Local Culture, Popular Culture, and Cultural Landscapes

Field Note   Preserving Culture

The signs with the Tata Corporation's logo were everywhere on the landscape of the city of Hyderabad in India (Fig. 4.1): a Tata corporate building across the street from our flat; Tata emblazoned on the grill of trucks throughout the city; Tata sky satellite dishes bring television into homes; Tata International consulting buildings in the high-tech district of the city.

I asked my host what the Tata Corporation was and where the name came from. He explained, "Tata is a family name. The Tata family are members of the Parsi religion and they own many businesses throughout India and the world."

I was surprised I had not heard of the Tata family before, but I had heard about the Parsi. The Parsi are an ethnic group and a religion. The Parsi are followers of the Zoroastrian religion and came to India from Persia (present-day Iran) somewhere between the eighth and tenth centuries.

According to Indian folklore, the Parsi were looking for a place of refuge as they fled from Iran. They sent word to a Hindu ruler in western India that they wanted to settle there. The Hindu ruler sent the Parsi a bowl full of milk to symbolize that they should not come to India—that the western states were already full. Legend has it that the Parsi leader placed a gold ring in the bowl of milk and returned it—symbolizing they would bring wealth to the region without displacing the people. Around 1500 years ago, the Parsi soon settled in western India, primarily in the city of Bombay.
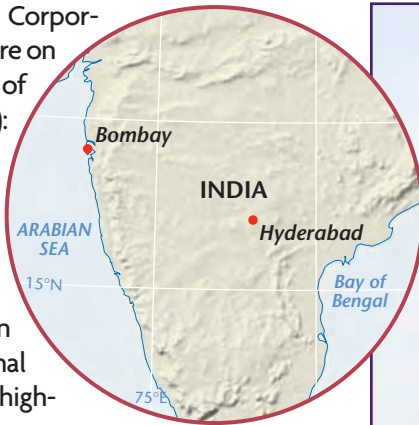

Figure 4.1

Hyderabad, India. A Tata Corporation building in Hyderabad, India. © Erin H. Fouberg.

India is overwhelmingly Hindu (85 percent), but the followers of the Parsi religion, who make up 0.0069 percent of the Indian population (fewer than 60,000 Parsi in the Indian population of 1.2 billion people), control a large share of the Indian economy. The Tata Group recorded revenues of $28.8 billion in 2006–2007, while the entire gross national income (GNI) of India for the same time frame was around $800 billion. In addition to the Tata family, the Godrej Group, which produces soap, appliances, and office equipment, and the Wadias Company, which produces textiles and owns an airline, are both companies established and run by Parsi families in India.

How did such a small group of families become such major players first in the Indian economy, and now in the global economy? Some Indian economists point to a positive relationship the Parsi had with the British when India was a colony of Great Britain. Others point to the tight-knit Parsi community that benefited financially early on through the establishment of India's cotton industry and then grew that wealth into many other sectors over time.

The financial success of the Parsi in India cannot be ascribed to a single cause. The tight-knit community of the Parsi and the maintenance of cultural practices that keep the Parsi together and culturally separate from the dominant Hindu culture were definitely factors in the Parsi success. These same traits now threaten to destroy the Parsi culture, and their numbers are beginning to dwindle.

A local culture such as the Parsi is maintained through the preservation of cultural traits and cultural practices. Today, one core cultural practice among the Parsi threatens the existence of the culture itself. According to an edict set down by Parsi religious leaders in 1918, the Parsi religion recognizes only the children who are born of two Parsi parents. Although some Parsi do accept the children who are born to a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother as a member of the Parsi community, children born of Parsi women who are married to non-Parsi (called "outsiders" by the Parsi) are not accepted as community members.

This is significant today because the Parsi have a very high literacy rate in India—98 percent—and many Parsi women are highly educated, have good jobs, and choose either not to marry, to have children late (thus reducing fertility rates), or to marry outside of the Parsi community. In addition, thousands of Parsi, women and men, have migrated to the United States and Europe over the past few decades.

One Parsi high priest sees the historical lack of intermarriage as a major reason the Parsi were able to keep their culture and religion in a world surrounded by Hindu followers. Parsi in India today question whether to count the women married to "outsiders" and the children born to them. Not counting these women and children, the Parsi population in India has declined over the last 30 years from 100,000 to 56,000.

The local culture of the Parsi is highly engaged in the global economy, and today they are struggling to maintain their culture and sustain their numbers in a changing world.

In an era of globalization, popular culture has diffused around the globe—embraced by some and rejected by others—nonetheless, infiltrating every corner of the globe. Local cultures continue to exist around the world, but they face constant pressure from larger cultural groups and from the enveloping popular culture. In the face of these pressures, some members of local cultures have clung more tightly to their customs, some have let go, and others have forged a balance between the two.

Key Questions For Chapter 4

1. What are local and popular cultures?
2. How are local cultures sustained?
3. How is popular culture diffused?
4. How can local and popular cultures be seen in the cultural landscape?

WHAT ARE LOCAL AND POPULAR CULTURES?

A **culture** is a group of belief systems, norms, and values practiced by a people. Although this definition of culture sounds simple, the concept of culture is actually quite complex. A group of people who share common beliefs can be recognized as a culture in one of two ways: (1) the people call themselves a culture or (2) other people (including academics) can label a certain group of people as a culture. Traditionally, academics have labeled cultural groups as folk cultures or as part of popular culture. The idea is that the **folk culture** is small, incorporates a homogeneous population, is typically rural, and is cohesive in cultural traits, whereas **popular culture** is large, incorporates heterogeneous populations, is typically urban, and experiences quickly changing cultural traits. Instead of using this polarity of folk and popular cultures, some academics now see folk and popular cultures as ends of a continuum, defining most cultures as fitting somewhere between folk and popular.

In this chapter, we chose to use the concept of **local culture** rather than folk culture. We find folk culture to be a limiting concept in as much as it requires us to create a list of traits (such as the one in the previous paragraph) and to look for cultures that meet that list of traits. This methodology of defining folk cultures leaves much to be desired. Once we have our list of traits, we must ask ourselves, are the Amish a folk culture? Are the Navajo a folk culture? And it is in this very process that we get frustrated with the concept of folk culture—for it is *how the people define themselves* that matters much more.

A local culture is 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.

We are much more interested in questions such as, do the Amish have a group identity, and what cultural traits do they share? How do the Amish navigate through popular culture and defend their local customs? Why do a group of Americans in a small town identify themselves as Swedish Americans and hold festivals to commemorate important Swedish holidays, while other Swedish Americans in other parts of the country function completely unaware of the Swedish holidays? Why do certain ethnic holidays such as St. Patrick's Day transcend ethnicity to be celebrated as a part of popular culture?

It is remarkable to note how people in local cultures (folk or not) accept or reject diffusing cultural traits, depending on what works for them. Some local cultures rely primarily on religion to maintain their belief systems, others rely on community celebrations or on family structures, and still others on a lack of interaction with other cultures.

Local cultures are constantly redefining or refining themselves based on interactions with other cultures (local and popular) and diffusion of cultural traits (local and popular). Local cultures also affect places by establishing neighborhoods, by building churches or community centers to celebrate important days, and by expressing their material and nonmaterial cultures in certain places.

The **material culture** of a group of people includes the things they construct, such as art, houses, clothing, sports, dance, and foods. **Nonmaterial culture** includes the beliefs, practices, aesthetics (what they see as attractive), and values of a group of people. What members of a local culture produce in their material culture reflects the beliefs and values of their nonmaterial culture.

Unlike local cultures, which are found in relatively small areas, popular culture is ubiquitous and can change in a matter of days or hours. Popular culture is practiced by a heterogeneous group of people: people across identities and across the world. Like local culture, popular culture encompasses music, dance, clothing, food preference, religious practices, and aesthetic values. The main paths of diffusion of popular culture are the transportation, marketing, and communication networks that interlink vast parts of the world (see Chapter 14 for further discussion of these networks).

A new fashion, such as the Dior Extreme cutout sandal, finds itself on runways in Paris; it will be seen on models in New York within days; days later it will be seen on celebrities (Fig. 4.2); it makes its way to *In Style* magazine within weeks; and it will be found in upscale stores in the same time frame with knockoffs in your local mall weeks after that. The costumers for *Sex and the City: The Movie*, Patricia Fields and Molly Rogers, put the Dior Extreme cutout sandal on actor Sarah Jessica Parker in the 2008 movie in several scenes—rapidly diffusing its popularity and spurring shoe companies to copy the sandal and offer it at a lower price and a broader audience.

In popular culture, as we have seen, fashion trends spread quite quickly through the interconnected world; it

New York, New York. Sarah Jessica Parker wears Dior Extreme Cutout sandal in *Sex and the City: The Movie*. © David Murphy/Newscom/PhotoShot.

is a classic case of **hierarchical diffusion**. The hierarchy in this case is the fashion world. Key cities such as Milan, Paris, and New York are the **hearth** (the point of origin) or the cases of first diffusion. The next tier of places includes the major fashion houses in world cities. Finally, the suburban mall receives the innovation. Hierarchical diffusion can also occur through a hierarchy of people. In this case, the designer is the hearth, the models are the next tier, celebrities and the editors and writers of major magazines follow, and subscribers to fashion magazines follow in close order. Finally, anyone walking through a shopping mall can become a "knower" in the diffusion of this innovation.

We do not see local and popular cultures as being ends of a continuum; rather, we see both operating on the same plane, affecting people and places in different ways across different scales. For example, you may go to a major department store, such as Target or Wal-Mart and see Hutterites or Amish dressed in distinctive local clothing in the midst of the ultimate in popular culture: a major international department store. Traditions, such as painting henna on one's hands or practicing mystical Kabbalah beliefs, are carried from centuries-old customs of local cultures to the global popular culture through a popular culture icon or

through the corporations (such as the media industry) that work to construct popular culture (Fig. 4.3).

Both local cultures and popular cultures are constantly navigating through a barrage of customs diffused from each other and across scales, through a complex of political and economic forces that shape and limit their practices, and through global communications and transportation networks that intricately link certain parts of the world and distance others.

In this chapter, we focus on how local cultures are sustained despite the onslaught of popular culture, how popular culture diffuses and is practiced in unique ways in localities of the world, and how local and popular cultures are imprinted on the cultural landscape.

thinking *geographically*

Employing the concept of hierarchical diffusion, describe how you became a "knower" of your favorite kind of music—where is its hearth, and how did it reach you?

Los Angeles, California. Actor Ashton Kutcher wears a red string bracelet while speaking at the Kabbalah center. Kabbalists believe a red string bracelet worn around the left wrist and tied with seven knots will protect the wearer from negative influences. @ Ann Johansson /© AP/Wide World Photos
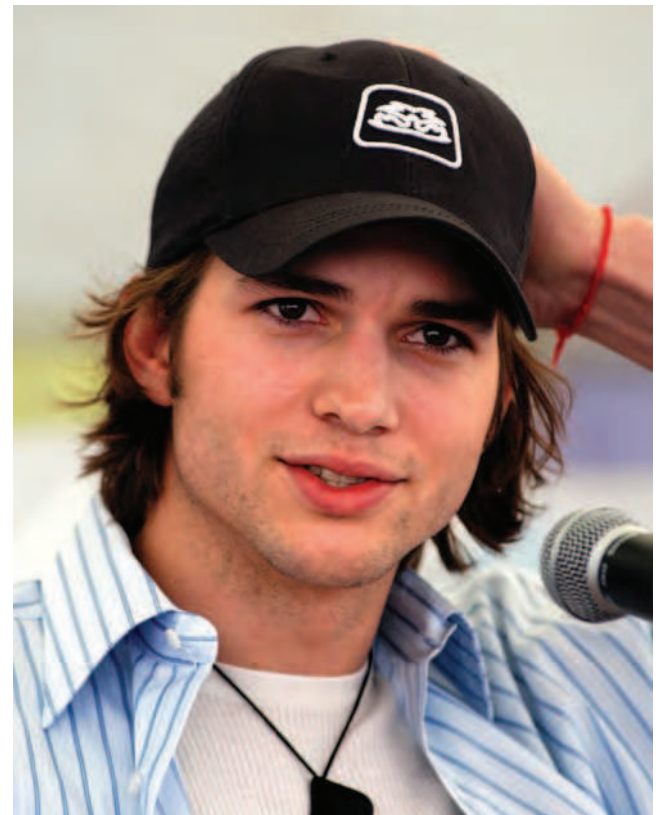
HOW ARE LOCAL CULTURES SUSTAINED?

During the 1800s and into the 1900s, the U.S. government had an official policy of **assimilation**. It wanted to assimilate indigenous peoples into the dominant culture—to make American Indians into "Americans" rather than "Indians." Canadians, Australians, Russians, and other colonial powers adopted similar policies toward indigenous peoples, using schools, churches, and government agents to discourage native practices. In the United States, the federal government forced tribal members to settle in one place and to farm rather than hunt or fish. Public and missionary school teachers punished tribal members for using their native language.

Government agents rewarded the most "American" Indians with citizenship and paid jobs. The federal government even employed East Coast women from 1888 until 1938 to live on reservations and show the native women how to be "good housewives" by teaching them Victorian ways of cooking, cleaning, and sewing.

Today, several churches and governments have apologized for assimilation policies. In 2008, the governments of Australia and Canada each officially apologized to their indigenous populations (Aboriginals in Australia and First Nations and Inuit in Canada).

The Australian Parliament unanimously passed a motion stating, "We apologize for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians." Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologized specifically for the government's policy of taking Aboriginal children from their homes and placing them in residential schools—a policy that lasted from the 1800s until the late 1960s.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper likewise cited the disastrous outcomes of the assimilation policies in his apology to Canada's 1.3 million indigenous people. Prime Minister Harper apologized for the abuse and the lasting negative effects of Canada's residential schools, stating: "We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow." Speaking to the indigenous people seated in the House of Commons, he continued, "Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry."

The United States government has not formally apologized to American Indians for the policy of assimilation. American Indians in the United States are working to push back assimilation and popular culture by reviving the customs of their local cultures. Tribes are teaching younger generations their language, reviving their traditional religion, and eating the foods and herbs of their lands, the foods and herbs on which their ancestors depended.

Local cultures are sustained through customs. A **custom** is a practice that a group of people routinely follows. People have customs regarding all parts of their lives, from eating and drinking to dancing and sports. To sustain a local culture, the people must retain their customs. The customs change in small ways over time, but they are maintained despite the onslaught of popular culture.

Researcher Simon Harrison recognizes that local cultural groups purposefully and often fervently define themselves as unique, creating boundaries around their culture and distinguishing themselves from other local cultures. In the age of globalization, where popular culture changes quickly and diffuses rapidly, Harrison finds that local cultures typically have two goals: keeping other cultures out and keeping their own culture in.

For example, a local culture can create a boundary around itself and try to keep other cultures out—in order to avoid "contamination and extinction." Harrison uses the example of the Notting Hill carnival in London to describe how Londoners from the West Indies (the Caribbean) claimed the festival as their own, in conjunction with an increasing sense of collective West Indies culture. The festival did not begin as a West Indies celebration, but as people from the West Indies shared experiences of "unemployment, police harassment and poor housing conditions" during the 1970s, they began to define themselves as a local culture and redefined the festival as a West Indian celebration.

A local culture can also work to avoid **cultural appropriation**, the process by which other cultures adopt customs and knowledge and use them for their own benefit. In our globalizing world, Harrison explains that cultural appropriation is a major concern for local cultures because aspects of cultural knowledge, such as natural pharmaceuticals or musical expression, are being privatized by people outside the local culture and used to accumulate wealth or prestige. Local cultures can thus work to keep their customs and knowledge to themselves, to avoid cultural appropriation.

Geographers see both of these processes happening with local cultures around the world; local cultures desire to keep popular culture out, keep their culture intact, and maintain control over customs and knowledge. Geographers also recognize that through these actions, *places become increasingly important*. When defining a place (such as a town or neighborhood) or a space for a short amount of time (such as an annual festival) as quintessentially representing the local culture's values, members of a local culture reinforce their culture and their beliefs. In the process, a local culture can reestablish customs, recreate entire towns, or establish urban neighborhoods.

Figure 4.4
Stratford, South Dakota. A Hutterite boy who lives in the Hutterville Farm colony near Stratford, South Dakota. © Erin H. Fouberg.

Rural Local Cultures

Members of local cultures in rural areas often have an easier time maintaining their cultures because they are more isolated. By living together in a rural area, members of a local culture can more easily keep external influences on the outside. It is no accident that we find Anabaptist groups, such as the Hutterites, the Amish, and the Mennonites, living in rural areas of South Dakota, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, respectively.

For the past five centuries, many Anabaptist groups have migrated to rural areas beyond these three states (often fleeing persecution) with the expressed purpose of living apart and staying together. During the Protestant Reformation, Anabaptists broke from both the Catholic Church and the new Protestant churches. Followers of the new religion were called Anabaptists (meaning baptized again) because of their belief in adult baptism, despite having been baptized as infants in the Protestant or Catholic religions.

Anabaptists broke from the state as well as the church; they stressed pacifism and soon suffered persecution. Fleeing persecution, Anabaptists migrated east to Moravia and Austria, and then to Russia and the Ukraine. Continually moving to rural areas to live apart, alone, and avoid persecution, a group of Anabaptists called the Hutterites, named for leader Jacob Hutter, eventually migrated to North America in the second half of the 1800s.

Old Order Anabaptist groups are shown in stereotypical ways in the popular media, but major differences exist across Old Order Amish, Mennonites, Hutterites, and Brethren. The Hutterites are the only Anabaptist group who live communally (Fig. 4.4). Rather than living with immediate family on a farmstead, Hutterites live in colonies of about 100 people, with individuals ranging in age from infant to elderly. More than 425 colonies are located in Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota, Saskatchewan, Montana, and Alberta (Fig. 4.5). In their book *On the Backroad to Heaven*, Donald Kraybill and Carl Bowman explain that the lynchpin of each colony is the Hutterite religion. Members of the colony join together every night for a 30-minute service as well as on Sundays. The most prominent position in a colony is held by the minister, who speaks in archaic German, reading sermons written in the sixteenth century.

Unlike the Amish, Hutterites readily accept technologies that help them in their agricultural pursuits. However, they do not accept technologies such as televisions, cameras, and cell phones, which encourage individualistic behaviors or undermine the Hutterite religion. Colonies assign separate jobs and tasks to men and women, which reinforces a patriarchal social structure. Kraybill and Bowman explain that marriages happen across colonies, and women move to their husband's colony after marrying. As a result, a single colony is usually composed of only one or two surnames. Moving to their husband's colony perpetuates women's weak political position in the colony. Women are expected to rear many
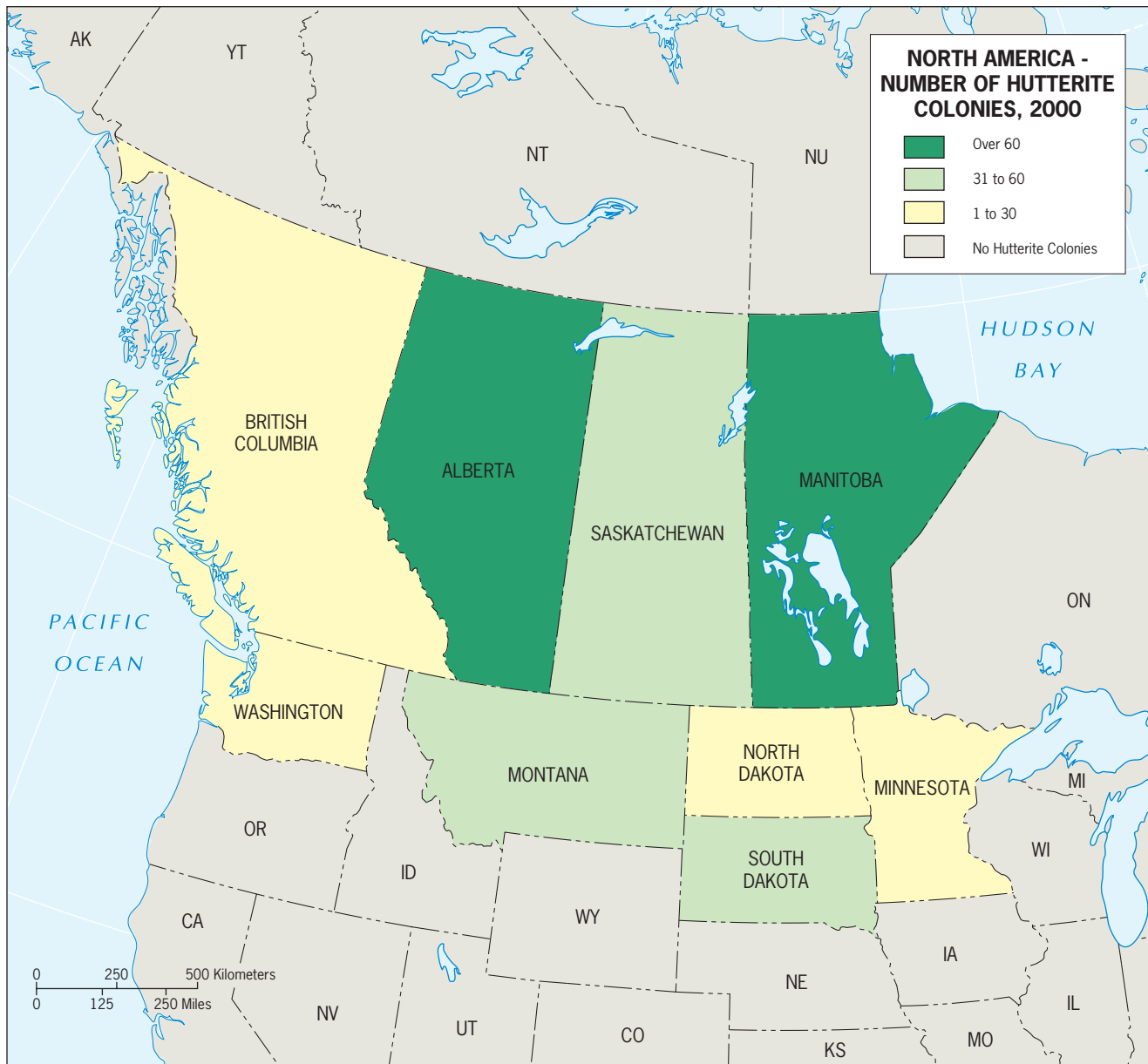
Figure 4.5

Hutterite Colonies in North America.   *Data from*: D. B. Kraybill and C. F. Bowman, *On the Backroad to Heaven: Old Order Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, and Brethren* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 31.

children, averaging five or six currently, but the colony as a whole is responsible for raising and disciplining the child.

Hutterite colonies specialize in diversified agriculture, raising feed, food, and livestock on up to 10,000 acres. Hutterite men often barter with neighboring farmers to fix machinery, trade goods, and lend help. Aside from shopping, interaction with the outside world is uncommon for most in the colony. The minister serves as liaison with the outside world, and he works with lawyers and bankers to keep the colony corporation operating smoothly and profitably. The most economically successful colonies have created products used in agriculture that they produce in their shops and sell to other farmers. One colony produces stainless steel animal

feeders, and another markets its own animal feed. Some colonies also invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in computerized milking systems for their dairy operations and computerized systems for feeding and raising hogs.

Mennonites have migrated from the East Coast of the United States in search of rural farmland. Geographer Dawn Bowen has traced the migration of Mennonites, finding their desire to farm in rural areas leading them to the northern reaches of Alberta, Canada, to turn forestlands into farmlands and as far away as Bolivia to find a place where they can farm, form their own schools, and practice their religion without pervasive pressures from the popular culture. Rurality can make it much easier for local

cultures to keep their culture intact by separating themselves from other local cultures and from popular culture as well. Rurality also enables local cultures to define their own space, to create a place, a town that reflects their values, and to practice their customs unfettered in that place.

In rural local cultures, the economic activity, such as whale or bison hunting, can be such a focus of daily life that numerous customs are tied to it. In rural areas, often all members of a local culture engage in the same economic activities. For instance, in the early 1800s in North America, the Plains Indians migrated during the year based on the bison; they made tools, shelter, and clothing out of the bison, and held dances and ceremonies that surrounded the bison hunt. When a local culture discontinues its major economic activity, it faces the challenge of maintaining the customs that depended on the economic activity and, in turn, sustaining its culture. In the modern world, when a local culture decides to reengage in a traditional economic activity or other cultural custom, it must navigate through the limitations and perceptions imposed by different governments and cultures across a variety of scales.

The Makah American Indians

In the late 1990s, the Makah American Indians of Neah Bay, Washington, did what environmentalists considered unthinkable: they reinstated the whale hunt. The Makah hunted whales for 1500 years, but were stopped in the 1920s because the gray whale they hunted became endangered. In 1994, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) removed the eastern North Pacific gray whale from the endangered list.

In 1999, when the Makah reinstated the whale hunt, tribal members interviewed by journalists spoke to their traditional culture as their reason for returning to the whale hunt. They needed to return to their past, they said, to understand their ancestors, to re-create and solidify their local culture. In the midst of a popular culture onslaught, the Makah sought refuge in their past.

Although the Makah wanted to hunt whales as their ancestors did, their 1999 hunts took place in a completely different context than the Makah faced a century before. This time, the Makah hunted whales under the watchful eye of the International Whaling Commission; they faced numerous protests by Green Peace and local environmentalists; and they found themselves in federal court with the George W. Bush administration on their side supporting the reinstatement of the whale hunt.

The Makah wanted to hunt with their traditional canoes and harpoons, for they saw the whale hunt as a central focus for their culture (Fig. 4.6). The contemporary whale hunt was not that simple. Actors at the regional, national, and global scale influenced whether the Makah could hunt whales and also the methods the Makah used in their hunt. When the Makah killed a gray whale in May 1999, they did so with a .50 caliber rifle, as dictated by the International Whaling Commission, in hopes of being more humane and finishing the kill more quickly than

Figure 4.6
Neah Bay, Washington. Makah American Indians show their support for the return of the whale hunt. © Dan Levine/AFP/Getty Images.

Guest Field Note

Lindsborg, Kansas

Lindsborg, Kansas, founded by Swedish Lutherans in 1869, has remade itself in recent decades as "Little Sweden, U.S.A." Swedish gift shops, restaurants, and ethnic festivals, along with faux-Swedish storefronts, all attract visitors interested in the Swedish American heritage. Here you see a Dala horse, a traditional Swedish folk craft that has been adopted as the town symbol. Note, too, the Swedish and American flags flying in the background. Most visitors to the town assume one of two things: either the town is an island of nineteenth-century culture passed on unchanged for generations, or it is a crock of Disneyesque fakery cooked up to draw in gullible tourists. The fascination of fieldwork is that it undermines any such simplifications. I found ethnicity here to be complex, quirky, ever-changing, and very much a part of the people's lives. Swedishness in Lindsborg has been invented and reinvented time and time again through the decades, as people constantly look for answers to that most basic of questions: who am I?

Credit: Steven M. Schnell, Kutztown
University of Pennsylvania

Figure 4.7

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their ancestors had. Soon after, the Makah whale hunt was put on hold, as cases calling for a cessation of the hunt made their way through the courts.

American Indians are not the only Americans looking to the customs of their ancestors to reinvigorate their local cultures. Throughout the rural United States, small towns were built by immigrants from Europe, and many local cultures have defined entire small towns as places to maintain their culture and to teach others about their customs and beliefs.

Little Sweden, U.S.A.

The residents of Lindsborg, Kansas, have proclaimed their town Little Sweden, U.S.A. Geographer Steven Schnell asked why a town of 3300, which a few decades ago had little or no sign of Swedishness on its landscape, transformed itself into a place where Swedish culture is celebrated every day in gift stores on Main Street and in buffets in restaurants (Fig. 4.7).

Cynics would argue the reason is purely economic, but there is more to it than that. Certainly, Lindsborg benefits economically from tourists who flock to buy Swedish trinkets and celebrate Swedish festivals. But, as Schnell found, on a daily basis, the people of Lindsborg benefit from promoting a sense of a shared history, a common place in this world. In the 1930s, the townspeople began to share stories about the roles of Swedes in American history and the importance of their Swedishness to Lindsborg. From that base, the townspeople began to celebrate their Swedish heritage in the 1950s, highlighting the "everyday existence" (the local culture) of the Swedes who immigrated to Lindsborg. During festivals today, the townspeople (whether Swedish or not) dress up in the peasant clothes Swedish immigrants wore in the 1800s. Geographer James Shortridge refers to this as **neolocalism**, seeking out the

regional culture and reinvigorating it in response to the uncertainty of the modern world.

The Makah, the Hutterites, and the people of Lindsborg have something in common: each is inundated with a pulsating popular culture that challenges their place in the world. Each has chosen to maintain or reconnect with its local culture. For the Hutterites, the goal is to maintain, what they have, to adopt only those technologies that advance their agricultural pursuits and ban those that challenge their religion. Central concerns for the Makah include thinking in their own language, embracing their history, and coming to know who they are despite what others have done to subvert their identity. The people of Lindsborg, seek to celebrate the Swedish immigrants who made the place unique and connect with others around them.

Urban Local Cultures

Some local cultures have successfully built a world apart, a place to practice their customs, within a major city by constructing tight-knit **ethnic neighborhoods**. Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn, New York, and Italian Americans in the North End of Boston, Massachusetts, are able to maintain their distinct local cultures in urban environments.

Runners of the New York City Marathon can see the ethnic neighborhoods of New York City's boroughs firsthand. Running through Brooklyn, they see a predominantly Mexican neighborhood full of Mexican flags and mariachi bands, followed in sharp contrast by a Hasidic Jewish neighborhood with streets lined with men and boys on one side and women and girls on another all dressed in clothes modeled after eighteenth-century Russian and Polish clothing (Fig. 4.8).

Field Note

"One of the most amazing aspects of running the New York City marathon is seeing the residents of New York's many ethnic neighborhoods lining the streets of the race. Running through the Hasidic Jewish neighborhood in Williamsburg, Brooklyn was striking: even before noticing the traditional dress of the neighborhood's residents, I noticed the crowd was much quieter—the people were not yelling, they were clapping and quietly cheering."

Figure 4.8
Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York.   © Martha Cooper/Peter Arnold, Inc.

In the North End of Boston, the Italian community still celebrates the feast days of Italian saints. This area is home to 12 religious societies, each focusing on an Italian saint. Between June and September, each of the 12 societies holds a celebration for its saint. Members of the society march through the North End holding a statue of their saint, collecting money and adorning the saint with it. Each society is led by the Romaband, an Italian band that has played since 1919. The march ends with a street celebration, including vendors selling everything from fried calamari to hot dogs.

Having their own ethnic neighborhood enables members of a local culture in an urban area to set themselves apart and practice their customs. Schools, houses of worship, food stores, and clothing stores all support the aesthetics and desires of members of the local culture. The greatest challenge to local cultures in cities is the migration of members of the popular culture or another local culture or ethnic group into their neighborhood. Members of local cultures in both Brooklyn and the North End are being challenged by young artists and professionals, who are moving into the respective neighborhoods. Rents and housing costs are climbing in each neighborhood, and the cultural landscapes are starting to reflect the neighborhood's new residents. A new arts community is inundating the Hasidic neighborhood of Brooklyn called Williamsburg. Today, you will find art galleries, artistically painted old warehouses converted into residences, and even a new brewery. In Boston's North End, young professionals are taking advantage of the neighborhood's favorable location, choosing apartments in the North End so they can walk to their jobs in the city center. Today, you will find apartments being renovated to appeal to the North End's new residents.

Local Cultures and Cultural Appropriation

Local cultures, whether rural or urban, often find themselves trying to keep their customs for themselves, to prevent others from appropriating their customs for economic benefit. Anthropologists and geographers have studied how others are using local cultural knowledge, customs, and even names. For example, a brewery that produced Crazy Horse beer was sued by the estate of Crazy Horse (a Lakota Indian leader).

The process through which something (a name, a good, an idea, or even a person) that previously was not regarded as an object to be bought or sold becomes an object that can be bought, sold, and traded in the world market is called **commodification**. One need look no further than eBay to see commodification. Newspapers frequently report on bizarre objects, such as California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's cough drop or a person's vote for a London mayoral election, being commodified in Internet space.

Commodification affects local cultures in numerous ways. First, their material culture, their jewelry and clothing, their food and games, can be commodified by themselves or by nonmembers. Similarly, their nonmaterial culture, their religion, language, and beliefs, can be commodified, often by nonmembers selling local spiritual and herbal cures to ailments. Local cultures may be commodified as a whole, with tourist buses "observing" the Amish culture of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, or trekking with "traditional" Nepalese guides on spiritual journeys through the Himalayas.

When commodification occurs, the question of **authenticity** follows. When local cultures or customs are commodified, usually one image or experience is typecast as the "authentic" image or experience of that culture, and it is that image or experience that the tourist or buyer desires. However, local cultures are dynamic, and places and people change over time. To gain an "authentic" sense of place, people need to experience the complexity of a place directly rather than the stereotype of a place. An "authentic" local culture does not fit into a single experience or image; rather, an "authentic" local culture is one that is complex and not stereotyped.

The act of stereotyping local culture is quite confusing for the members of the local culture, for rarely is there consensus that all things must be done in one traditional way. Tourists in Lancaster County, for example, may be disappointed to see some Amish driving tractors across their fields. European, Canadian, American, or Australian trekkers in Nepal desire the same "authentic" experience that a travel pamphlet shows when trekking across the Himalayas.

Authenticity of Places

During the process of colonization, Europeans tagged the cultures they encountered as either savage or mystic. "Authentic" tourist destinations are designed to exploit the mystical in local cultures. A new South African theme park, The Lost City (built on the site of the resort Sun City), capitalizes on *mystical images of Africa described in a legend*, thereby "freezing" the continent to a time that never existed (Fig. 4.9).

A local culture need not be "mystical" in order to create an authentic place. The city of Branson, Missouri, is capitalizing on a local culture in the Ozarks that melds a number of people and perceptions in one place so that tourists can consume the place. Geographer Johnathan Bascom studied the processes by which the city of Branson has effectively tapped its local customs, such as food preferences, history, and music, to create an "authentic" identity for Branson that sets it apart from neighboring towns. Branson becomes "authentic," and surrounding towns that try to capitalize on their rural, country heritage become "copies."

Guinness and the Irish Pub Company

Theme parks and entertainment venues overtly choose a stereotype and perpetuate it, but a discerning tourist or consumer may be aware of what is occurring. Often, the act of corporations commodifying the mystique of local cultures to drive profits is less obvious to the consumer. The Guinness Brewing Company of Dublin, Ireland, created a business plan nearly 20 years ago aimed at capitalizing on the global mystique of the traditional Irish pub. Guinness saw the sales of its stout beer declining in Ireland and the United Kingdom and decided to go global.

Guinness formed a partnership with the Irish Pub Company, which has offices in Dublin, Atlanta, the United Arab Emirates, and Australia. The Irish Pub Company studied traditional Irish pubs and created five Irish pub prototypes—including Irish Country Cottage, Victorian Dublin, traditional pub, Gaelic (based on what pubs would have looked like had they existed over 2000 years ago in Ireland), and Irish Brewery. For example, a hotel owner in Naples, Florida, or a businessperson in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (Fig. 4.10), works with the Irish Pub Company to choose a good site and to choose the pub type. The specifications are sent to Ireland, and the pub itself is built in Ireland and shipped abroad. Along with the pub, the Irish Pub Company provides food recommendations, training, music suggestions, and notably, Irish bartenders trained in their Dublin "pub school." The Irish Pub Company also sells bric-a-brac (Irish antiques and reproductions) to give the place the feel of an Irish pub. Of course, every pub has Guinness on tap. All of these components create what the Irish Pub Company refers to as ambience that leads to *craic* (Irish for fun).

Figure 4.10
Dubai, United Arab Emirates. An old Irish truck marks the entrance to an Irish Pub Company pub in Dubai. © Alamy.

**IRISH PUB
COMPANY PUBS**

0   1000   2000   3000 Kilometers

0   1000   2000 Miles

Figure 4.11

Irish Pubs Designed by the Irish Pub Company.   *Data from*: Irish Pub Company, by email
and http://www.irishpubcompany.com/pubsworldwide.asp, last accessed July 2008.

Guinness and the Irish Pub Company have built over
400 pubs in 40 countries around the world (Fig. 4.11).
Remarkably, dozens of the pubs are in Ireland proper. The
most enigmatic of the pubs is in Las Vegas, Nevada. The
Irish Pub Company designed and built a pub called Nine
Fine Irishmen that spans 9000 square feet in the New York-
New York Hotel and Casino and spills an additional 20,000
square feet onto Las Vegas Boulevard. The "authentic"
Irish pub in "authentic" New York in the "Disneyfied" Las
Vegas is one we can chew on for a while.
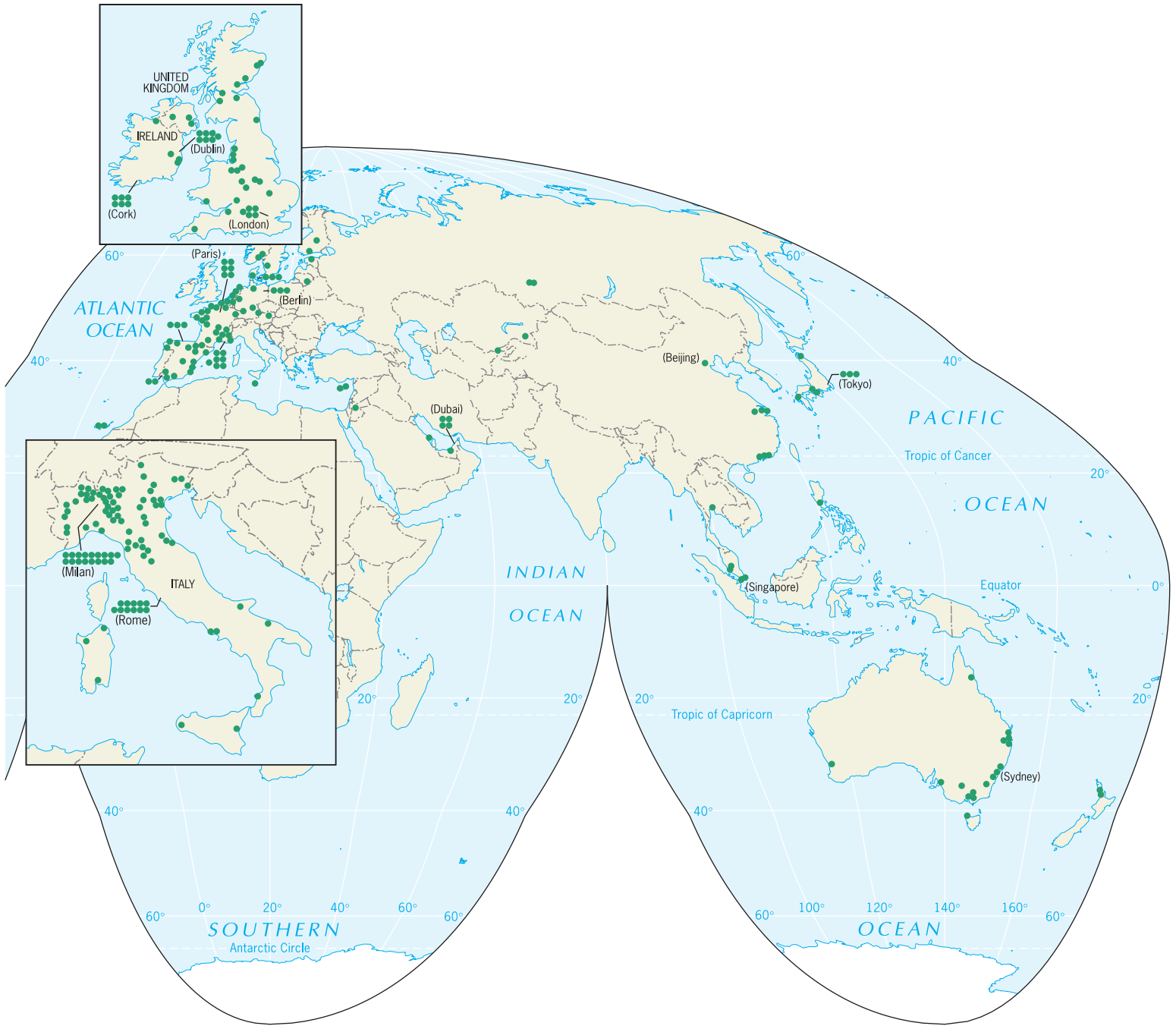
The commodification of local customs freezes customs in place and time for consumption, with claims of "authenticity" abounding. The search for "authentic" local cultures implies an effort to identify peoples who are seemingly untouched by change or external influ- ence. However, all local cultures (rural and urban) are dynamic, and all have been touched by external influences throughout their existence (Fig. 4.12). The search for an "authentic" local culture merely perpetuates myths about local cultures. Members of local cultures

Field Note

"The Dingle Peninsula in Ireland was long one of the more remote parts of the country, and even its largest town, Dingle, was primarily an agricultural village just a few decades ago. As I walked through the streets of town, I noticed the colorful inns and houses of the older town. The 'Little Bridge Pub' on the corner of this intersection in the older town is an 'authentic' pub, the kind that the Irish Pub Company works to replicate."

Figure 4.12
Dingle, Ireland   © Alexander B. Murphy.

are constantly renegotiating their place in this world and making sense of who they are in the midst of the popular culture onslaught.

thinking geographically

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?

HOW IS POPULAR CULTURE DIFFUSED?

Extraordinary changes have occurred over the past century in the time it takes for people, innovations, and ideas to diffuse around the globe. The innovation of agriculture took nearly 10,000 years to diffuse around the world. In much more recent times, the diffusion of developments such as the printing press or the Industrial Revolution was measured over the course of 100 years or more.

During the past century, however, the pace of diffusion shrank to months, weeks, days, and in some cases even hours. Simultaneously, the spatial extent of diffusion has expanded, so that more and more parts of the Earth's surface are affected by ideas and innovations from far away places. For example, the social networking site Facebook has over 40 million subscribers and adds many new members each day. In Canada in 2007, the number of Facebook subscribers doubled to 7 million in just three months. With that many subscribers and instant communication, news can travel quickly through the Facebook network.

Transportation and communication technologies have altered **distance decay**. No longer does a map with a bull's-eye surrounding the hearth of an innovation describe how quickly the innovation will diffuse to areas around it (Fig. 4.13 top). Rather, what geographer David Harvey called **time–space compression** explains how quickly innovations diffuse and refers to how interlinked two places are through transportation and communication technologies (Fig. 4.13 bottom).

In the past few decades, major world cities have become much closer to each other as a result of modern technologies, including airplanes, high-speed trains, expressways, wireless connections, fax machines, e-mail, and telephone. Places that lack transportation and communications technologies are now more removed from interconnected places than ever. All of the new technologies create the infrastructure through which innovations diffuse. Because the technologies link some places more closely than others, ideas diffuse through interconnected places rapidly rather than diffusing at constant rates across similar distances.
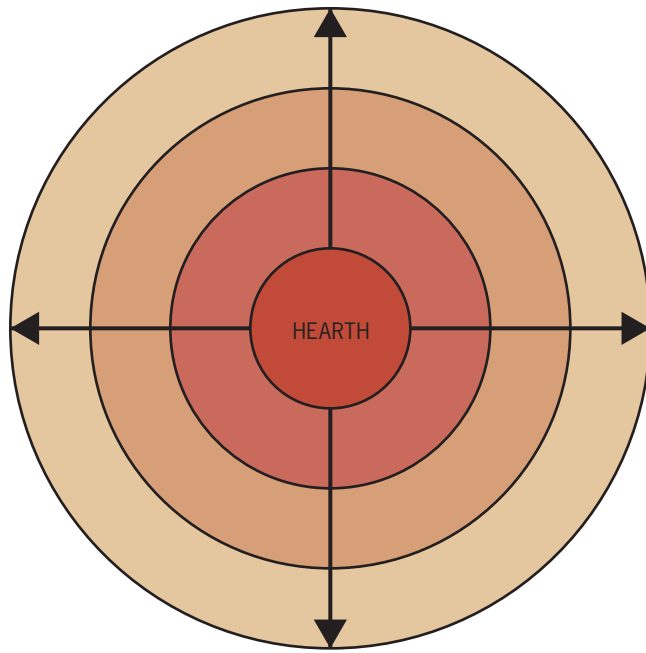
A. DISTANCE DECAY
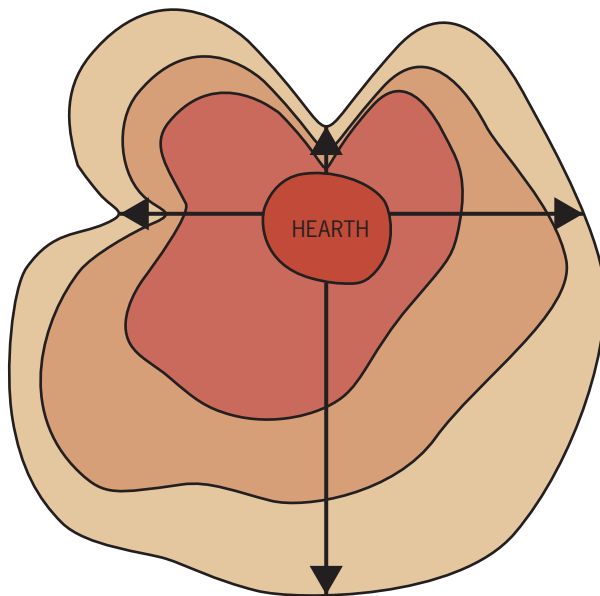
B. TIME-SPACE COMPRESSION

Figure 4.13a, b

Distance Decay and Time–Space Compression. 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 on the connectedness (in communications and transportation technologies) among places.
© E. H. Fouberg, A. B. Murphy, H. J. de Blij, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Hearths of Popular Culture

Popular culture diffuses hierarchically in the context of time–space compression, with diffusion happening most rapidly across the most compressed spaces. As we saw in the last section, even local customs practiced for centuries in one place can be swept up into popular culture. How does a custom, idea, song, or object become part of popular culture? It is relatively easy to follow the communications, transportation, and marketing networks that account for the diffusion of popular culture, but how do we find the hearths of popular culture, and how do certain places establish themselves as the hearths of popular culture?

Establishing a Hearth

All aspects of popular culture—music, sports, television, and dance—have a hearth, a place of origin. Typically, a hearth begins with contagious diffusion: developers of an idea or innovation may find they have followers who dress as they do or listen to the music they play. A multitude of American musical groups (REM, Hootie and the Blowfish, Vertical Horizon) began as college bands or in college towns. They play a few sets in a campus bar or at a campus party and gain followers. The group starts to play to bars and campuses in nearby college towns, and soon they sell self-made compact discs at their concerts.

Bands that begin on college campuses or in college towns and build from their base typically follow the path of building a hearth for their sound's diffusion first through contagious diffusion and then through hierarchical diffusion. Towns like Athens, Georgia, Burlington, Vermont, Seattle, Washington, Charlottesville, Virginia, and other college towns are the perfect nesting spaces for new bands. The Dave Matthews Band created and perfected their sound in Charlottesville, Virginia in the early 1990s. Lead singer and guitarist Dave Matthews was born in South Africa and landed in Charlottesville as a young adult, after living in Johannesburg, New York, and London (Fig. 4.14).

Matthews was a bartender at Miller's in Charlottesville when he met Ross Hoffman, a local songwriter who mentored Matthews in song writing. The Dave Matthews Band was formed when Matthews invited Carter Beuford (drums), LeRoi Moore (saxophone, who died in 2008), Stefan Lessard (bass), and Boyd Tinsley (violin) to join him in creating a demo of some of his songs. The Dave Matthews Band's first live show was in Charlottesville on Earth Day in April 1991. The band played bars throughout the Charlottesville area from 1991 through 1993. Manager Coran Capshaw followed the path of diffusion carved by the Grateful Dead and Phish, through a grassroots campaign of word of mouth (contagious diffusion).

Hierarchical diffusion of the band soon followed, through the hierarchy of college towns in the United States

Figure 4.14
Randalls Island, New York.   Boyd Tinsley
and Dave Matthews of the Dave Matthews
Band.   ©James Devaney/GettyImages.

(Fig. 4.15). The Dave Matthews Band played 200 nights a
year in fraternities, sororities, bars, and clubs throughout
the American Southeast, following the same circuit as col-
lege band Hootie and the Blowfish. The band encouraged
fans to record their music and send it to friends, helping

to establish audiences for the band in college towns far
removed from Charlottesville.

Their first album, released in 1993, was on the band's
own independent label. It hit the college charts, and a union
with RCA soon followed with their second album, *Under the*

Figure 4.15
World Distribution of Dave Matthews Band concerts.   *Data from:* http://www.bmbalmanac.com, last accessed July 2008.
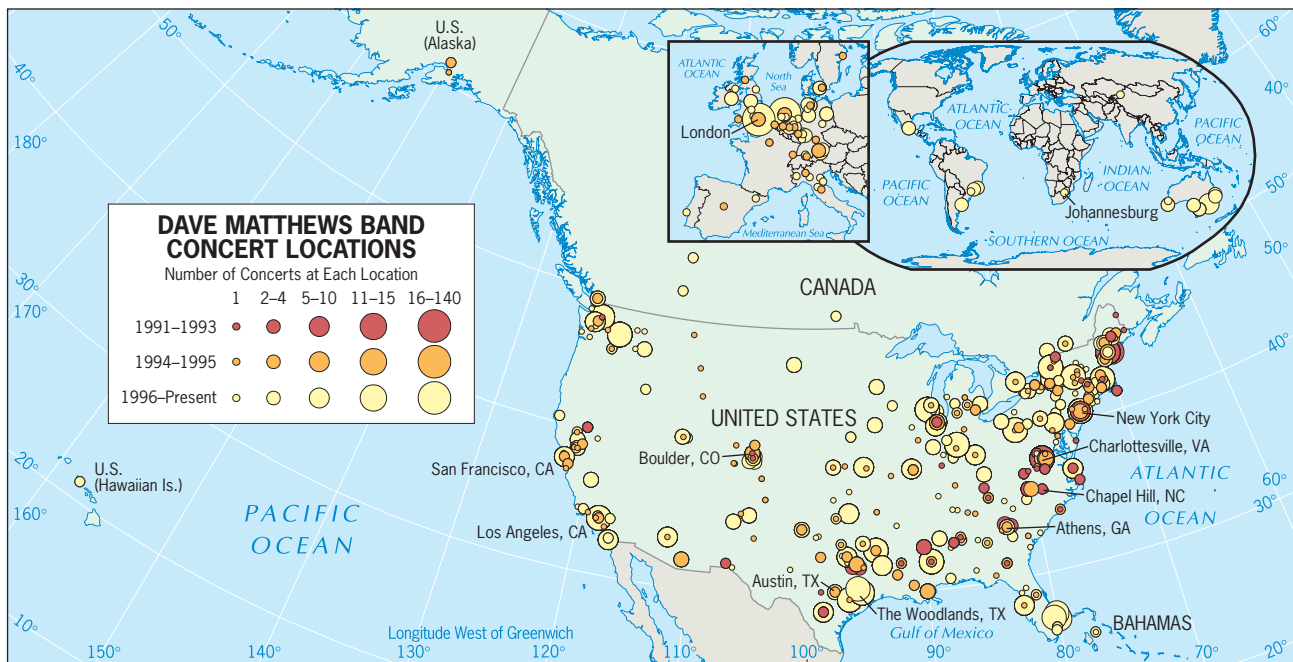Compiled by Liz Sydnor and Lennea Mueller.

Table and Dreaming, released in 1994. As *Entertainment* magazine explained in 1995, "By playing nearly 200 gigs a year and releasing their own CDs, they built up such a zealous following that when Under the Table entered the album chart at No. 34, neither MTV nor most of America had even heard of them." The band's first video was not released until three months after the song "What Would You Say" hit the Billboard charts.

The band became broadly popular after 1995 and began playing large arenas throughout the United States and in Australia. The band continues to rely on its fan base for support. Manager Capshaw and the Dave Matthews Band were early adopters of the Internet to stay connected with fans. Today, the official Dave Matthews Band fan club has over 80,000 online members (each of whom pay $35 a year to belong).

The music of groups such as the Dave Matthews Band, Phish, Grateful Dead, and Jimmy Buffet also diffuses relocationally, as fans follow the musicians along their concert routes, living in their cars and selling tie-died shirts and beaded necklaces out of the backs of their cars in the parking lots of concert venues. The action of following the bands for years (an estimated 500 to 1000 fans traveled to *every* Grateful Dead concert) leads fans to create their own customs and culture. Like other acts of pilgrimage (see Chapter 7 on religion), environmental effects can be grave. Prior to their final concert, Phish (breaking up for the second time), used their website to plead to fans to leave their beloved rural Vermont as they found it. Today, Reverb, a nonprofit organization, helps bands, including the Dave Matthews Band, create environmentally conscious concerts—having bands purchase carbon offset credits for each of their concerts, supporting recycling, selling eco-friendly merchandise, and setting up Reverb Eco-Villages at concert venues to encourage eco-friendly behaviors among fans.

Manufacturing a Hearth

The question of whether a college band "makes it" depends greatly on the choices and actions of record producers and music media corporate giants. Certain corporations, such as Viacom, the parent company of MTV, generate and produce popular culture, pushing innovations in popular culture through the communications infrastructure that links them with the rest of the world (Fig. 4.16). Geographer Clayton Rosati studied the infrastructure of MTV and its role in the production of popular culture and geographies of popular culture. In his study, he found that MTV produces popular culture by opening globalized spaces to local culture, thereby globalizing the local. Rosati explained that "MTV's incorporation of rap music and Hip Hop expressive forms into its production since 1997" helped produce music celebrities and opened the MTV space to "artists and forms that were often formerly relegated to street corners, block parties and mixtapes—broadening the unification of popular aspirations with the machinery of the industrial production of culture."

A 2001 documentary produced by PBS entitled *The Merchants of Cool* looks at the roles corporations and marketing agencies play in creating popular culture. By conducting focus groups with teenagers (the main demographic for innovations in popular culture), by amassing enormous databases of what

Figure 4.16

New York, New York. The Times Square Studios of MTV's Total Request Live (TRL) show.   ©James Leynse/Corbis.

teenagers do and like, by sending "cool hunters" ("cool" kids themselves) out to talk with other "cool" kids about what is "cool," and by rummaging through teenagers' bedrooms (as Rosati noted MTV does for casting its reality shows), MTV and marketing companies are creating what is cool, what is new in popular culture. In the process of producing *The Merchants of Cool*, producers interviewed Sharon Lee, one of the founding partners of Look-Look, a research company specializing in youth culture. Lee explained how trends in popular culture are spread from the hearth:

> *Actually it's a triangle. At the top of the triangle there's the innovator, which is like two to three percent of the population. Underneath them is the trend-setter, which we would say is about 17 percent. And what they do is they pick up on ideas that the innovators are doing and they kind of claim them as their own. Underneath them is an early adopter, which is questionable exactly what their percentage is, but they kind of are the layer above mainstream, which is about 80 percent. And what they do is they take what the trend-setter is doing and they make it palatable for mass consumption. They take it, they tweak it, they make it more acceptable, and that's when the mass consumer picks up on it and runs with it and then it actually kills it.*

This description is a perfect story of the hierarchical diffusion of traits and trends in popular culture.

With these kinds of infrastructure behind the production of popular culture, we may expect popular culture to act as a blanket, evenly covering the globe. Even as popular culture has diffused throughout the world, it has not blanketed the world, hiding all existing local cultures underneath it. Rather, one aspect of popular culture (such as music or food) will take on new forms when it encounters a new locality and the people and local culture in that place. Geographers and anthropologists call this the **reterritorialization** of popular culture: a term referring to a process in which people start to produce an aspect of popular culture themselves, doing so in the context of their local culture and place, and making it their own.

Reterritorialization of Hip Hop

Hip Hop and rap grew out of the inner cities of New York and Los Angeles during the 1980s and 1990s. Places such as Compton (Los Angeles) and the Bronx and Harlem (New York) came to represent the hearths of Hip Hop. These neighborhoods (as well as places in Detroit and Atlanta that later served as the basis for the midwestern and southern hearths) became the authentic spaces of Hip Hop and rap. Neighborhood venues became the best place to enjoy an authentic performance, and the lyrics reflected the importance of local places to the music itself.

The Hip Hop from these hearths diffused abroad, especially to major cities in Europe. MC Solaar, Die Fantastischen Vier, and Jovanotti each made Hip Hop their own by writing music that connected with the youth of their country (France,

Germany, and Italy, respectively). As Hip Hop diffused throughout Europe, it mixed with existing local cultures, experiences, and places, reterritorializing the music to each locale.

In Southeast Asia, Indonesia serves as a good example of the process of reterritorialization. Imported Hip Hop diffused first to a small group of people in Indonesia; then, Indonesians began to create Hip Hop music. Through the creation of their own music, Indonesian Hip Hop artists integrated their local culture with the practices of the "foreign" Hip Hop hearth to create a hybrid that was no longer foreign.

As Hip Hop has diffused and grown, artists have addressed the major concerns of their local cultures in their lyrics. Hip Hop artists in the United States wrote about social issues in the 1980s and 1990s, and some wrote about violence, crime, and surviving during the gangsta rap of the 1990s. Some artists write more about having fun and partying. In France and Germany, American Hip Hop music diffused first to immigrants living in major cities. In France, for example, some of the first Hip Hop artists were African, Arab, and Spanish immigrants writing about the racism they experienced in France.

The results of reterritorialization are seen in the ways Hip Hop artists around the world use the texts and music from their own local cultures, national cultures, and libraries to sample (mix) in their music. Hip Hop artists outside of the United States typically write and perform in their own language or dialect with reference to Hip Hop terms used by artists in the United States.

Replacing Old Hearths with New: Beating Out the Big Three in Popular Sports

Baseball, football, and basketball are historically the big three sports in the United States. During the 1800s and 1900s, they all benefited from advances in transportation technology, communication technology, and institutionalization. First, the railroad interconnected cities across the country, allowing baseball teams to compete and baseball to diffuse. The telegraph enabled newspapers to report baseball scores, which added to the sport's following. In the late 1880s, electric lighting made basketball a nighttime spectator sport, played inside gymnasiums. The founding of the National Football League in 1920 helped institutionalize (by creating institutions to support it, formalize it, and regulate it) the sport of football, with rules that have changed relatively little over the last century.

During much of the twentieth century, the big three dominated sports popular culture. Figures such as Mark McGwire, Michael Jordan, and Brett Favre found their ways onto Wheaties boxes and to icon status. In the last decades of the twentieth century, advertising contracts and corporate sponsors padded and eventually surpassed the salaries of the biggest sports heroes.

While the big three continued to draw millions of fans and huge crowds to their venues, a growing number

of alternative sports began to capture the imagination of young sports fans. Popular films (including *Endless Summer*) of the 1960s immortalized the freedom of surfing. In the 1970s, sidewalk surfing, now known as skateboarding, diffused from its hearth in Southern California. In the 1980s, snowboarding found a following and met strong resistance on ski slopes in the United States.

The organization of ESPN's X Games (debuting in 1995) and the proliferation of video games involving extreme sports propelled previously alternative sports into popular culture. Video games sparked interest in the sports for kids who had never shown any interest in sports. Tony Hawk, the famous vert (a skateboarding ramp that looks like an enormous pipe cut in half—also called a halfpipe) skateboarder, worked with Activision to create several versions of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, with average annual sales of $180 million. In 2001, sales relating to video games were higher than the movie industry's box office receipts. That same year, baseball took a back seat to skateboarding, with more children under the age of 18 skateboarding than playing baseball.

Extreme sports greats, like Tony Hawk, gain corporate sponsors, create their own brands, and sign lucrative advertising deals. Hawk reportedly earns more than $10 million a year through his skateboards and clothing line, his video games, and his stints as spokesperson for Heinz, Hershey, and Frito-Lay (Fig. 4.17). Hawk has even combined popular sports with popular music, creating his Boom Boom Huck Jam tour that features famous skateboarders, BMX bike riders, and motorcycle stunt drivers, neatly choreographed and enhanced by alternative live music.

The expansion of extreme sports into the mainstream of popular culture has been driven by advertisers who court the 12–34 age demographic, fans looking for athletes who are outside of the excess of major league sports, and fans who desire a sport that is different from their parents' sport. Researchers Maureen Smith and Becky Beal studied how masculine identities are created through MTV's television show "Cribs." They found that in the current economy, "marketing lifestyles and desires is central to selling products, which has opened new and multiple masculinity markets." Marketers use sports to "sell trucks, beer, fast food, financial advice, and a number of other products and lifestyles, including fashion and skin care."

Like new music or other forms of popular culture, extreme sports become more popular, mainstream, and commodified. Once that happens, the fan base turns its attention to a new extreme sport, and the corporate sponsors begin to tap into the new popular sport, helping it follow the same path to popular, mainstream, and commodified status.

One of the best known recent examples of this trend is the popularization of Ultimate Fighting. In the early 1990s, advertising executives and sports promoters drew from a long history of mixed martial arts fights in Brazil to produce

Figure 4.17

Los Angeles, California.   Professional skateboarder Tony Hawk has led the charge of extreme sports by performing tricks such as this one, where he completed a 900 to win the Skateboard Vert Best Trick at the ninth X Games.   © Matt A. Brown/X Games/IX/NewSport/Corbis.

a series of fights in the United States among different martial arts and boxing experts to see who was the best fighter. The new fights, called mixed martial arts, grew a fan base through live matches and pay per view on cable television. The early mixed martial arts fights had few rules (such as no headbutting) and no weight classes.

The fan base grew quickly, and by 1993, the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) was formed to serve as a professional organization for mixed martial arts. The sport continued to grow during the 1990s, with the establishment of rules over time allotments for matches, the institutionalization of promotions and marketing, and the growth in popularity of a reality television show called *The Ultimate Fighter*. The UFC has diffused to over 100 countries, and the rules of the UFC, including specifications for the fighting arena called "the Octagon" or "the Cage," are being institutionalized as the basis for ultimate fighting worldwide. References to ultimate fighting and ultimate fighters (such as Chuck Liddell's appearance on HBO's *Entourage*) are diffusing into other aspects of popular culture, spreading both the commodification and the popularization of the sport (Fig. 4.18).

Figure 4.18
Culver City, California. Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) fighter Chuck Liddell at Spike TV's Guys Choice Awards.   © Frederick M. Brown/Getty Images.
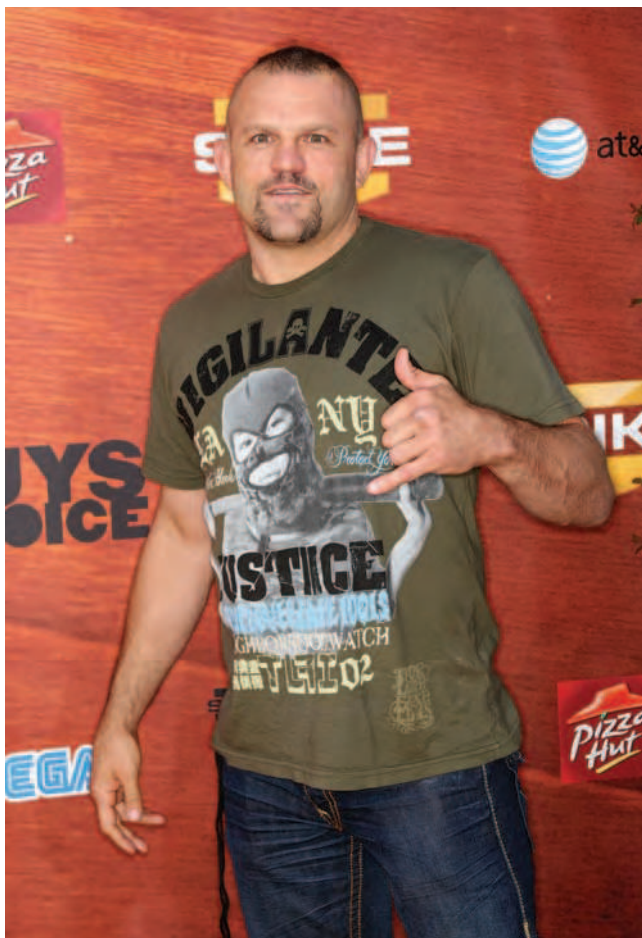
Identity and the desire to remain outside of popular culture will continue to spur the creation of extreme sports to rival the "big three." In discussing MTV's production of culture, Rosati explained that the foundation of industrial capitalism is not simply "meeting the existing needs of the public." Rather, industrial capitalism demands that corporations continue to produce goods that "become socially *desirable*." The need for corporations to create the "new" so that they have something to sell that is "socially desirable" applies to MTV and the music industry, as well as to major sports promoters and marketers. Skateboarding and ultimate fighting will be followed by the next extreme sport and the next, as long as corporations can spur the consumption of the new.

Stemming the Tide of Popular Culture— Losing the Local?

The policies of assimilation practiced by the American, Canadian, Russian, Australian, and New Zealand governments were official policies designed for the express purpose of disrupting and changing indigenous, local cultures. Western, democratic governments no longer have official policies of assimilation. Yet, for people in many local cultures and in regions that are not hearths of popular culture, popular culture itself can feel like a policy of assimilation.

Popular media such as music, television, and film from the United States and the United Kingdom diffuse quickly. American, and to a lesser extent British, products can now be seen and heard around the world. If you turn on the television in Harare, Zimbabwe, you can easily find reruns of a 10-year-old American television show, or a contemporary CNN broadcast. If you walk down the street in Seoul, South Korea, you might hear a radio broadcasting a song recorded by the Beatles, Madonna, or Justin Timberlake. If you go to a cinema in Santiago, Chile, you can choose among several recently released American films.

The influence of Europe, the United States, and Japan in global popular culture makes many people feel threatened by cultural homogenization. At the global scale, North America, western Europe, and Japan exert the greatest influence on global popular culture at present. Each region acts as a major hearth for certain aspects of popular culture. North America influences western Europe and Japan in music, sports, and fast food; Japan influences North America and western Europe in children's television programs and electronic games; and western Europe influences North America and Japan in fashion, art, and philosophy.

The rapid diffusion of popular culture can cause consumers to lose track of the hearth of a good or idea. For example, Americans may think of the Nintendo Wii as an American product because of its popularity throughout the country. The Nintendo Wii, like most video game consoles and games, was created in Japan. Japanese video designer Shigeru Miyamoto, who also created Donkey Kong, Mario Brothers, and the Legend of Zelda, led the design of the

interactive Wii for Nintendo. The diffusion of the Wii into households and even retirement homes throughout North America was embraced by Americans and Canadians alike, because it has not been seen as a threat to local culture.

The diffusion of popular culture, when it displaces or replaces local culture, usually will be met with resistance. In response to the influx of American and British film, the French government heavily subsidizes its domestic film industry. French television stations, for example, must turn over 3 percent of their revenues to the French cinema. The French government also stemmed the tide of American and British music on the radio by setting a policy in the 1990s requiring 40 percent of on-air time to be in French. Of the 40 percent, half must be new artists. These policies directly benefited the French Hip Hop industry. By performing in French, the new artists received quite a bit of air time on French radio. Through policies and funding, the French government has helped maintain its cultural industries, but in countless other cases, governments and cultural institutions lack the means or the will to promote local cultural productions.

Concern over the loss of local distinctiveness and identity is not limited to particular cultural or socioeconomic settings. We find such concern among the dominant societies of wealthier countries, where it is reflected in everything from the rise of religious fundamentalism to the establishment of semiautonomous communes in remote locations. We find this concern among minorities (and their supporters) in wealthier countries, where it can be seen in efforts to promote local languages, religions, and customs by constructing barriers to the influx of cultural influences from the dominant society. We find it among political elites in poorer countries seeking to promote a nationalist ideology that is explicitly opposed to cultural globalization. And we find it among social and ethnic minorities in poorer countries who seek greater autonomy from regimes promoting acculturation or assimilation to a single national cultural norm.

Geographers realize that local cultures will interpret, choose, and reshape the influx of popular culture. People interpret individual cultural productions in very different ways, depending on the cultural context in which they view them. What people choose to adopt from popular culture, how they reterritorialize it, and what they reject help shape the character and culture of people, places, and landscapes.

@ **thinking**
geographically

Think about your local community (your college campus, your neighborhood, or your town). Determine how your local community takes one aspect of popular culture and makes it your own.

HOW CAN LOCAL AND POPULAR CULTURES BE SEEN IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE?

The tension between globalized popular culture and local culture can be seen in the **cultural landscape**—the visible imprint of human activity on the landscape. Human imprint includes everything from how people have changed and shaped the environment to the buildings, signs, fences, and statues people erect. Cultural landscapes reflect the values, norms, and aesthetics of a culture. On major roadways in North American towns and suburbs, the landscape is a series of big box stores, gas stations, and restaurants that reflect popular culture (Fig. 4.19). As you drive down one of these roadways, one place

Figure 4.19
Roseville, Minnesota. A series of signs advertising national chains creates a nondescript landscape on Snelling Avenue in this St. Paul suburb. Across the street from where this photo was taken is the site of T-1, the first Target store ever built (which was recently torn down and replaced with the largest Target store in the world).   © Bridget Hogan Hoye.
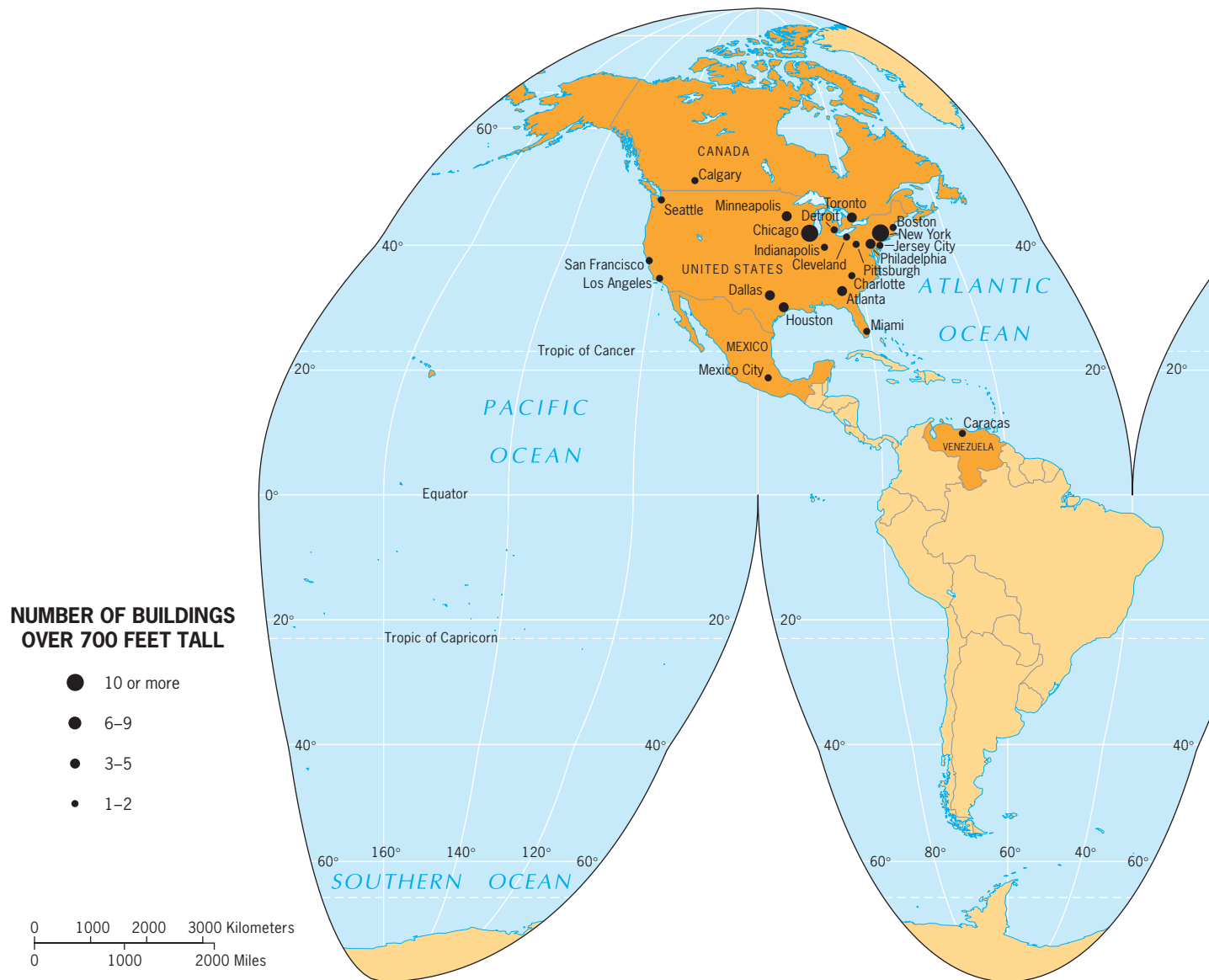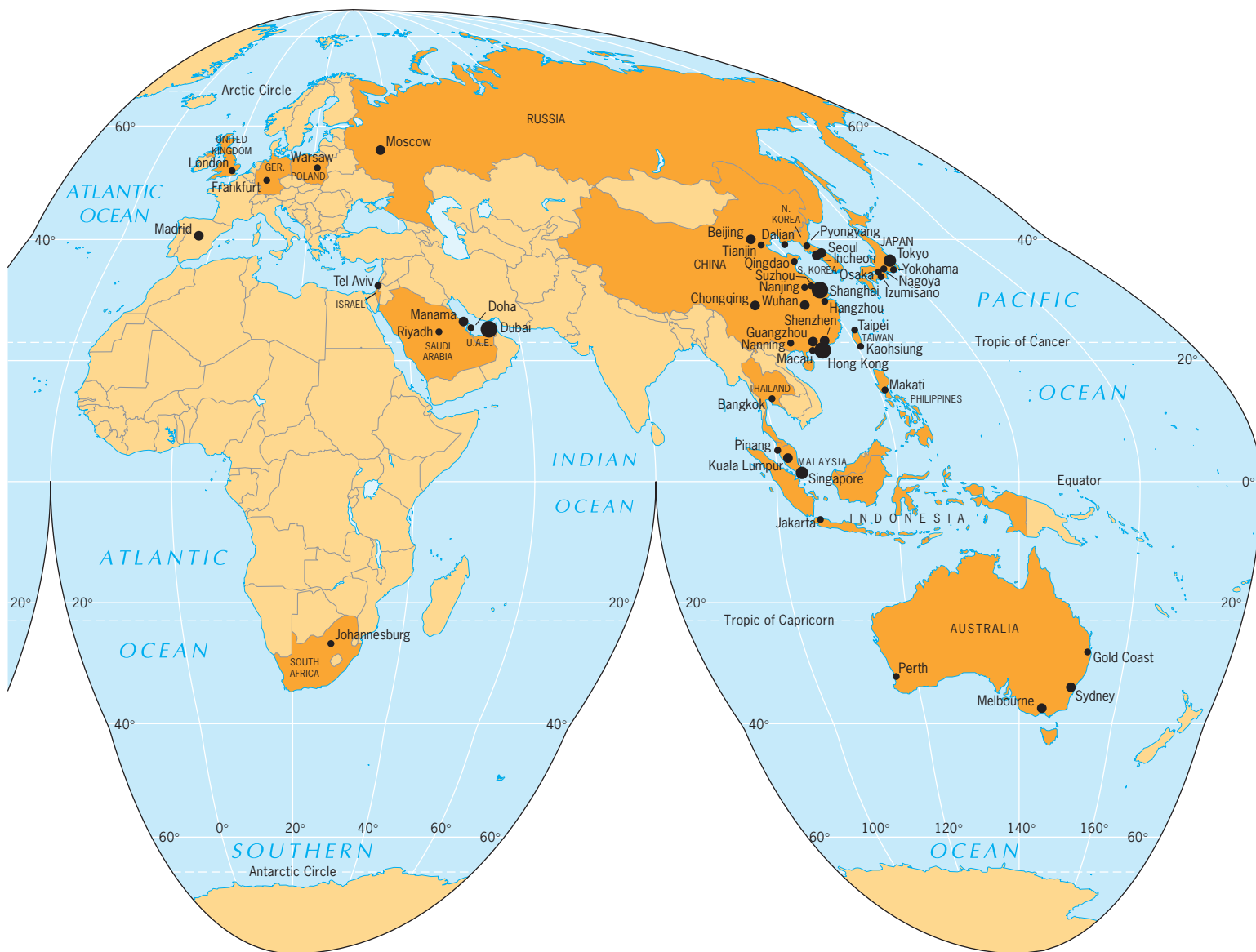
Figure 4.20

World Distribution of Skyscrapers.   Number of skyscrapers that are taller than 700 feet. *Data from*: Emporis Inc., 2005.

looks like the next. You drive past TGIFridays, Applebees, Wal-Mart, Target, and McDonald's. Then, several miles down the road, you pass another conglomeration (clustering) of the same stores. Geographer Edward Relph coined the word **placelessness** to describe the loss of uniqueness of place in the cultural landscape to the point that one place looks like the next.

Cultural landscapes begin to blend together, converging cultural landscapes in three dimensions: (1) particular architectural forms and planning ideas have diffused around the world; (2) individual businesses and products have become so widespread that they now leave a distinctive landscape stamp on far-flung places; and (3) the wholesale borrowing of idealized landscape images,

though not necessarily fostering convergence, promotes a blurring of place distinctiveness.

The global diffusion of the skyscraper provides a clear illustration of the first point—particular architectural forms and planning ideas have diffused around the world (Fig. 4.20). In the second half of the 1800s, with advancements in steel production and improved costs and efficiencies of steel use, architects and engineers created the first skyscrapers (the Home Insurance Building of Chicago is typically pointed to as the first skyscraper). The fundamental difference between a skyscraper and another building is that the outside walls of the skyscraper do not bear the major load or weight of the building; rather, the internal steel structure or skeleton of the building bears most of the load.

Arctic Circle

RUSSIA

60°

UNITED KINGDOM
London
GER.
Warsaw
POLAND
Frankfurt
Moscow

ATLANTIC
OCEAN

Madrid

40°

N. KOREA
Beijing   Dalian   Pyongyang
Tianjin   Seoul   JAPAN   Tokyo
CHINA   Qingdao   Incheon   Yokohama
Suzhou   S. KOREA   Osaka   Nagoya
Nanjing   Shanghai   Izumisano
Chongqing   Wuhan   Hangzhou
Shenzhen   Taipei
Guangzhou   TAIWAN
Nanning   Kaohsiung
Macau   Hong Kong

60°

Tel Aviv
ISRAEL
Manama   Doha
Riyadh   Dubai
SAUDI   U.A.E.
ARABIA

PACIFIC

Tropic of Cancer

20°

OCEAN

THAILAND
Bangkok

Makati
PHILIPPINES

INDIAN

OCEAN

Pinang
Kuala Lumpur   MALAYSIA
Singapore

Equator   0°

Jakarta   I N D O N E S I A

ATLANTIC

20°   20°

Tropic of Capricorn

AUSTRALIA

20°

OCEAN

Johannesburg

SOUTH
AFRICA

Perth

Gold Coast

40°   40°

Melbourne   Sydney

40°

SOUTHERN

0°   20°   40°   60°   60°   60°   100°   120°   140°   160°   60°

OCEAN

Antarctic Circle

From Singapore to Johannesburg and from Caracas to Toronto, the commercial centers of major cities are dominated by tall buildings, many of which have been designed by the same architects and engineering firms. With the diffusion of the skyscraper around the world, the cultural landscape of cities has been profoundly impacted. Skyscrapers require substantial land clearing in the vicinity of individual buildings, the construction of wide, straight streets to promote access, and the reworking of transportation systems around a highly centralized model. Skyscrapers are only one example of the globalization of a particular landscape form. The proliferation of skyscrapers in Taiwan, Malaysia, and China in the 1990s marked the integration of these economies into the major players in the world economy. Today, the growth of skyscrapers in Dubai, United Arab Emirates signals the world city status of the place (Fig. 4.21).

Reading signs is an easy way to see the second dimension of cultural landscape convergence: the far-flung stamp of global businesses on the landscape. Walking down the streets of Rome, you will see signs for Blockbuster and Pizza Hut. The main tourist shopping street in Prague hosts Dunkin' Donuts and McDonald's. A tourist in Munich, Germany, will wind through streets looking for the famed beer garden, the Hofbräuhaus, and will happen upon the Hard Rock Café, right next door (Fig. 4.22). Marked landscape similarities such as these can be found everywhere from international airports to shopping centers. The

Figure 4.21
Taipei City, Taiwan. The Taipei 101 Building, the World's tallest building. ©José Fuste Raga /Age Fotostock America, Inc.

Figure 4.22
Munich, Germany. In modern-day Munich, the famed Hofbräuhaus shares a street corner with the Hard Rock Cafe. © Courtesy Munich Tourist Office.

global corporations that develop spaces of commerce have wide-reaching impacts on the cultural landscape. Architectural firms often specialize in building one kind of space—performing arts centers, medical laboratories, or international airports. Property management companies have worldwide holdings and encourage the Gap, the Cheesecake Factory, Barnes and Noble, and other companies to lease space in all of their holdings. Facilities, such as airports and college food courts, begin to look the same even though they are separated by thousands of miles.

The third dimension of cultural landscape convergence is the wholesale borrowing of idealized landscape images across the world. As you study the cultural landscape, you may notice landscape features transplanted from one place to another—regardless of whether the landscape feature even "fits."

The strip in Las Vegas, Nevada, represents an extreme case of this tendency, with various structures designed to evoke different parts of the planet. The popular Venetian Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas replicates the Italian city of Venice, including canals. The Las Vegas Sands Corporation, a casino developer and owner, recently built a new Venetian Hotel and Casino—across the Pacific from Las Vegas in Macao (a former port of Portugal that became part of China again in 1999). The Venetian Macao Resort cost $2.4 billion and is three times the size of the largest casino in Las Vegas (Fig. 4.23). Gambling is illegal in mainland China, but Macao's recent incorporation into China and its special status allow gambling to grow on the small island.

The borrowing of landscape is not confined to grand-scale projects like the Venetian. A more common borrowed landscape in North America is the town center. Town centers popping up in suburbia in North America have a similar look—one that is familiar if you have walked on Main Street, U.S.A. at Disneyland or Disney World, or if you have visited the centers of any number of "quaint" historic towns on the eastern seaboard. Each town center is designed to make you think of all things American and to feel immediately "home" in the place.

In less obvious ways, cultural borrowing and mixing is happening all around the world. This idea is behind the **global-local continuum** concept. This notion emphasizes that what happens at one scale is not independent of what happens at other scales. Human geography is not simply about documenting the differences between places; it is also about understanding the processes unfolding at different scales that produce those differences. What happens in an individual place is the product of interaction across scales. People in a local place mediate and alter regional, national, and global processes, in a process called **glocalization**. The character of place ultimately comes out of a multitude of dynamic interactions among local distinctiveness and wider-scaled events and influences.

Figure 4.23
Top: UNESCO World Heritage site, **Venice, Italy.** © Cindy Milter Hopkins/Danita Delimont. Middle: The Venetian Hotel Casino in **Las Vegas, Nevada.** © David Noble Photography/Alamy. Bottom: The Venetian Hotel and Casino in **Macau, China.** © Paul Yeung/Reuters/Landov

Cultural Landscapes of Local Cultures

What makes travel interesting for most people is the presence of variety in the cultural landscape. Travel beyond the tourist sites and the main roads, and one will easily find landscapes of local cultures, even in wealthy countries such as the United States and Canada. By studying local cultural landcapes, you can gain insight into the social

structures of local cultures. In everything from the houses to the schools to the churches to the cemeteries, a local cultural landscape reveals its foundation.

The Mormon landscape of the American West was created by the founders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as they moved westward under persecution and in search of a place where they could practice their religion freely. The Mormon Church began in Vermont, and then John Smith and his followers moved westward to Independence, Missouri. From there, Mormons migrated westward to present-day Salt Lake City, Utah. The easiest place to see the foundations of the Mormon cultural landscape are in the small towns established by Mormons throughout Utah and stretching into Arizona, Nevada and Idaho (Fig. 4.24).

Geographers, including Donald Meinig, Richard Francaviglia, and Allen Noble have studied the Mormon landscape and discerned the roots of the Mormon culture in the local landscape. If you drove from Chicago west to Las Vegas and traveled through the rural areas of Nebraska and Utah on your path, you would immediately notice one fundamental difference in the landscape: farmsteads versus farming villages. In the Great Plains, farms were established as single farmsteads, where a farm family lived alone on their 160 acres and the nearest neighbor was down the dirt road. In the rural Mormon landscape, early settlers established farming villages where houses clustered together and crop lands surrounded the outskirts of the village (Fig. 4.25). Clustering houses together in a farming village allowed Mormons to protect each other (because the religious followers were experiencing persecution in the east and because the settlers' fears were raised by stories of Indians attacking villages in the west) and equally importantly, to join together for services in each village's chapel.

Figure 4.24

The Mormon Cultural Region. *Adapted with permission from*: D.W. Meinig, "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847–1964," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 55, 2 (1965), p. 196.

Guest Field Note

Paragonah, Utah

I took this photograph in the village of Paragonah, Utah in 1969, and it still reminds me that field work is both an art and a science. People who know the American West well may immediately recognize this as a scene from "Mormon Country," but their recognition is based primarily on their impressions of the place. "It is something about the way the scene looks," they may say, or "it feels like a Mormon village because of the way the barn and the house sit at the base of those arid bluffs." These are general impressions, but how can one prove that it is a Mormon scene? That is where the science of field work comes into play. Much like a detective investigating a crime scene, or a journalist writing an accurate story, the geographer looks for proof. In this scene, we can spot several of the ten elements that comprise the Mormon landscape. First, this farmstead is not separate from the village, but part of it—just a block off of Main Street, in fact.

Next we can spot that central-hall home made out of brick; then there is that simple, unpainted gabled-roof barn; and lastly the weedy edge of a very wide street says Mormon Country. Those are just four clues suggesting that pragmatic Mormons created this cultural landscape, and other field work soon confirmed that all ten elements were present here in Paragonah. LIke this forty-year old photo, which shows some signs of age, the scene here did not remain unchanged. In Paragonah and other Mormon villages, many old buildings have been torn down, streets paved, and the landscape "cleaned up"—a reminder that time and place (which is to say history and geography) are inseparable.

Credit: Richard Francaviglia, Geo.Graphic Designs, Salem, Oregon

Figure 4.25
Paragonah, Utah. Photo taken in 1969.

Geographer Richard Francaviglia offers several factors that delimit the Mormon landscape in western United States and Canada, including symmetrical brick houses that look more similar to houses from the East Coast than to other pioneer houses, wide streets that run due north-south and east-west, ditches for irrigation, poplar trees for shade, bishops storehouses for storing food and necessities for the poor, and unpainted fences. Because the early Mormons were farmers and were clustered together in villages, each block in the town was quite large, allowing for one-acre city lots where a farmer could keep livestock and other farming supplies in town. The streets were wide so that farmers could easily turn a cart and horses on the town's streets.

The morphology (the size and shape of a place's buildings, streets, and infrastructure) of a Mormon village tells us a lot, and so too, can the shape and size of a local culture's housing. In Malaysia, the Iban, an indigenous people, live along the Sarawak River in the Borneo region of Malaysia. Each long house is home to an extended family of up to 200 people. The family and the long house function as a community, sharing the rice farmed by the family, supporting each other through frequent flooding of the river (the houses are built on stilts), and working together on the porch that stretches the length of the house. The rice paddies surrounding each long house are a familiar shape and form throughout Southeast Asia, but the Iban long house tells you that you are experiencing a different kind of place—one that reflects a unique local culture.

thinking geographically

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?

Summary

Advances in transportation and communications technology help popular culture diffuse at record speeds around the world today. Popular culture changes quickly, offering new music, foods, fashions, and sports. Popular culture envelopes and infiltrates local cultures, presenting constant challenges to members of local cultures. Some members of local cultures have accepted popular culture, others have rejected it, and still others have forged a balance between the two.

Customs from local cultures are often commodified, propelling them into popular culture. The search for an "authentic" local culture custom generally ends up promoting a stereotyped local culture or glorifying a single aspect of that local culture. Local culture, like popular culture, is dynamic, and the pursuit of authenticity disregards the complexity and fluidity cultures.

Geographic Concepts

culture	assimilation	time–space compression
folk culture	custom	reterritorialization
popular culture	cultural appropriation	cultural landscape
local culture	neolocalism	placelessness
material culture	ethnic neighborhood	global-local continuum
nonmaterial culture	commodification	glocalization
hierarchical diffusion	authenticity	folk-housing regions
hearth	distance decay	diffusion routes

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