena, and all of them are interconnected in very complicated ways. The complexity of the forces that affect culture can be illustrated by an example drawn from agricultural geography: the distribution of wheat cultivation in the world. If you look at Figure 1.2, you can see important areas of wheat cultivation in Australia but not in Africa, in the United States but not in Chile, in China but not in Southeast Asia. Why does this spatial pattern exist? Partly it results from environmental factors such as climate, terrain, and soils. Some regions have always been too dry for wheat cultivation. The land in others is too steep or infertile. Indeed, there is a strong correlation between wheat cultivation and midlatitude climates, level terrain, and good soil.

Still, we should not place exclusive importance on such physical factors. People can modify the effects of cli-

mate through irrigation; the use of hothouses; or the development of new, specialized strains of wheat.

They can conquer slopes by terracing, and they can

make poor soils productive with fertilization. For example, farmers in mountainous parts of Greece traditionally wrested an annual harvest of wheat from tiny terraced plots where soil had been trapped behind hand-built stone retaining walls. Even in the United States, environmental factors alone cannot explain the curious fact that major wheat cultivation is concentrated in the semiarid Great Plains, some distance from states such as Ohio and Illinois, where the climate for growing wheat is better. The cultural geographer knows that wheat has to survive in a cultural environment as well as a physical one.

Ultimately, agricultural patterns cannot be explained by the characteristics of the land and climate alone. Many factors complicate the distribution of wheat, including people's tastes and traditions. Food preferences and taboos, often backed by religious beliefs, strongly influence

physical environment All aspects of the natural physical surroundings, such as climate, terrain, soils, vegetation, and wildlife.

the choice of crops to plant. Where wheat bread is preferred, people are willing to put great efforts into overcoming physical surroundings hostile to growing wheat. They have even created new strains of wheat, thereby decreasing the environment's influence on the distribution of wheat cultivation. Other factors, such as public policies, can also encourage or discourage wheat cultivation. For example, tariffs protect the wheat farmers of France and other European countries from competition with more efficient American and Canadian producers.

This is by no means a complete list of the forces that affect the geographical distribution of wheat cultivation. The distribution of all cultural elements is a result of the constant interplay of diverse factors. Cultural geography is the discipline that seeks such explanations and understandings.

Themes in Cultural Geography

Our study of cultures is organized around five geographical concepts or themes:

- Culture region
- Cultural diffusion
- Cultural ecology
- Cultural interaction
- Cultural landscape

We use these themes to organize the diversity of issues that confront cultural geography and have selected them because they represent the major concepts that cultural geographers discuss. Each of them stresses one particular

aspect of the discipline, and even though we have separated them for purposes of clarity, it is important to remember that the concepts are related to one another. These themes give a common structure to each chapter and are stressed throughout the book.



Culture Region

Phrased as a question, the theme of culture region could be “How are people and their traits grouped or arranged geographically?” Places and regions provide the essence of geography. How and why are places alike or different? How do they mesh together into functioning spatial networks? How do their inhabitants perceive them and identify with them? These are central geographical questions. A **culture region** is a grouping of similar places or the functional union of places to form a spatial unit.

Maps provide an essential tool for describing and revealing culture regions. If, as is often said, one picture is worth a thousand words, then a well-prepared map is worth at least 10 thousand words to the geographer. No description in words can rival a map's revealing force. Maps are valuable tools particularly because they so concisely portray spatial patterns in culture.

Geographers recognize three types of regions: formal, functional, and vernacular.

culture region A geographical unit based on characteristics and functions of culture.

formal culture region A cultural region inhabited by people who have one or more cultural traits in common.

Formal Culture Regions A **formal culture region** is an area inhabited by people who have one or more traits in common, such as language, religion, or a system of livelihood. It is an area, therefore, that is relatively homogeneous with regard to one or more cultural traits. Geographers use this concept to map spatial differences throughout the world. For example, an Arabic-language formal region can be drawn on a map of languages and would include the areas where Arabic is spoken, rather than, say, English or Hindi or Mandarin. Similarly, a wheat-farming formal region would include the parts of the world where wheat is a major crop (look again at Figure 1.2).

The examples of Arabic speech and of wheat cultivation represent the concept of formal culture region at its simplest level. Each is based on a single cultural trait. More commonly, formal culture regions depend on multiple related traits (Figure 1.3). Thus, an Inuit (Eskimo) culture region might be based on language, religion, economy, social organization, and type of dwellings. The region would reflect the spatial distribution of these five Inuit cultural traits. Districts in which all five of these traits are present would be part of the culture region. Similarly, Europe can be subdivided into several multitrait regions (Figure 1.4).



Figure 1.3 An Inuit hunter with his dogsled team. Various facets of a multitrait formal region can be seen here, including the clothing, the use of dogsleds as transportation, and hunting as a livelihood system. (Bryan and Cherry Alexander Photography/Alamy.)

Thinking Geographically What evidence suggests changes in this region?

Formal culture regions are the geographer's somewhat arbitrary creations. No two cultural traits have the same distribution, and the territorial extent of a culture region depends on what and how many defining traits are used (see Figure 1.4). Why *five* Inuit traits, not four or six? Why

not *foods* instead of (or in addition to) dwelling types? Consider, for example, Greeks and Turks, who differ in language and religion. Formal regions defined on the basis of speech and religious faith would separate these two groups. However, Greeks and Turks hold many other cultural traits

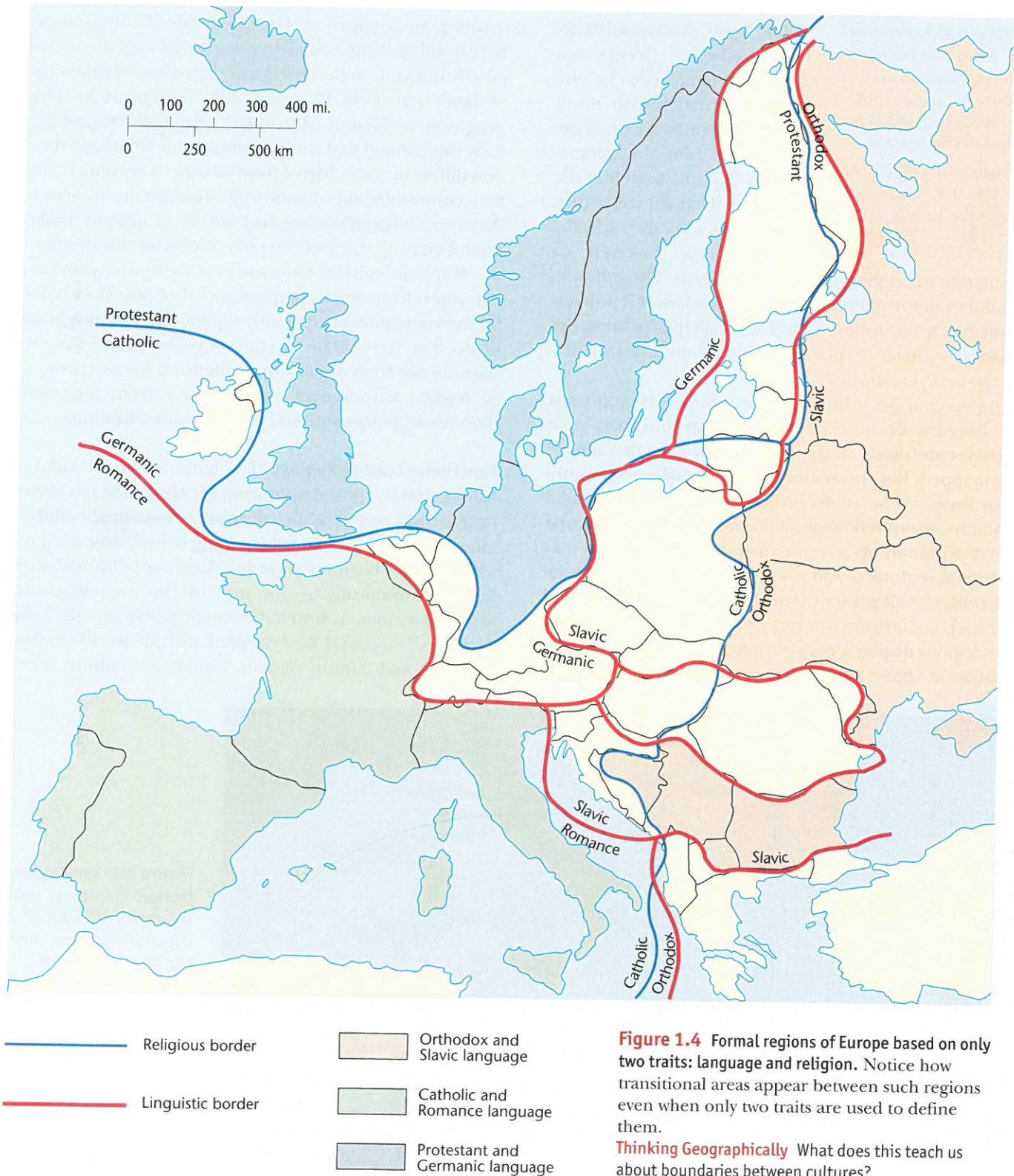


Figure 1.4 Formal regions of Europe based on only two traits: language and religion. Notice how transitional areas appear between such regions even when only two traits are used to define them.

Thinking Geographically What does this teach us about boundaries between cultures?

border zones The areas where different regions meet and sometimes overlap.

core-periphery A concept based on the tendency of both formal and functional culture regions to consist of a core or node, in which defining traits are purest or functions are headquartered, and a periphery that is tributary and displays fewer of the defining traits.

functional culture region A cultural area that functions as a unit politically, socially, or economically.

teaching that the region is designed to serve. Thus, an infinite number of formal regions can be created. It is unlikely that any two geographers would use exactly the same distinguishing criteria or place cultural boundaries in precisely the same location.

The geographer who identifies a formal region must locate borders. Because cultures overlap and mix, such boundaries are rarely sharp, even if only a single cultural trait is mapped. For this reason, we find **border zones** rather than lines. These zones broaden with each additional trait that is considered because no two traits have the same spatial distribution. As a result, instead of having clear borders, formal regions reveal a center or core where the defining traits are all present. Moving away from the central core, the characteristics weaken and disappear. Thus, many formal regions display a **core-periphery** pattern. This refers to a situation where a region can be divided into two sec-

in common. Both groups are monotheistic, worshipping a single god. In both groups, male supremacy and patriarchal families are the rule. Both enjoy certain folk foods, such as shish kebab. Whether Greeks and Turks are placed in the same formal region or in different ones depends entirely on how the geographer chooses to define the region. That choice in turn depends on the specific purpose of research or

tions, one near the center where the particular attributes that define the region (in this case, language and religion) are strong, and other portions of the region further away from the core, called the periphery, where those attributes are weaker.

In a real sense, then, the human world is chaotic. No matter how closely related two elements of culture seem to be, careful investigation always shows that they do not cover exactly the same area. This is true regardless of what degree of detail is involved. What does this chaos mean to cultural geographers? First, it tells us that every cultural trait is spatially unique and that the explanation for each spatial variation differs in some degree from all others. Second, it means that culture changes continually throughout an area and that every inhabited place on Earth has a unique combination of cultural features. No place is exactly like another.

Does this cultural uniqueness of each place prevent geographers from seeking explanatory theories? Does it doom them to explaining each locale separately? The answer must be no. The fact that no two hills or rocks, no two planets or stars, no two trees or flowers are identical has not prevented geologists, astronomers, and botanists from formulating theories and explanations based on generalizations.

Functional Culture Regions The hallmark of a formal culture region is cultural homogeneity. Moreover, it is abstract rather than concrete. By contrast, a **functional culture region** need not be culturally homogeneous; instead, it is an area that has been organized to function politically, socially, or economically as one unit. A city, an independent state, a precinct, a church diocese or parish, a trade area, a farm, and a Federal Reserve Bank district are all examples of functional culture regions. Functional culture regions

Figure 1.5 Aerial view of Denver. This image clearly illustrates the node of a functional region—here, the dense cluster of commercial buildings—that coordinates activities throughout the area that surrounds it. (Jim Wark/Airphoto.)

Thinking Geographically
Can you identify the border of this functional region? Why or why not?



have **nodes**, or central points where the functions are coordinated and directed. Examples of such nodes are city halls, national capitals, precinct voting places, parish churches, factories, and banks. In this sense, functional regions also possess a core-periphery configuration, in common with formal culture regions.

Many functional regions have clearly defined borders. A metropolitan area is a functional region that includes all the land under the jurisdiction of a particular urban government (Figure 1.5). The borders of this functional region may not be so apparent from a car window, but they will be clearly delineated on a regional map by a line distinguishing one jurisdiction from another. Similarly, each state in the United States and each Canadian province is a functional region, coordinated and directed from a capital, with government control extended over a fixed area with clearly defined borders.

Not all functional regions have fixed, precise borders, however. A good example is a daily newspaper's circulation area. The node for the paper is the plant where it is produced. Every morning, trucks move out of the plant to distribute the paper throughout the city. The newspaper may

have a sales area extending into the city's suburbs, local bedroom communities, nearby towns, and rural areas.

There its sales area overlaps with the sales territories of competing newspapers published in other cities. It would be futile to try to define exclusive borders for such an area. How would you draw a sales area boundary for the *New York Times*? Its Sunday edition is sold in some quantity even in California, thousands of miles from its node, and it is published simultaneously in different cities.

Functional culture regions generally do not coincide spatially with formal regions, and this disjuncture often creates problems for the functional region. Germany provides an example (Figure 1.6). As an independent state, Germany forms a functional region. Language provides a substantial basis for political unity. However, the formal region of the German language extends beyond the political borders of Germany and includes part or all of eight other independent states. More important, numerous formal regions have borders cutting through German territory. Some

nodes A central point in a functional culture region where functions are coordinated and directed.

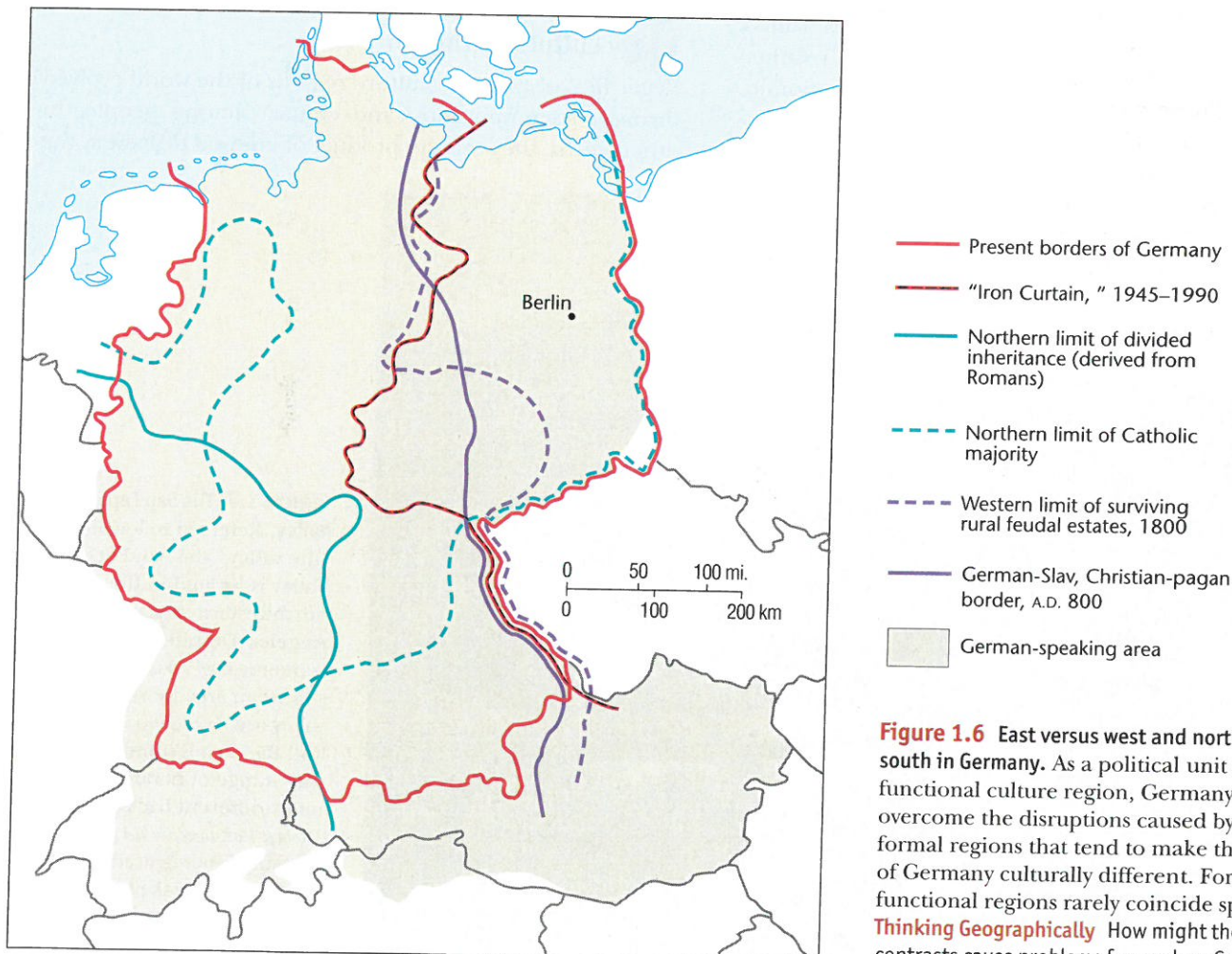


Figure 1.6 East versus west and north versus south in Germany. As a political unit and functional culture region, Germany must overcome the disruptions caused by numerous formal regions that tend to make the sections of Germany culturally different. Formal and functional regions rarely coincide spatially. **Thinking Geographically** How might these sectional contrasts cause problems for modern Germany?

of these have endured for millennia, causing differences among northern, southern, eastern, and western Germans. These contrasts make the functioning of the German state more difficult and help explain why Germany has been politically fragmented more often than unified.

Vernacular Culture Regions A **vernacular culture region** is one that is *perceived* to exist by its inhabitants, as evidenced by the widespread acceptance and use of a special regional name. Some vernacular culture regions are based on physical environmental features. For example, there are many regions called simply “the valley.” Wikipedia lists more than

vernacular culture region

A cultural region perceived to exist by its inhabitants; based in the collective spatial perception of the population at large; bearing a generally accepted name or nickname (such as “Dixie”).

30 different regions within the United States and Canada that are referred to as such, places as varied as the Sudbury Basin in Ontario and the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania. In the 1980s, “the valley” became synony-

mous with the San Fernando Valley in Southern California (Figure 1.7) and became associated with a type of landscape (suburban), a person (a white, teenage girl, called the “valley girl”), and a way of speaking (“valspeak”). Other vernacular culture regions find their basis in economic, political, or historical characteristics. Vernacular regions, like most regions, generally lack sharp borders, and the

inhabitants of any given area may claim residence in more than one such region. They vary in scale from city neighborhoods to sizable parts of continents.

At a basic level, the vernacular culture region grows out of people’s sense of belonging and identification with a particular region. By contrast, many formal or functional culture regions lack this attribute and, as a result, are often far less meaningful for people. You’re more likely to hear people say, “we’re fighting to preserve ‘the valley’ from further urban development,” than to see people rally under the banner of “wheat-growing areas of the world!” Self-conscious regional identity can have major political and social ramifications.

Reflecting on Geography

What examples can you list of that show how identification with a vernacular culture region is a powerful political force?

Vernacular culture regions often lack the organization necessary for functional regions, although they may be centered on a single urban node, and they frequently do not display the cultural homogeneity that characterizes formal regions.



Cultural Diffusion

Regardless of type, the culture regions of the world evolved through communication and contact among people. In other words, they are the product of **cultural diffusion**, the



Figure 1.7 The San Fernando Valley. Referred to locally as “the valley,” the San Fernando Valley is located in the northwestern area of Los Angeles. Despite its reputation as a white, suburban area, portions of the valley are densely populated, and the area is home to a wide range of peoples from many different backgrounds. (Robert Landau/drr.net.)

Thinking Geographically Can you think of other examples of regions that are locally known as “the valley”?

cultural diffusion The spread of elements of culture from the point of origin over an area.

independent invention A cultural innovation that is developed in two or more locations by individuals or groups working independently.

relocation diffusion The spread of an innovation or other element of culture that occurs with the bodily relocation (migration) of the individual or group responsible for the innovation.

spatial spread of learned ideas, innovations, and attitudes throughout an area. The study of cultural diffusion is a very important theme in cultural geography. Through the study of diffusion, cultural geographers can begin to understand how spatial patterns in culture evolved.

After all, any culture is the product of almost countless innovations that spread from their points of origin to

cover a wider area. Some innovations occur only once, and geographers can sometimes trace a cultural element back to a single place of origin. In other cases, **independent invention** occurs: the same or a very similar innovation is separately developed at different places by different people.

Types of Diffusion Geographers, drawing heavily on the research of Torsten Hägerstrand, recognize several different kinds of diffusion (Figure 1.8). **Relocation diffusion** occurs

when individuals or groups with a particular idea or practice migrate from one location to another, thereby bringing the idea or practice to their new homeland. Religions frequently spread this way. An example is the migration of Christianity with European settlers who came to America. In **expansion diffusion**, ideas or practices spread throughout a population, from area to area, in a snowballing process, so that the total number of knowers or users and the areas of occurrence increase.

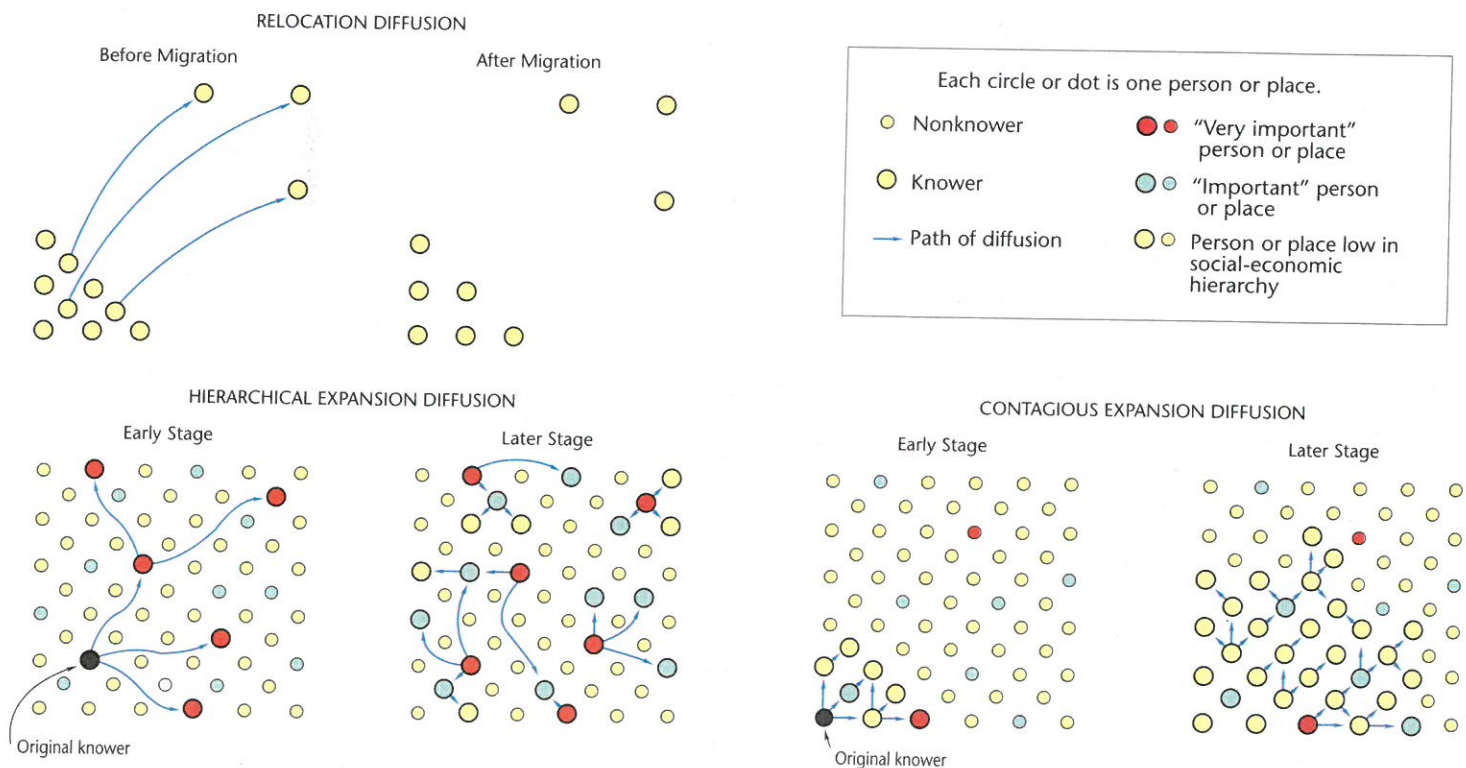
Expansion diffusion can be further divided into three subtypes. In **hierarchical diffusion**, ideas leapfrog from one important person to another or from one urban center to another, temporarily bypassing other persons or rural territories. We can see hierarchical diffusion at work in everyday life by observing the acceptance of new modes of dress or foods. For example, sushi restaurants originally diffused from Japan in the 1970s very slowly because many people were reluctant

expansion diffusion The spread of innovations within an area in a snowballing process so that the total number of knowers or users becomes greater and the area of occurrence grows.

hierarchical diffusion A type of expansion diffusion in which innovations spread from one important person to another or from one urban center to another, temporarily bypassing other persons or rural areas.

Figure 1.8 Types of cultural diffusion. These diagrams are merely suggestive; in reality, spatial diffusion is far more complex. In hierarchical diffusion, different scales can be used so that, for example, the category “very important person” could be replaced by “large city.”

Thinking Geographically Why would the starting point for hierarchical diffusion frequently be a very important person and a large city at the same time?



contagious diffusion A type of expansion diffusion in which cultural innovation spreads by person-to-person contact, moving wavelike through an area and population without regard to social status.

stimulus diffusion A type of expansion in which a specific trait fails to spread but the underlying idea or concept is accepted.

to eat raw fish. In the United States, the first sushi restaurants appeared in the major cities of Los Angeles and New York. Only gradually throughout the 1980s and 1990s did sushi eating become more common in the less urbanized parts of the country. By contrast, **contagious diffusion** involves the

wavelike spread of ideas in the manner of a contagious disease, moving throughout space without regard to hierarchies. Hierarchical and contagious diffusion often work together. The worldwide spread of HIV/AIDS provides a sobering example of how these two types of diffusion can reinforce each other. As you can see from Figure 1.9, HIV/AIDS diffused first to urban areas (hierarchical diffusion) and from there spread outward (contagious diffusion).

Sometimes a specific trait is rejected but the underlying idea is accepted, resulting in **stimulus diffusion**. For example, early Siberian peoples domesticated reindeer

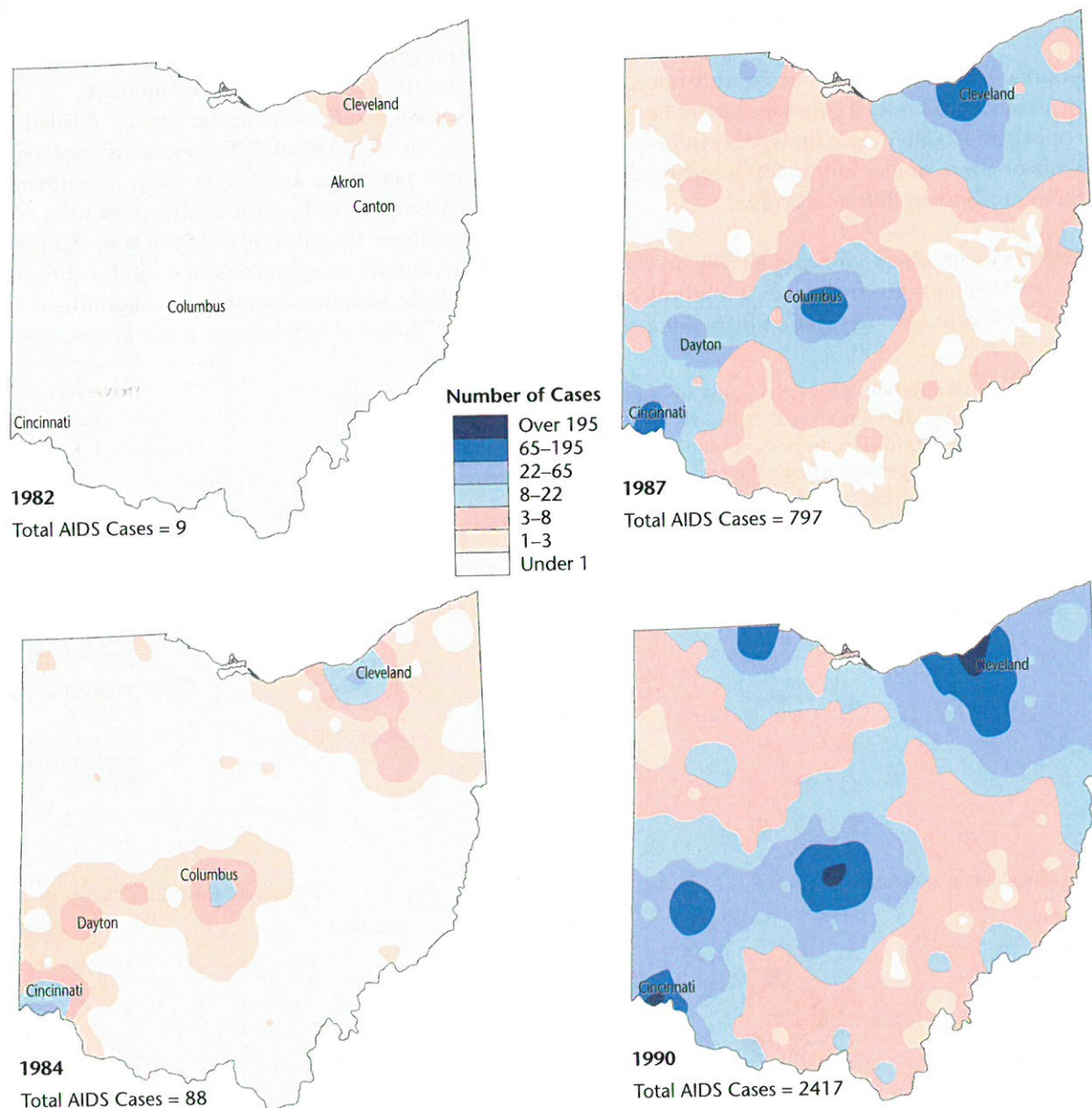


Figure 1.9 Diffusion of HIV/AIDS in Ohio. As you can see from this map, HIV/AIDS spread through both hierarchical and contagious diffusion processes. (Source: Gould, 1993.)

Thinking Geographically Would a similar pattern be evident at the national scale? At the global scale? Why or why not?

only after exposure to the domesticated cattle raised by cultures to their south. The Siberians had no use for cattle, but the idea of domesticated herds appealed to them, and they began domesticating reindeer, an animal they had long hunted.

If you throw a rock into a pond and watch the spreading ripples, you can see them become gradually weaker as they move away from the point of impact. In the same way, diffusion becomes weaker as a cultural innovation moves away from its point of origin. That is, diffusion decreases with distance. An innovation will usually be accepted most thoroughly in the areas closest to where it originates. Because innovations take increasing time to spread outward, time is also a factor. Acceptance generally decreases with distance and time, producing what geographers call **time-distance decay**. Modern mass media, however, have greatly accelerated diffusion, diminishing the impact of time-distance decay.

In addition to the gradual weakening or decay of an innovation through time and distance, barriers can retard its spread. **Absorbing barriers** completely halt diffusion, allowing no further progress. For example, in 1998 the fundamentalist Islamic Taliban government of Afghanistan decided to abolish television, videocassette recorders, and videotapes, viewing them as “causes of corruption in society.” As a result, the cultural diffusion of television sets was reversed, and the important role of television as a communication device to facilitate the spread of ideas was eliminated.

Extreme examples aside, few absorbing barriers exist in the world. More commonly, barriers are permeable, allowing part of the innovation wave to diffuse through but acting to weaken or retard the continued spread. When a school board objects to students with tattoos or body piercings, the principal of a high school may set limits by mandating that these markings be covered by clothing. However, over time, those mandates may change as people get used to the idea of body markings. More likely than not, though, some mandates will remain in place. In this way, the principal and school board act as a **permeable barrier** to cultural innovations.

Reflecting on Geography

The Internet has certainly made the diffusion of many forms of cultural change much more rapid. Some scholars have argued that, in fact, the Internet has eliminated barriers to diffusion. Can you think of examples where this is true? Untrue?

Acceptance of innovations at any given point in space passes through three distinct stages. In the first stage, acceptance takes place at a steady yet slow rate, perhaps because the innovation has not yet caught on, the benefits have not been adequately demonstrated, or a product is not readily available. Then during the second stage, rapid growth in acceptance occurs, and the trait spreads widely, as with a fash-

ion style or dance fad. Often diffusion on a microscale exhibits what is called the **neighborhood effect**, which means simply that acceptance is usually most rapid in small clusters around an initial adopter. The third stage of growth shows a slower rate than the second, perhaps because the fad is passing or because an area is already saturated with the innovation.

Although all places and communities hypothetically have equal potential to adopt a new idea or practice, diffusion typically produces a core-periphery spatial arrangement, the same pattern observed earlier in our discussion of regions (see Figure 1.4). Hägerstrand offered an explanation of how diffusion produces such a regional configuration. The distribution of innovations can be random, but the overlap of new ideas and traits as they diffuse through space and time is greatest toward the center of the region and least at the peripheries. As a result of this overlap, more innovations are adopted in the center, or core, of the region.

In today's world, we see many other examples of diffusion, such as the almost instant communication about new ideas and technologies through computers and other digital media, the rapid movement of goods from the place of production to that of consumption, and the seemingly nonstop movement of money around the globe through digital financial networks. These types of movements through space do not necessarily follow the pattern of core-periphery but instead create new and different types of patterns. Other types of diffusion, such as large-scale movements of people between different regions, can be best thought of as **migrations** from one region or country to another through particular routes. In today's globalizing world, with better and faster communication and transportation technologies, many migrants more easily maintain ties to their homelands even after they have migrated, and some may move back and forth between their home countries and those to which they have migrated.

A Special Case of Diffusion: Globalization How and why are different cultures, economies, and societies linked around the world? Given all these new linkages, why are

time-distance decay The decrease in acceptance of a cultural innovation with increasing time and distance from its origin.

absorbing barrier A barrier that completely halts diffusion of innovations and blocks the spread of cultural elements.

permeable barrier A barrier that permits some aspects of an innovation to diffuse through it but weakens and retards continued spread; an innovation can be modified in passing through a permeable barrier.

neighborhood effect Microscale diffusion in which acceptance of an innovation is most rapid in small clusters around an initial adopter.

migrations The large-scale movements of people between different regions of the world.

there so many differences between different groups of people in the world? The modern technological age, in

globalization The binding together of all the lands and peoples of the world into an integrated system driven by capitalistic free markets, in which cultural diffusion is rapid, independent states are weakened, and cultural homogenization is encouraged.

which improved worldwide transport and communications allow the instantaneous diffusion of ideas and innovations, has accelerated the phenomenon called **globalization**. This term refers to a world increasingly linked, in which international borders are

diminished in importance and a worldwide marketplace is created. This interconnected world has been created from a set of factors: faster and more reliable transportation, particularly the jet plane; the almost instantaneous com-

munication that computers, phones, faxes, and so on have allowed; and the creation of digital sources of information and media, such as the Internet. Thus, globalization in this sense is a rather recent phenomenon, dating from the late twentieth century. Yet we know that long before that different countries and different parts of the world were linked. For example, in early medieval times overland trade routes connected China with other parts of Asia, the British East India Company maintained maritime trading routes between England and large portions of South Asia as early as the seventeenth century, and religious and political wars in Europe and the Middle East brought different peoples into direct contact with one another. Some geographers refer to such moments as *early global encounters* and suggest they set the background for contemporary globalization.

Human Development Index

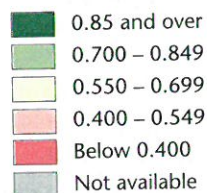


Figure 1.10 World Map of the Human Development Index, 2007. The Human Development Index (HDI) includes life expectancy, adult literacy, educational participation, and gross domestic product (GDP). These statistics are brought together to create a measure of development that is more balanced than one based only on economic growth. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its Human Development Reports, calculates the HDI yearly. (*Human Development Report, 2007/2008*. Accessed at <http://hdr.undp.org>.)

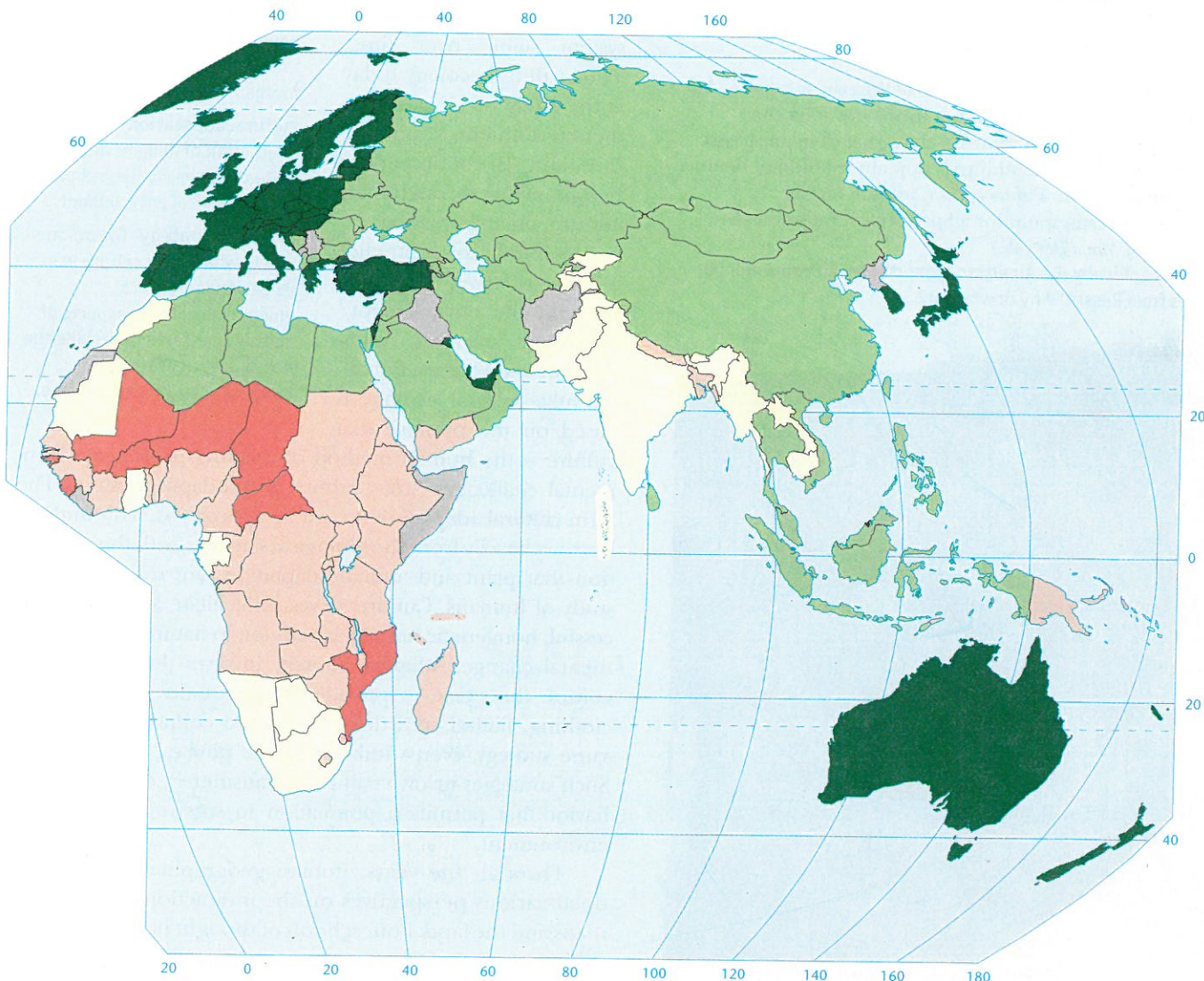
Thinking Geographically What countries or regions surprise you in terms of their HDI measure? Why?

The increasingly linked economic, political, and cultural networks around the world might lead many to believe that different groups of people around the globe are becoming more and more alike. In some ways this is true, but actually these new global encounters have enabled an increasing recognition of the differences between groups of people, and some of those differences have been caused by globalization itself. Some groups of people have access to advanced technologies, more thorough health care, and education, whereas others do not. If we mapped certain indicators of human well-being on a global scale, such as life expectancy, literacy, and standard of living, we would find quite an uneven distribution. Figure 1.10 shows us that different cultures around the world have different access to these types of resources. These differences are what scholars mean when they refer to stages of development. In Figure 1.10, you can see that there are regions of the world

that have a fairly high Human Development Index (HDI) and those that have a relatively low HDI. Scholars often refer to these two types of regions as developed (relatively high HDI) and developing (relatively low HDI). This inequitable distribution of resources is referred to as **uneven development**. We will be discussing much more about development in Chapter 3 and 9.

Culture, of course, is a key variable in global interactions and interconnections. In fact, as we have suggested, globalization is occurring through cultural media, for example, in films, on television, and on the

uneven development The tendency for industry to develop in a core-periphery pattern, enriching the industrialized countries of the core and impoverishing the less industrialized periphery. The term is also used to describe urban patterns in which suburban areas are enriched while the inner city is impoverished.



Internet (Figure 1.11). In addition, if we consider culture as a way of life, then globalization is a key shaper of culture and in turn is shaped by it. Some scholars have suggested that globalizing processes and an increase in personal mobility will work to homogenize different peoples, breaking down culture regions and eventually producing a single global culture. Other scholars see a different picture, one where new forms of media and communication allow local cultures to maintain their distinct identities, reinforcing the diversity of cultures around the world. Throughout *Fundamentals of The Human Mosaic*, we will return to these issues, considering the complex role of culture and cultures in an increasingly global world.



Cultural Ecology

Cultural geographers look on people and nature as interacting. Cultures do not exist in an environmental vacuum; each human group occupies a piece of the physical earth and develops in a specific natural habitat. The cultural geographer must study the interaction between culture and environ-

Figure 1.11 Global culture on the streets of Moscow. A karaoke bar (a highly globalized Japanese cultural form) occupies the storefront of a Soviet-era building on the Arbat (a main street) in downtown Moscow; the building is now almost hidden behind an advertisement for the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie. Meanwhile, an advertisement for a Spanish festival drapes the street. (Courtesy of Mona Domosh.)

Thinking Geographically Do American cities display an equal number of influences from Russia? Why or why not?

ment in order to understand spatial variations in culture. This is the study of *cultural ecology*.

The term *ecology* was coined in the nineteenth century to refer to a new biological science concerned with studying the complex relationships among living organisms and their physical environments. Geographers borrowed this term in the mid-twentieth century and joined it with the term *culture* in order to delineate a field of study—**cultural ecology**—that dealt with the interaction between culture and physical environments. Later, another concept, the **ecosystem**, was introduced to describe a territorially bounded system consisting of interacting organic and inorganic components. Plant and animal species were said to be adapted to specific conditions in the ecosystem and functioned to help keep the system stable over time. Thus cultural ecology today is the study of (1) environmental influences on culture, and (2) the impact of people, acting through their culture, on an ecosystem.

Cultural ecology implies a “two-way street,” with people and the environment/ecosystem exerting influence on one another. Put differently, cultural ecology is based on the premise that culture is the human method of meeting physical environmental challenges—that culture is an adaptive system. The term **cultural adaptation** is used in this context. This outlook borrows heavily from the biological sciences, with the assumption that plant and animal adaptations are relevant to the study of humans. Culture serves to facilitate long-term, successful, nongenetic human adaptation to nature and environmental change. **Adaptive strategy** involves those aspects of culture that serve to provide the necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter, and defense. No two cultures employ the same strategy, even within the same physical environment. Such strategies involve culturally transmitted, or learned, behavior that permits a population to survive in its natural environment.

Through the years, human geographers have developed various perspectives on the interaction between humans and the land. Four schools of thought have developed: environmental determinism, possibilism, environmental perception, and humans as modifiers of the Earth.

cultural ecology Broadly defined, the study of the relationships between the physical environment and culture; narrowly (and more commonly) defined, the study of culture as an adaptive system that facilitates human adaptation to nature and environmental change.

ecosystem A territorially bounded system consisting of interaction between organic and inorganic components.

cultural adaptation The adaptation of humans and cultures to the challenges posed by the physical environment.

adaptive strategy The unique way in which each culture uses its particular physical environment; those aspects of culture that serve to provide the necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter, and defense.



Environmental Determinism During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many geographers accepted **environmental determinism**, the belief that the physical environment is the dominant force shaping cultures and that humankind is essentially a passive product of its physical surroundings. Humans are clay to be molded by nature. Similar physical environments produce similar cultures.

For example, environmental determinists believed that peoples of the mountains were predestined by the rugged terrain to be simple, backward, conservative, unimaginative, and freedom loving. Dwellers in the desert were likely to believe in one God but to live under the rule of tyrants. Temperate climates produced inventiveness, industriousness, and democracy. Coastlands pitted with fjords produced great navigators and fishers. Environmental determinism had serious consequences, particularly during the time of European colonization in the late nineteenth century. For example, many Europeans saw Latin American native inhabitants as lazy, childlike, and prone to vices such as alcoholism because of the tropical climates that cover much of this region. Living in a tropical climate supposedly ensured that people didn't have to work very hard for their food. Europeans were able to rationalize their colonization of large portions of the world in part along climatic lines. Because the natives were "naturally" lazy and slow, the European reasoning went, the natives would benefit from the presence of the "naturally" stronger, smarter, and more industrious Europeans who came from more temperate lands.

We now feel that determinists overemphasize the role of environment in human affairs. This does not mean that environmental influences are inconsequential or that geographers should not study such influences. Rather, the physical environment is only one of many forces affecting human culture and is never the sole determinant of behavior and beliefs.

Possibilism Since the 1920s, **possibilism** has been the favored view among geographers. Possibilists claim that any physical environment offers a number of possible ways for a culture to develop. In this way, the local environment helps shape its resident culture. However, a culture's way of life ultimately depends on the choices people make among the possibilities that are offered by the environment. These choices are guided by cultural heritage and are shaped by a particular political and economic system. Possibilists see the physical environment as offering opportunities and limitations; people make choices among these to satisfy their needs. Figure 1.12 on page 16 provides an interesting example: the cities of San Francisco and Chongqing both were built on similar physical terrains that dictated an overall form, but differing cultures led to very different street patterns, architecture, and land use. In short, local traits of cul-

ture and economy are the products of culturally based decisions made within the limits of possibilities offered by the environment.

Most possibilists think that the higher the technological level of a culture, the greater the number of possibilities and the weaker the influences of the physical environment. Technologically advanced cultures, in this view, have achieved some mastery over their physical surroundings. Geographers Jim Norwine and Thomas Anderson, however, warn that even in these advanced societies "the quantity and quality of human life are still strongly influenced by the natural environment," especially climate. They argue that humankind's control of nature is anything but supreme and perhaps even illusory. One only has to think of the devastation caused by the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to underscore the often-illusory character of the control humans think they have over their physical surroundings.

Environmental Perception Another approach to the theme of cultural ecology focuses on how humans perceive nature. Each person and cultural group has mental images of the physical environment, shaped by knowledge, ignorance, experience, values, and emotions. To describe such mental images, human geographers use the term **environmental perception**. Whereas the possibilist sees humankind as having a choice of different possibilities in a given physical setting, the environmental perceptionist declares that the choices people make will depend more on what they perceive the environment to be than on the actual character of the land. Perception, in turn, is colored by the teachings of culture.

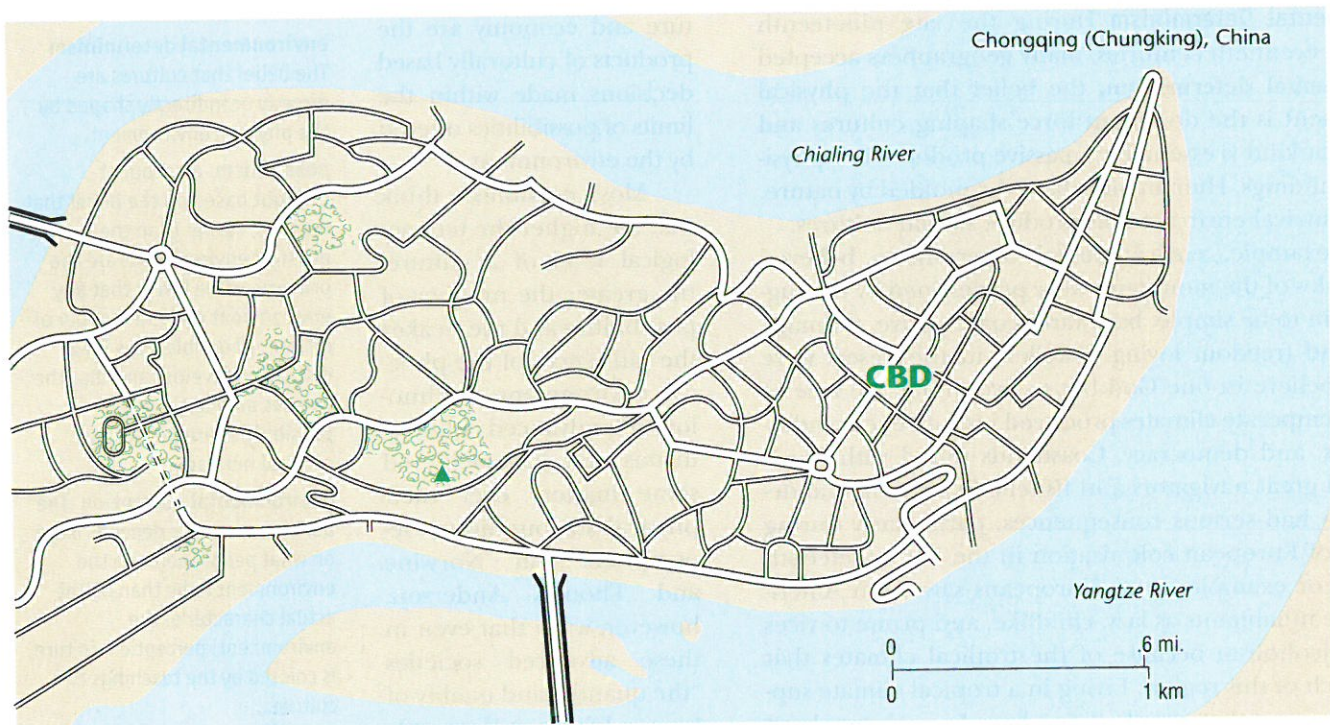
Some of the most productive research done by geographers who are environmental perceptionists has been on the topic of **natural hazards**, such as flooding, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, insect infestations, and droughts. All cultures react to such hazards and catastrophes, but the reactions vary greatly from one group to another. Some people reason that natural disasters and risks are unavoidable

environmental determinism The belief that cultures are directly or indirectly shaped by the physical environment.

possibilism A school of thought based on the belief that humans, rather than the physical environment, are the primary active force; that any environment offers a number of different possible ways for a culture to develop; and that the choices among these possibilities are guided by cultural heritage.

environmental perception The belief that culture depends more on what people perceive the environment to be than on the actual character of the environment; perception, in turn, is colored by the teachings of culture.

natural hazards Inherent dangers present in a given habitat, such as flooding, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, or earthquakes; often perceived differently by different peoples.



CBD Central business district
 Streets and roads
 ▲ Scenic overview

Bridge
 Tunnel
 Park



Figure 1.12 Chongqing (Chungking) and San Francisco. Both of these cities are among the largest in their respective countries. Both developed on elongated, hilly sites flanked on all but one side by water, and both were connected in the twentieth century by bridges to adjacent land across the water. In certain other respects, too—such as the use of tunnels for arterial roads—the cities are similar. Note, however, the contrast in street patterns. In Chongqing, the streets were laid out to accommodate the rugged terrain, but in San Francisco, relatively little deviation from a gridiron pattern was permitted. Note, too, that although San Francisco has a much smaller population than Chongqing, it covers a far larger area.

Thinking Geographically What do these contrasts suggest about the relative merits of environmental determinism and possibilism? About the role of culture?



Figure 1.13 Post-Katrina New Orleans. The dams and levees built along the Mississippi River as it enters the Gulf of Mexico were unable to stop the flooding waters of Hurricane Katrina from inundating many portions of the city. (U.S. Coast Guard/Getty Images.)

Thinking Geographically Does the experience with Hurricane Katrina (and other major disasters) require a rethinking of environmental determinism? Why or why not?

acts of the gods, perhaps even divine retribution. Often they seek to cope with the hazards by placating their gods. Others hold government responsible for taking care of them when hazards yield disasters. In Western culture, many groups regard natural hazards as problems that can be solved by technological means. In the United States, one of the most common manifestations of this belief has been the widespread construction of dams to prevent flooding. This belief in the use of technology to mitigate the impacts of natural hazards was sorely tested in the United States during Hurricane Katrina in August of 2005, when the numerous dams and levees that had been built to keep floodwaters out of the city of New Orleans failed (Figure 1.13). More than 1800 people lost their lives as a result, and tens of thousands of people were left homeless, calling into question the belief that natural disasters can be avoided through technology.

In virtually all cultures, people knowingly inhabit hazard zones, especially floodplains, exposed coastal sites, drought-prone regions, and the environs of active volcanoes. More Americans than ever now live in areas likely to be devastated by hurricanes along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and atop earthquake faults in California. How accurately do they perceive the hazard involved? Why have they chosen to live there? How might we minimize the

eventual disasters? The cultural geographer seeks the answers to such questions and aspires, with other geographers, to mitigate the inevitable disasters through such devices as land-use planning.

Humans as Modifiers of the Earth Many cultural geographers, observing the environmental changes people have wrought, emphasize humans as modifiers of the habitat. This presents yet another facet of cultural ecology. In a sense, the humans-as-modifier school of thought is the opposite of environmental determinism. Whereas the determinists proclaim that nature molds humankind, and possibilists believe that nature presents possibilities for people, those geographers who study the human impact on the land assert that humans mold nature.

In addition to the deliberate modifications of the Earth through such activities as mining, logging, and irrigation, we now know that even seemingly innocuous behavior, repeated for millennia, for centuries, or in some cases for mere decades, can have catastrophic effects on the environment. Plowing fields and grazing livestock can eventually denude regions (Figure 1.14). The increasing release of fossil-fuel emissions from vehicles and factories—what are known as greenhouse gases—is arguably leading to global warming, with potentially devastating effects on Earth's environment. Clearly, access to energy and technology is the key variable that controls the magnitude and speed of environmental alteration. Geographers seek to understand and explain the processes of environmental alteration as they vary from one culture to another and, through applied geography, to propose alternative, less destructive modes of behavior.

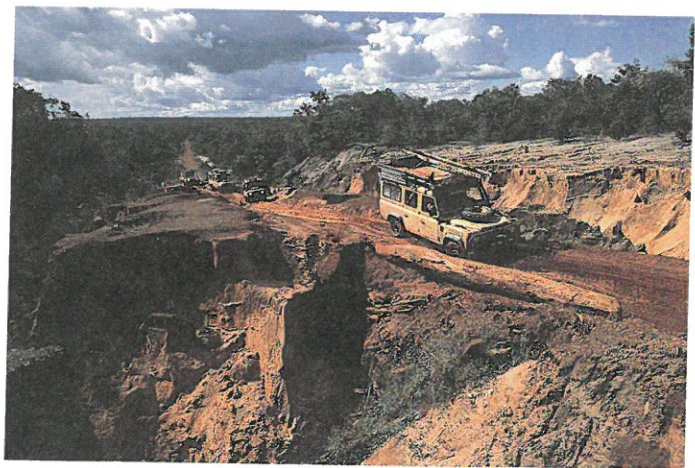


Figure 1.14 Human modification of the Earth includes severe soil erosion. This erosion could have been caused by road building or poor farming methods. The scene is in the Amazon Basin of Brazil. (Michael Nichols/National Geographic.)

Thinking Geographically How can we adopt less destructive ways of modifying the land?

cultural interaction The relationship of various elements within a culture.

space A term used to connote the objective, quantitative, theoretical, model-based, economics-oriented type of geography that seeks to understand spatial systems and networks through application of the principles of social science.

model An abstraction, an imaginary situation, proposed by geographers to simulate laboratory conditions so that they may isolate certain causal forces for detailed study.

place A term used to connote the subjective, idiographic, humanistic, culturally oriented type of geography that seeks to understand the unique character of individual regions and places, rejecting the principles of science as flawed and unknowingly biased.

topophilia Love of place; used to describe people who exhibit a strong sense of place.

Cultural geographers began to concentrate on the human role in changing the face of the Earth long before the present level of ecological consciousness developed. They learned early on the fact that different cultural groups have widely different outlooks on humankind's role in changing the earth. Some, such as those rooted in the mechanistic tradition, tend to regard environmental modification as divinely approved, viewing humans as God's helpers in completing the task of creation. Other groups, organic in their view of nature, are much more cautious, taking care not to offend the forces of nature. They see humans as part of nature, meant to be in harmony with their environment (for more on this topic, see Chapter 7).

Geographers have employed two fundamentally different approaches to studying cultural interaction: the scientific and the humanistic.

Social Science Those who view cultural geography as a social science, also called "modernists," believe that we should apply the scientific method to the study of people. Emulating physicists and chemists, they devise theories and seek regularities or universal spatial principles that cut across cultural lines to govern all of humankind. These principles ideally become the basis for laws of human spatial behavior. **Space** is the word that perhaps best connotes this scientific approach to cultural geography.

Social scientists face several difficulties. First, they tend to overemphasize economic factors at the expense of culture. Second, they have no laboratories in which to test their theories. They cannot run controlled experiments in which certain forces can be neutralized so that others can be studied. Their response to this deficiency is a technique known as **model** building. Aware that in the real world many causal forces are involved, they set up artificial model situations in order to focus on one or several potential factors. Figure 1.8 is an example of a model. Throughout *Fundamentals of The Human Mosaic*, we will see many of the classic models built by cultural geographers.

Some culture-specific models are more sensitive to cultural variables. Such models still seek regularities and spatial principles, but do so more modestly within the bounds of individual cultures. For example, several geographers proposed a model for Latin American cities, in an effort to stress similarities among them and to understand underlying causal forces (Figure 1.15). No actual city in Latin America conforms precisely to this model. Instead, the model is deliberately simplified and generalized so that Latin American cities can be better understood. This model will look strange to a person living in a city in the United States or Canada, for it describes a very different kind of urban environment, based in another culture.



Cultural Interaction

The relationship between people and the land, the theme of cultural ecology, lies at the heart of traditional geography. However, the explanation of human spatial variations also requires consideration of a whole range of cultural and economic factors. The cultural geographer recognizes that all facets of culture are systematically and spatially intertwined or integrated. In short, cultures are complex wholes rather than series of unrelated traits. They form integrated systems in which the parts fit together causally. All aspects of culture are functionally interdependent on one another. The theme of **cultural interaction** addresses this complexity. Cultural interaction recognizes that (1) the immediate causes of some cultural phenomena are other cultural phenomena and (2) a change in one element of culture requires an accommodating change in others.

For example, religious belief has the potential to influence a group's voting behavior, diet, shopping patterns, type of employment, and social standing. Traditional Hinduism, the majority religion of India, segregates people into social classes called *castes* and specifies what forms of livelihood are appropriate for each. The Mormon faith forbids the consumption of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and caffeine, thereby influencing both the diet and shopping patterns of its members.

Humanistic Geography If the social scientist seeks to level the differences among people in the quest for universal explanations, the humanistic geographer celebrates the uniqueness of each region and place. **Place** is the key word connoting a humanistic approach to geography. In fact, the humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan even coined the word **topophilia**, literally "love of place," to describe people who exhibit a strong sense of place and the geographers who are attracted to the study of such places and peoples. Geographer Edward Relph tells us that "to be human is to have and know your place" in the geographical sense. To the humanist, cultural geography is an art rather than a science.

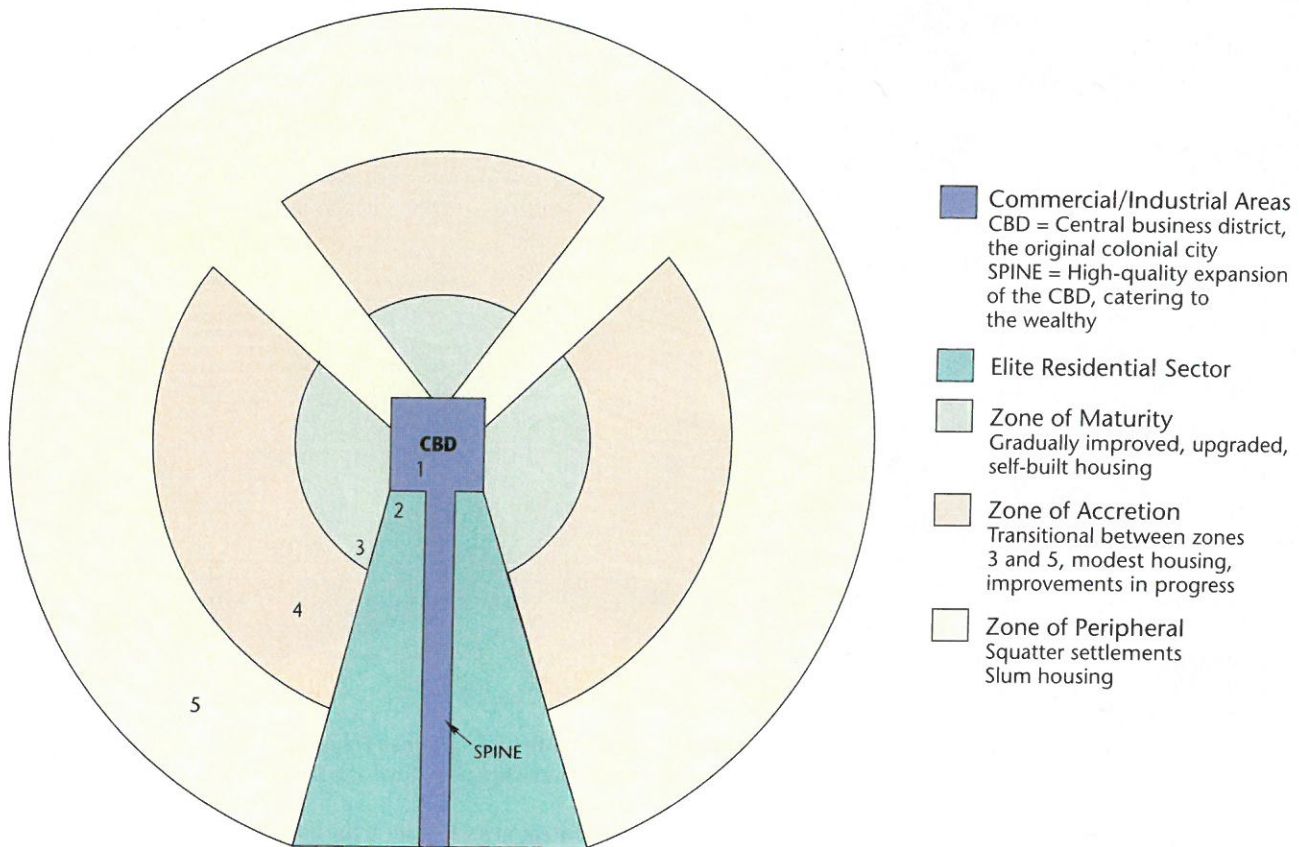


Figure 1.15 A generalized model of the Latin American city. Urban structure differs from one culture to another, and in many ways the cities of Latin America are distinctive, having much in common with one another. Geographers Ernst Griffin and Larry Ford developed the model diagrammed here to help describe and explain the processes at work shaping the cities of Latin America. (After Griffin and Ford, 1980: 406.)

Thinking Geographically In what ways would this model not be applicable to cities in the United States and Canada?

Traditional humanists in geography are as concerned about explanation as the social scientists, but they seek to explain unique phenomena—place and region—rather than seeking universal spatial laws. Indeed, most humanists doubt that laws of spatial behavior even exist. They believe in a far more chaotic world than the scientist could tolerate.

The debate between scientists and humanists is both healthy and necessary. The two groups ask different questions about place and space; not surprisingly, they obtain different answers. Both lines of inquiry yield valuable findings. In *Fundamentals of The Human Mosaic*, we present both sides of the scientist vs. humanist debate, within the theme of cultural interaction.



Cultural Landscape

What are the visible expressions of culture? How are peoples' interactions with nature materially expressed? What do regions actually look like? These questions provide the basis of our fifth and final theme, **cultural landscape**.

The human or cultural landscape is composed of all the built forms that cultural groups create in inhabiting the Earth—roads, agricultural fields, cities, houses, parks, gardens, commercial buildings, and so on. Every inhabited area has a cultural landscape, fashioned from the natural landscape, and each uniquely reflects the culture or cultures that created it (Figure 1.16 on page 20). Landscape mirrors a culture's needs, values, and attitudes toward the Earth, and the cultural geographer can learn much about a group of people by carefully observing and studying the landscape. Indeed, so important is this visual record of cultures that some geographers regard landscape study as geography's central interest.

cultural landscape The artificial landscape; the visible human imprint on the land.

Why is such importance attached to the human landscape? Perhaps part of the answer is that it visually reflects the most basic strivings of humankind: shelter, food, and clothing. In addition, the cultural landscape reveals



Figure 1.16 Terraced cultural landscape of an irrigated rice district in Yunnan Province, China.

In such areas, the artificial landscape made by people overwhelms nature and forms a human mosaic on the land. (Stone.)

Thinking Geographically Why is rice cultivated in such hilly areas in Asia, while in the United States rice farming is confined to flat plains?

people's different attitudes toward the modifications of the Earth. It also contains valuable evidence about the origin, spread, and development of cultures because it usually preserves various types of archaic forms. Dominant and alternative cultures use, alter, and manipulate landscapes to express their diverse identities.

Aside from containing archaic forms, landscapes also convey revealing messages about the present-day inhabitants and cultures. According to geographer Pierce Lewis, "the cultural landscape is our collective and revealing autobiography, reflecting our tastes, values, aspirations, and fears in tangible forms." Cultural landscapes offer "texts" that geographers read to discover dominant ideas and prevailing practices within a culture, as well as less dominant and alternative forms within that culture. This "reading," however, is often a very difficult task, given the complexity of cultures, cultural change, and recent globalizing trends that can obscure local histories.

Reflecting on Geography

As we will learn throughout this book, landscapes are often created from more than one set of cultural values and beliefs, oftentimes in conflict with each other. How then can we "read" conflict into the landscape, when it appears so natural and unified? What sort of information would we need?

Geographers have pushed the idea of "reading" the landscape further in order to focus on the symbolic and ideological qualities of landscape. In fact, as geographer Denis Cosgrove has suggested, the very idea of landscape itself was ideological, in that its development in the Renaissance served the interests of the new elite class for whom agricultural land was valued not for its productivity but for its use as a visual subject. Land, in other words, was important to look at as a scene, and the actual workings that were necessary for agriculture were thus hidden from these views. If you go to an art museum, for example, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to find in the Italian Renaissance room any landscape paintings that depict agricultural laborers (Figure 1.17).

Closer to home, we need only to look outside our windows to see other symbolic and ideological landscapes. One of the most familiar and obvious **symbolic landscapes** is the urban skyline. Composed of tall buildings that normally house financial service industries, it represents the power and dominance of finance and economics within that culture (Figure 1.18). However, other cities are dominated by tall structures that have little to do with eco-

symbolic landscapes

Landscapes that express the values, beliefs, and meanings of a particular culture.



Figure 1.17 Landscape triptych panel by Fra Angelico, fifteenth century. Notice the depiction of the beautiful and orderly agricultural landscape outside the city walls but the absence of people actually doing the work to maintain that order. (*Archivio Iconografico, S.A./Corbis.*)

Thinking Geographically Why aren't the laborers depicted?

nomics but more with religion. In medieval Europe, for example, cathedrals and churches rose high above other buildings, symbolizing the centrality and dominance of Catholicism in this culture.

Even the most mundane landscape element can be interpreted as symbolic. The typical middle-class suburban, American or Canadian home, for example, can be interpreted as an expression of a dominant set of ideas about culture and family structure (Figure 1.19 on page 22). These homes are often composed of a living room, dining room, kitchen, and bedrooms, all separated by walls. The cultural assumptions built into this division of space include the assumed value of individual privacy (everyone has his or her own bedroom); the idea that certain functions should be spatially separate from others (cooking, eating, socializing, sleeping); and the notion that a family is composed of a mother, father, and children (indicated by the "master" bedroom and smaller "children's" bedrooms). Thus, even the most common of landscapes can be seen as symbolic of a particular culture.

Aspects of the Cultural Landscape As we have seen, the physical content of the cultural landscape is both varied and complex. To better study and understand these complexities, geographical studies focus on three principal

Figure 1.18 Yokohama at dusk. This skyline is a powerful symbol of the economic importance of the world's largest city, Tokyo-Yokohama.

Thinking Geographically What landscape form best symbolizes your town/city?





Figure 1.19 American ranch house. The horizontally expansive ranch is a common house form in the United States and Canada.

Thinking Geographically Can you think of other countries where ranch houses are common?

aspects of landscape: settlement forms, land-division patterns, and architectural styles.

In the study of **settlement forms**, geographers describe and explain the spatial arrangement of buildings, roads, and other features that people construct while inhabiting an area. One of the most basic ways in which geographers categorize settlement forms is to examine their degree of **nucleation**, or the relative density of landscape elements. Urban centers are of course very nucleated, whereas rural farming areas tend to be much less nucleated, what geographers call **dispersed**. Another common way to think about settlement forms is the

settlement forms The spatial arrangement of buildings, roads, towns, and other features that people construct while inhabiting an area.

nucleation A relatively dense settlement form.

dispersed A type of settlement form in which people live relatively distant from one another.

land-division patterns The spatial patterns of different land uses.

architectural style The exterior and interior designs and layouts of the cultural/physical landscape.

degree to which they appear standardized and planned, such as the grid form of much of the American West (Figure 1.20), versus the degree to which the forms appear to be organic, that is, to have been built without any apparent geometric plan, such as the central areas of most European cities. Thinking about settlement forms in terms of these two basic categories helps geographers begin their analysis of the relationships between cultures and the landscapes they produce.

Land-division patterns indicate the uses of particular parcels of land and reveal the way people have divided the land for economic, social, and political uses. Within a particular nucleated settlement form—a city, for example—you can see different patterns of land use. Some areas are devoted to economic uses, others to residential, political (city hall, for example), social, and cultural uses. Each of these areas can be further divided. Economic uses can include offices for financial services, retail stores, warehouses, and factories. Residential areas are often divided into middle-class, upper-class, and working-class districts and/or are grouped by ethnicity and race (see Chapter 11). Such patterns, of course, vary a great deal from place to place and culture to culture, as we will see throughout this book. One of the best ways to glimpse settlement and land-division patterns is through an airplane window. Looking down, you can see the multicolored abstract patterns of planted fields, as vivid as any modern painting, and the regular checkerboard or chaotic tangle of urban streets.

Perhaps no other aspect of the human landscape is as readily visible from ground level as the **architectural style** of a culture. Geographers look at the exterior materials and decoration, as well as the layout and design of the inte-

Figure 1.20 The town of Westmoreland in the Imperial Valley of California. It's difficult to find a more regularized, geometric land pattern than this. (Jim Wark/Airphoto.)

Thinking Geographically Why do you think geometric patterns dominate the western United States?





Figure 1.21 Architecture as a reflection of culture. (Left) This log house, near Ottawa in Canada, is a folk dwelling and stands in sharp contrast to the professional architecture of the Toronto skyline (right).

riors. Styles tend to vary both through time, as cultures change, and across space, in the sense that different cultures adopt and invent their own stylistic detailing according to their own particular needs, aesthetics, and desires. Thus, examining architectural style is often useful when trying to date a particular landscape element or when trying to understand the particular values and beliefs that cultures may hold. In North American culture, different building styles catch the eye: modest white New England churches and giant urban cathedrals, hand-hewn barns and geodesic domes, wooden one-room schoolhouses and the new windowless school buildings of urban areas, shopping malls and glass office buildings. Each tells us something about the people who designed, built, or inhabit these spaces. Thus, architecture provides a vivid record of the resident culture (Figure 1.21). For this reason, cultural geographers have traditionally devoted considerable attention to examining architecture and style in the cultural landscape.

Key Terms

absorbing barrier, 11
adaptive strategy, 14
architectural style, 22
border zones, 6
contagious diffusion, 10
core-periphery, 6
cultural adaptation, 14
cultural diffusion, 8
cultural ecology, 14
cultural geography, 2
cultural interaction, 18

cultural landscape, 19
culture, 2
culture region, 4
dispersed, 22
ecosystem, 14
environmental determinism, 15
environmental perception, 15
expansion diffusion, 9
formal culture region, 4
functional culture region, 6

Thinking Geographically What conclusion might a perceptive person from another culture reach (considering the “virtues” of height, durability, and centrality) about the ideology of the culture that produced the Toronto landscape?

geography, 2
globalization, 12
hierarchical diffusion, 9
independent invention, 9
land-division pattern, 22
migrations, 11
model, 18
natural hazard, 15
neighborhood effect, 11
nodes, 7
nucleation, 22
permeable barrier, 11

physical environment, 3
place, 18
possibilism, 15
relocation diffusion, 9
settlement forms, 22
space, 18
stimulus diffusion, 10
symbolic landscapes, 20
time-distance decay, 11
topophilia, 18
uneven development, 13
vernacular culture region, 8

Geography on the Internet

You can learn more about the discipline of geography and the subdiscipline of human geography on the Internet at the following web sites:

American Geographical Society

<http://www.amergeog.org/>

America’s oldest geographical organization, with a long and distinguished record; publisher of the *Geographical Review*.

Association of American Geographers

<http://www.aag.org/>

The leading organization of professional geographers in the United States. This site contains information about the discipline, the association, and its activities, including annual and regional meetings.

National Geographic Society

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/>

An organization that has, for more than a century, served to popularize geography with active programs of publishing and television presentations prepared for the public.

Royal Geographic Society/Institute of British Geographers

<http://www.rgs.org/>

Explore the activities of these allied British organizations, whose collective history goes back to the Age of Exploration and Discovery in the 1800s

Recommended Books on Cultural Geography

- Anderson, Kay, Mona Domosh, Steve Pile, and Nigel Thrift (eds.). 2003. *Handbook of Cultural Geography*. London: Sage Publications. An edited collection of essays that push the boundaries of cultural geography into such subdisciplines as economic, social, and political geography.
- Cosgrove, Denis. 1998. *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. The landmark study that outlines the relationships between the idea of landscape and social and class formation in such places as Italy, England, and the United States.
- Foot, Kenneth E., Peter J. Hugill, Kent Mathewson, and Jonathan M. Smith (eds.). 1994. *Re-Reading Cultural Geography*. Austin: University of Texas Press. A beautifully compiled representative collection of some of the best works in American cultural geography at the end of the twentieth century, and a useful companion to the book edited by Wagner and Mikesell.
- Goudie, Andrew. 2000. *The Earth Transformed: An Introduction to Human Impacts on the Environment*, 5th ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. A fine introduction to the theme of cultural ecology—in particular, habitat modification—as viewed by a British geographer.
- Mitchell, Don. 1999. *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Blackwell. An introductory text on cultural geography that emphasizes the material and political elements of the discipline.
- Radcliffe, Sarah (ed.). 2006. *Culture and Development in a Globalizing World: Geographies, Actors, and Paradigms*. London: Routledge. A series of essays that provide case studies from around the world showing the various ways that culture and economic development are integrally related.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1974. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. A Chinese-born geographer's innovative and imaginative look at people's attachment to place, a central concern of the cultural approach to human geography.

Journals in Human and Cultural Geography

- Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Volume 1 was published in 1911. The leading scholarly journal of American geographers.
- Cultural Geographies* (formerly known as *Ecumene*). Volume I was published in 1994.
- Journal of Cultural Geography*. Published semiannually by the Department of Geography, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK. Volume 1 was published in 1980.
- Progress in Human Geography*. A quarterly journal providing critical appraisal of developments and trends in the discipline. Volume 1 was published in 1977.
- Social and Cultural Geography*. Volume 1 was published in 2000 by Routledge, Taylor, & Francis Ltd. in Great Britain.

Answers to Thinking Geographically Questions

Figure 1.1: Both mark off sacred space from its surroundings, both are built in traditional styles, both are carefully maintained. The external symbols are different, as are the architectural styles.

Figure 1.2: A major force would be climate: sufficient water (but not too much) and warm temperatures for wheat growing, plus flat land for fields. Another important force is dietary preference.

Figure 1.3: The gun is obviously a piece of introduced technology. The dogs' harnesses also appear to be made from materials brought from elsewhere.

Figure 1.4: Most cultures are separated by a transition zone where characteristics of one culture gradually replace those of the neighboring one, rather than a sharp dividing line.

Figure 1.5: Identification of the border is difficult at best. In the very background there appears to be rural farmland, but even that is dependent on the city core—the node—for important services like banking, medical care, legal services, stores, and (because Denver is a state capital) government.

Figure 1.6: A major divide is still the former East Germany, which is poorer, has major pollution problems, and even has slightly different speech patterns from the western part of the country. Although the religious configuration is more complex, after movements of population in the late twentieth century, religion still instills different world views and concepts of right and wrong behavior. Differences in landholding laws can be extremely persistent and require special accommodation.

Figure 1.7: Silicon Valley and the Lower Rio Grande in Texas are examples. You may know of other examples from your local area.

Figure 1.8: Centers of power, such as government, financial institutions, and cultural institutions, are frequently located in large cities, where individual leaders often live.

Figure 1.9: Yes, the pattern would be similar. Contagious diseases, like HIV/AIDS, spread from person to person. People are physically closer in cities at whatever scale, and with fewer strong traditions from rural cultures, the kinds of behavior that spread HIV/AIDS are more acceptable in the population.

Figure 1.10: Your answers will vary depending on your acquaintance with world regions. The Middle East, especially Turkey, and Middle and South America and China and Southeast Asia may seem surprisingly high.

Figure 1.11: American cities probably do not display many Russian influences because Americans are less interested in copying trends from Russia than Russians are in copying American traits. America has a worldwide reputation for being in the vanguard of new ideas and offering a wealthy, comfortable lifestyle.

Figure 1.12: Both cities, as they grew, had to face the challenge of connections to a hinterland across considerable bodies of water. However, internally, Chongqing allowed the street pattern to follow the lay of the land because the leaders felt no compulsion to do otherwise (in flatter areas, Chinese cities were carefully laid out in a square). San Francisco shows the imposition of the modern grid pattern from the initial Spanish settlement and the Public Land Survey. In this way, leaders faced certain needs but had the possibility of solving the problems in different ways.

Figure 1.13: At best, such incidents give one pause to rethink whether human technology really can control nature or whether

nature should be allowed the upper hand—or at least more cooperation.

Figure 1.14: Erosion can be controlled by allowing trees and grass to continue to grow, because they hold the soil in place. Also, clear cutting promotes erosion, so forests that are more selectively cut can be a controlling factor. Roads can be engineered to keep soil in place and follow contours.

Figure 1.15: In the United States and Canada, the outskirts (the light yellow, labeled 5) tend to house the wealthy and middle class residents in suburbs. Slums tend to be in the center of town, just outside the CBD (central business district). North American cities have less self-built housing.

Figure 1.16: In Asia the pressure of population has led to turning steep slopes into farmland by terracing them (which also helps to control the flow of water). In the United States, there is sufficient farmland (and a smaller population dependent upon it), so there is less pressure for additional farmland created this way. The mainstream American diet is also based on wheat, rather than rice, as the staple grain, so that the market demands less rice production.

Figure 1.17: For purposes of the painting, which was probably commissioned by a wealthy member of society, the laborers were unimportant.

Figure 1.18: Your answers will vary, depending on landmarks in your home city. Among the possibilities are the hills and major bridges of San Francisco, the skyscrapers of New York, the historic buildings of Boston, and the adobe (and its replication) of Santa Fe.

Figure 1.19: Such houses, often called bungalows or villas, are common in Australia and New Zealand, and they have also been widely built in Great Britain.

Figure 1.20: The Public Land Survey (Township and Range Survey) was devised to make the legal description, and thus the subdivision and sale of, land in the West easy to attract settlers. Americans regarded “taming the wilderness” as a manifest destiny and responsibility. Because cadastral (land-ownership) patterns are so durable, the result has been a landscape of rectangular parcels and fields.

Figure 1.21: Toronto's highest buildings are centrally located, and they are built of durable materials (reinforced concrete and structural steel). The highest buildings are commercial structures, not buildings for religious purposes, indicating that the most important activity is economic. Even residences (high-rise apartment buildings) are tall.

