Local Culture, Popular Culture, and Cultural Landscapes
Chapter 4

Key Question:

What are Local and Popular Cultures?

Local Culture:
A group of people in a particular place who see themselves as a collective or a community, who share experiences, customs, and traits, and who work to preserve those traits and customs in order to claim uniqueness and to distinguish themselves from others.
Are the Hutterites an example of a local culture?

Why are Hutterite colonies located where they are?

Popular Culture:
A wide-ranging group of heterogeneous people, who stretch across identities and across the world, and who embrace cultural traits such as music, dance, clothing, and food preference that change frequently and are ubiquitous on the cultural landscape.
How do cultural traits from local cultures become part of popular culture?

Madonna wearing a red string Kabbalah bracelet.

How do cultural traits diffuse?

Hearth: the point of origin of a cultural trait.

Contagious diffusion

Hierarchical diffusion

Employing the concept of hierarchical diffusion, describe how you first became a “knower” of your favorite kind of music – where is its hearth, and how did it reach you?
Key Question:
How are Local Cultures Sustained?

Local cultures are sustained by maintaining customs.

Custom: a practice that a group of people routinely follows.

Material and Nonmaterial Culture

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Material Culture</th>
<th>Nonmaterial Culture</th>
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<td>The things a group of people construct, such as art, houses, clothing, sports, dance, and food.</td>
<td>The beliefs, practices, aesthetics, and values of a group of people.</td>
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In an age of globalization, where popular culture diffuses quickly, what do local cultures do to maintain their customs?

Local Cultures often have two goals:

1. Keeping other cultures out. (ie. create a boundary around itself)
2. Keeping their own culture in. (ie. avoid cultural appropriation)
What role does place play in maintaining customs?

By defining a place (a town or a neighborhood) or a space for a short amount of time (an annual festival) as representing a culture and its values, members of a local culture can maintain (or reestablish) its customs and reinforce its beliefs.

Rural Local Cultures

- Migration into rural areas is less frequent.
- Can better separate their culture from others and from popular culture.
- Can define their own space.
- Daily life may be defined by a shared economic activity.

Makah (Neah Bay, Washington)

Why did the Makah reinstate the whale hunt?
Makah (Neah Bay, Washington)
Why did the Makah reinstate the whale hunt? To reinvigorate the local culture.

Little Sweden, USA (Lindsborg, KS)
Why did the residents of Lindsborg define it as a Swedish place?

Little Sweden, USA (Lindsborg, KS)
Why did the residents of Lindsborg define it as a Swedish place? neolocalism: seeking out the regional culture and reinvigorating it in response to the uncertainty of the modern world.
Urban Local Cultures

- Can create ethnic neighborhoods within cities.
- Creates a space to practice customs.
- Can cluster businesses, houses of worship, schools to support local culture.
- Migration into ethnic neighborhoods can quickly change an ethnic neighborhood.

For example:
Williamsburg, NY, North End (Boston), MA

Commodification

How are aspects of local culture (material, non-material, place) commodified?

- what is commodified?
- who commodifies it?
Authenticity

Claims of authenticity abound – how do consumers determine what experience/place is “authentic” and what is not?

Irish Pub Company Pubs

Irish Pub Company and Guinness Brewing Company created 5 models of pubs and export them around the world.

Little Bridge Pub in Dingle, Ireland (not an Irish Pub Company Pub)
What is the last place you went to or the last product you purchased that claimed to be “authentic?” What are the challenges of defending the authenticity of this place or product while refuting the authenticity of other similar places or products?

Key Question:
How is Popular Culture Diffused?

How are hearths of popular culture traits established?

• Typically begins with an idea/good and contagious diffusion.

• Companies can create/manufacture popular culture. (i.e. MTV)

• Individuals can create/manufacture popular culture. (i.e. Tony Hawk)
The hearth of Phish concerts is in the northeastern United States, near where the band began in Vermont.

With Distance Decay, the likelihood of diffusion decreases as time and distance from the hearth increases.

With Time-Space Compression, the likelihood of diffusion depends upon the connectedness among places.

Which applies more to popular culture traits usually diffused hierarchically?

How is fashion in popular culture an example of hierarchical diffusion?
Think about your local community (your college campus, your neighborhood, your town). Determine how your local community takes one aspect of popular culture and makes it your own.

Key Question:

How can Local and Popular Cultures be seen in the Cultural Landscape?

Cultural Landscape

The visible human imprint on the landscape.

- How have people changed the landscape?
- What buildings, statues, and so forth have they erected?
- How do landscapes reflect the values of a culture?
Placelessness: the loss of uniqueness in a cultural landscape – one place looks like the next.

Convergence of Cultural Landscapes:

- Diffusion of architectural forms and planning ideas around the world.

Convergence of Cultural Landscapes:

- The widespread distribution of businesses and products creates distinctive landscape stamps around the world.
Convergence of Cultural Landscapes:

- Borrowing of idealized landscape images blurs place distinctiveness.

House Types

- Kniffen’s traditional American house types:
  - New England
  - Mid-Atlantic
  - Southern Tidewater
Focus on the cultural landscape of your college campus. Think about the concept of placelessness. Determine whether your campus is a “placeless place” or if the cultural landscape of your college reflects the unique identity of the place. Imagine you are hired to build a new student union on your campus. How could you design the building to reflect the uniqueness of your college?