Local culture, popular culture, and cultural landscapes

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Spring 2007

Overview

- Motivation: Why study cultural geography?
- Cultural Geography
  - What is culture?
  - Spatial organization of culture
  - Spatial diffusion of culture
- Examples:
  - Surf culture
  - Geography of the death penalty
  - The Balkans

Motivation: Why study cultural geography?

- As a humanistic pursuit... important in its own right.
- Improve our understanding of the present culture and how it differs from past cultures and the origins of the culture.
- Proactive intervention in the culture or preservation of fading cultural traits/complexes.
- Explore concrete examples of cultural diffusion and the spatial organization of culture (region, core, domain,…)

CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

What is culture?

- “... culture describes patterns of learned human behavior that form a durable template by which ideas and images can be transferred from one generation to another, or from one group to another.” Haggett (2001, pp. 204)
- complexity, persistence is distinct from non-human animal cultures

What is culture? (cont.)

- Culture traits (atoms or basic units of culture)
- Cultural complex (interrelated set of traits)
- Acculturation process (young or immigrant group)
  - Culture is acquired through speech and behavior (imprinting).
  - Increasing level of familiarity and comfort with a culture – acceptable responses to a given situation.
What is culture? – Taxonomy: The Huxley Model

- **Mentifacts**: Central core of culture related to ideas, ideals, and beliefs. They are fundamental to intergenerational transmission of culture. Examples include language, religion, and folklore.

- **Sociofacts**: Aspects of culture related to social behavior, cohesion, and control. Examples include norms related to family, marriage, and childrearing, as well as institutional manifestations such as educational or political systems.

- **Artifacts**: The material manifestations of culture: clothing, tools, technologies, athletic equipment.

  * Haggett: sometimes an “…intractable knot…”

Material and Nonmaterial Culture

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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,</td>
<td>The beliefs, practices, aesthetics, and values of a group of people.</td>
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<td>dance, and food.</td>
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Cultural geography

- How does “place” mediate culture?
- How do natural environments imprint on culture?
- Cultural regions:

  - Cognitive maps and cultural regions

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

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

Key Question:
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.

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

what is commodified?
who commodifies it?

Spatial diffusion of culture

- Do cultural regions persist through time?
- How are ideas and culture exchanged over time? (mentifacts, sociofacts, artifacts) – what is exchanged?
- How quickly can a cultural complex change?
- What attributes of a region or culture act as barriers or propellants to diffusion?

How do cultural traits diffuse?

Hearth: the point of origin of a cultural trait.

Contagious diffusion
Hierarchical diffusion

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
How are hearths of popular culture traits established?

- Typically begins with an idea/good and contagious diffusion.
- Companies can create/manufacture popular culture. (ie. MTV)
- Individuals can create/manufacture popular culture. (ie. Tony Hawk)

SURF CULTURE

History of Surfing: Time Periods

- Origins: 2500BC – 1900AD
  - Settlement of Polynesia (migration waves)
  - Development / refinement of board surfing
  - Near eradication of surfing by Europeans
- Renaissance: 1900-1930s
  - Rediscovery of surfing and culture
  - Diffusion to early culture hearths (Australia, California)
- Modern: 1930s-present
  - Mass production / mass culture
  - Longboards / Shortboards / materials

History of surfing - origins

History of surfing – migration waves
History of surfing – migration waves

- Lapita voyagers, ancestors of Polynesians, left trail of Lapita pottery.
  - Push factors caused initial migrations. If resistance encountered pushed further eastward.
  - Over time, Polynesian peoples and culture emerged from these and subsequent migrations; not as a migration per se.
- Culture traits: Excellent navigators, sailors, endurance paddlers, watercraft makers
- Exploring parties would carry food plants, domesticated animals, craft specialist, and other necessities for colonizing territory.
- Later migrations (3rd wave) based on language evidence.

HISTORY OF SURF CULTURE: RENAISSANCE

History of surfing – Reinventing the sport

- Individuals interacting with place, 1900-1930.
- Big Three:
  - Jack London
  - Alexander Hume Ford
  - George Freeth
  - Duke Kahanamoku
  - Tom Blake

History of surfing – Hawaii 1900

- “Circumstances were emerging…” that would allow a revival.
- Changing situation of Hawaii
  - becomes an American Territory
  - Pacific Cable, communication link
  - Steamship service
  - Strategic location for military and trade
- Political / Economic leaders wanting to seize the moment

History of surfing – Alexander Hume Ford

- Arrives in Hawaii, 1907, age 39
  - Stalled career.
- Hooked on surfing
- Part of traveling delegation touring islands with objective of fostering economic development.
  - Connected to “movers & shakers”
  - Has idea to “brand” islands with surfing.
- Working from a base of “pure stoke”
### History of surfing – Jack London

- Arrives in Hawaii, May 1907
  - Celebrity writer and adventure seeker (*Snark*)
  - Approached by Ford to try sport and promote it.
- Publishes “Riding the South Seas Surf”, Oct. 1907, *Women’s Home Companion*
  - republished 1908 (*Pall Mall Magazine*)
  - republished 1911 *Cruise of the Snark*
- Impact almost immediate
  - starts stream of national/international media attention.
  - coordinated effort by Ford

### History of surfing – George Freeth

- “First great waterman of the modern era”
  - Swimmer, diver, boatman, fisherman, outrigger canoeist, sailor, first professional lifeguard in California, Congressional Gold Medal for bravery, founds lifesaving service in California, and introduces waterpolo to California.
- Planted the “seeds of the new surf culture on the West Coast.”
  - Fit with emerging beach lifestyle.
  - Unemployment/underemployment – lived to surf.
  - Dies 1919 (age 35)