Local Culture, Popular Culture, and Cultural Landscapes
Cultural Systems

• Our daily lives make up our cultural systems.
• What we eat, when we eat and how we eat is an example of cultural differences
  – Some Asian cultures eat with the right hand, East Asian cultures use chopsticks, Western cultures use knife, fork and a spoon.
  – Certain foods are considered delicacies by some cultures, unclean and unfit for consumption by others. E.g. beef, shrimp, snails, worms, insects, etc.
• Voice-tone and level are very culturally specific.
• Body gestures-Japanese bowing, Western shaking hands, tipping of the hat
• Various marriage customs-intermarriage is accepted in some societies, but not others
Chapulines (grasshoppers) in the Market in Oaxaca, Mexico
• **Habit** - a repetitive act by an individual.

• **Custom** - when an entire group does it.

• **Tradition** - the same as a custom - the term implies longevity.

• **Folk culture** - the enduring, traditional practices of a people.

• **Popular culture** - the rapidly changing tastes and customs of a group.
Folk or Local Culture:

A group of people in a particular place who see themselves as a collective or a community, who share experiences, customs, and traits, and who work to preserve those traits and customs in order to claim uniqueness and to distinguish themselves from others.
Hutterite Colonies in North America

The Hutterites are an example of a local rural culture.
Popular Culture:

A wide-ranging group of heterogeneous people, who stretch across identities and across the world, and who embrace cultural traits such as music, dance, clothing, jewelry and food preference that change frequently and are ubiquitous on the cultural landscape.

Madonna wearing a red string Kabbalah bracelet.

Jay Z wearing a beaded Buddhist bracelet.
How do cultural traits diffuse?

Hearth: the point of origin of a cultural trait.

Contagious diffusion

Hierarchical diffusion

**LEGEND**
- Hearth
- Early diffusion
- Later diffusion
- Important person or place
- No diffusion
Local cultures are sustained by maintaining customs.

**Custom:**

a practice that a group of people routinely follows.
Material and Nonmaterial Culture

Material Culture
The things a group of people construct, such as art, houses, clothing, sports, dance, and food.

Nonmaterial Culture
The beliefs, practices, aesthetics, and values of a group of people. Examples—religion, language, traditions & customs.
Local Cultures often have two goals:

1. keeping other cultures out to avoid assimilation. (ie. create a boundary around itself)
2. keeping their own culture in. (ie. avoid cultural appropriation—the adoption of customs by other cultures)
What role does place play in maintaining customs?

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

- Migration into rural areas is less frequent.
- Can better separate their culture from others and from popular culture. (Amish, Mennonites, Hutterites & Mormons have done this)
- Can define their own space.
- Daily life may be defined by a shared economic activity.
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.

ie: Williamsburg, NY, North End (Boston), MA
NYC Marathon Runners in a Hasidic Orthodox Jewish neighborhood in Williamsburg, (Brooklyn), NY
How are heartths 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)-video games involving extreme sports popularized skateboarding and other sports.
The hearth of Phish concerts is in the northeastern United States, near where the band began in Vermont.
With Distance Decay, the likelihood of diffusion decreases as time and distance from the hearth increases.

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

Which applies more to popular culture?
• Reterritorialization of popular culture occurs when an aspect of popular culture is modified to adapt locally—e.g. Japanese baseball, European Hip Hop, McDonald’s around the world. This is also called stimulus diffusion.
• **Syncretism**—a fusion of old and new to create a new cultural trait.

• The examples below are foreign foods that have been modified to fit American tastes.
Brazil, the McCalabresa is a hamburger-sized slab of pepperoni on a bun. Quebecois McDonald's patrons can get McPoutine. Greece, burgers in pita bread with yogurt sauce, tomato, lettuce & onions Greek Mac. Israelis get to enjoy McShawarma and McCabe. Japan Tamago Double Mac—two beef patties, pepper sauce, bacon, and a poached egg. Pakistanis McChutney Burger and Poland's McKielbasa.”
Cultural Landscape

• The imprint of people on the land-how humans use, alter and manipulate the landscape to express their identity.

• Examples;
  – Architecture of buildings
  – Methods of tilling the soil
  – Means of transportation
  – Clothing and adornment
  – Sights, sounds and smells of a place
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?
The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area the medium, the cultural landscape is the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases, and probably reaching ultimately the end of its cycle of development. With the introduction of a different-that-is alien culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape sets in, or a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of an older one.  

Carl Sauer, 1925
Convergence of Cultural Landscapes:

Borrowing of idealized landscape images blurs place distinctiveness.
**Placelessness:** the loss of uniqueness in a cultural landscape – one place looks like the next.