

4

Cornerstones: Foundation Concepts of Geography

Chapter 4 Questions

1. What does he say is the basic assumption or “truth” about teaching Geography?
2. Why doesn't he advise teachers to teach the “5 Themes?”
3. What are his 4 Cornerstones & how are they different than the “5 Themes?”
4. What are “Placename Biases” and how can they affect geographic education?

Chapter 4 Questions (cont.)

5. What is the difference between Location & Conditions?
6. Besides creating Checklists for students, what other ways can you help them gather, organize & present geographic information?
7. What are 3 other important aspects of “place analysis” & why are they important to know?
8. What can we learn by answering the question: “Which is more American, a Ford or a Toyota?”

Chapter 4 Questions (cont.)

9. Look at the slide: “Distinct Kinds of Regions” (Formal, Functional, Fiat, Folk)

Work with a partner to describe an example of each region in our area & draw a visual to represent it.

Foundation Concepts of Geography

LOCATION

CONDITIONS

(SITE, PLACE)

CONNECTIONS

(LINK, MOVEMENT)

REGION

(AND OTHER ORGANIZERS)

Location

Some people say that location is the core concept of geography.

"Geography is the discipline that tries to understand why things are located where they are."

It might be more useful to say that location is the entrance ticket to a geographical discussion.

"If it's not about location, it might still be interesting, but it's not geography!"

"Location" Has Two Aspects

Site (conditions)

What is "right there"
at a specific location

TEMPERATURE MINERALS
POPULATION ETC.
FACTORY ARCHITECTURE
ETC. ETC.

Situation (connections)

How a location is linked
to other locations

CANAL UPWIND
OWNERSHIP FARTHER ETC.
ETC. BETWEEN DOWNHILL
ETC.

"Location" Has Two Aspects

Site
(conditions)

Situation
(connections)

In deciding where to locate something,
people should consider both aspects.

Example: New Orleans is a city with a great situation,
but its site leaves much to be desired.

Example: Poland has good sites for farms and towns,
but its situation between Germany and Russia
has historically been very vulnerable.

A Not-very-useful Distinction

**Absolute
location**

Location expressed in precise terms,
such as latitude and longitude

**Relative
location**

Location expressed in relation
to some other known feature

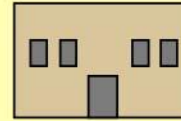
Problem: longitude is defined as angular distance away from an observatory in *Greenwich, England*. That is an excellent example of relative location!

Bottom line: ALL locations are relative. Humans have many "vocabularies" for expressing locations, and each can have several levels of precision.

Describing location

There are many ways to say **where** something is.

Landmark - "next to the library"



Distance/Direction - "one block east of downtown"

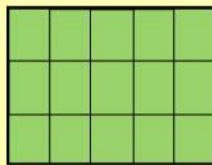
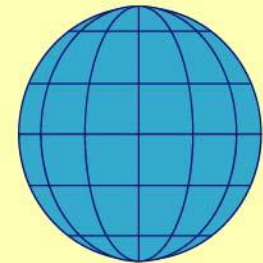


Topological - "between Wuhan and Chongqing"



Address - "at 1910 Maple Street"

Global grid - "at 41°N and 87°W"



Map grid - "in map sector 4C"

Placename Biases

Eurocentric

Exotic

Categorilla

Upscale

Problem

Headline

Some biases to avoid
in choosing the places
you examine in class
(or even just mention).

Personal faves

Location and Place

Location (n): position in space

Place (n): conditions and features that occur at a specific location; meaningful aspects of a location

This may seem like a fussy distinction, but it highlights the difference between the skills needed to find a position in space and the quite different skills needed to describe the conditions there.

Checklist

A form that allows students to organize information about a particular place.

Climate:

January temperature _____

July temperature _____

Precipitation _____

Resources:

Soil _____

Minerals _____

Wildlife _____

Population:

Number of people _____

Growth rate _____

Culture:

Language _____

Religion _____

Government _____

Economy:

Manufacturing _____

Unemployment _____

Architecture _____

PROBLEM: checklists can get really boring

Geographic Products

People buy many kinds of geographic analysis of local communities:

LOCAL-ISSUE
BRIEFS

MARKET
ANALYSES

NEIGHBORHOOD
PROFILES

CONTEXT
OUTLINES

BACKGROUND
PAPERS

RELOCATION
PACKETS

CRIME
ANALYSES

MEDICAL
SURVEYS

Cultural Definition of Resources

Resource (n): anything that people decide is a useful condition in a place

Nature does not decide what is a resource - people do.

Even the world's richest deposit of something like petroleum is not a resource until people have

- the technology to use it, and
- a purpose for using it.

Environmental Determinism

Determinism (n): belief that environment determines what people do in a particular place

In the early 1900s, geography fell rather hard into the trap of environmental determinism.

The pendulum may have swung too far in the opposite direction - toward an equally naive belief that technology can overcome any environmental condition.

Legacies of Past Occupance

Legacy (n): anything that persists from a previous time; a relic

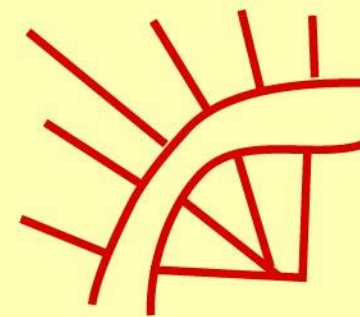
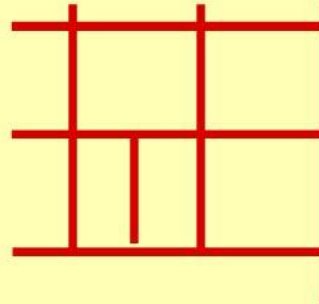
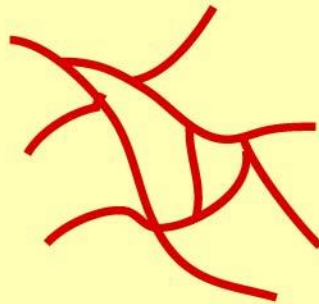
Legacies of past use in a place can influence what people do there today (and tomorrow).

"The Acropolis would sure be a nice place for a new condo, wouldn't it?"

"how about a factory at Stonehenge"

Land Division

The rules that governed the division of land have a pervasive influence on many things.



Use topographic maps or *Google Earth* to compare the arrangement of roads and property lines in your community with dissimilar places (such as Boston, Omaha, New Orleans).

Geographic Connections

Movement (n): changing position

To analyze connections between places,
one should consider:

ORIGIN

DESTINATION

ROUTE

MODE canal, rail,
phone, etc.

INFRASTRUCTURE

CHOKEPOINTS

BREAKPOINTS shift from
one mode
to another

Infrastructure

Infrastructure (n): the structures that make production, transportation, and communication more efficient

CANAL

BRIDGE

ROAD

ELECTRICITY
GENERATOR

RAILROAD

INTERNET

CELLPHONE
TOWER

SEWER

LAND
SURVEY

SUBWAY

Conditions and Connections in the 1820s

NEW YORK

PHILADELPHIA

Good building sites

Food-producing land

Waterfalls for power

Sheltered harbor

Connections to Europe

Access to interior

The Bumper Sticker of the Geographically Ignorant

**If it works for them, where they are,
it should work for us here**

Here is an art-class project:
make a more "arresting" design.

Conditions and Connections

Many conditions we observe in a place
are the results of connections
between that place and others.

and

Many connections between places
are the results of conditions
in one place or the other.



What is a Geographical Region?

The world is much too large and complex for the human brain to learn about every place in it.

Making regions is one way to simplify the world.

Region (n): an easy-to-remember group of places that are similar to each other or connected to each other in some way.

Distinct Kinds of Regions

Geographers recognize several kinds of regions:

Formal - similar places

Corn Belt

Functional - connected places

NY Times area

Fiat - defined for official purposes

NATO

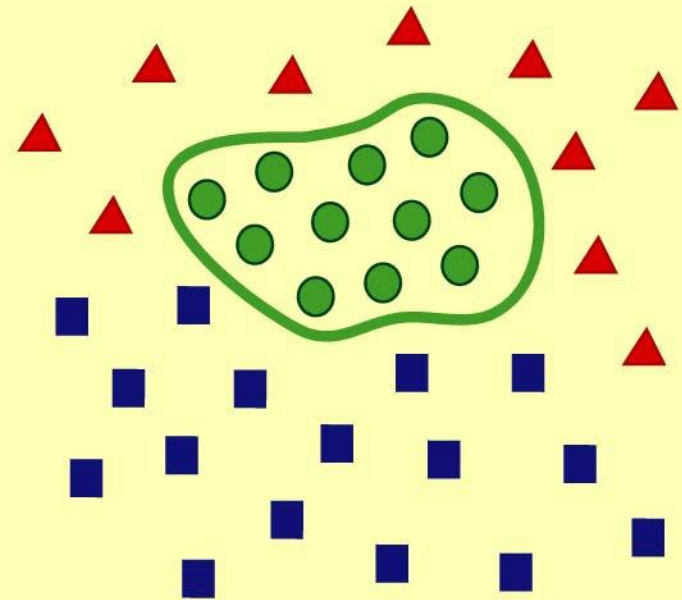
Folk - recognized as a region
by people who live there

TexMex

Formal (Homogeneous) Region

Area with generally similar conditions or appearance throughout.

- Corn Belt
- Andes Mountains
- Ruhr Industrial Area
- Bantu Language Region

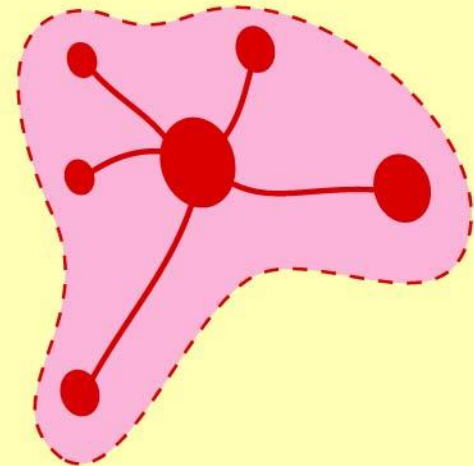


To map a formal region, look at the places and draw a line around the ones that are similar.

Functional (Nodal) Region

Area with dissimilar places
that are connected to each other in some way.

- Mekong River watershed
(areas linked by flowing water)
- Houston Chronicle area
(areas linked by paper delivery)
- Shinjuku labor area
(areas linked by commuters)

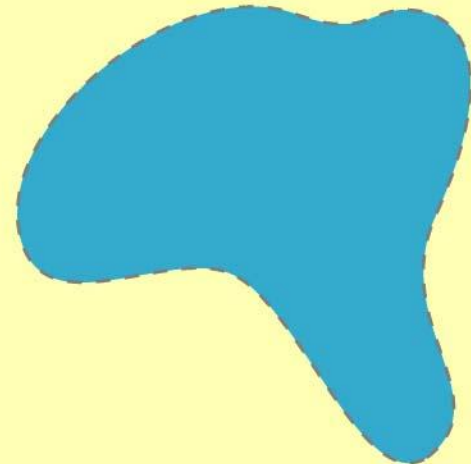


To map a functional region, draw a line
around places that are connected.

Folk (Vernacular) Region

Area recognized as a region by people who live there (or know about it).

- North Shore
- Outback
- Little Dixie
- Back of the Tracks

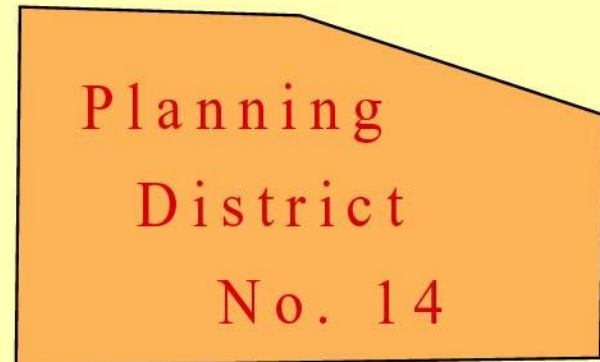


To map a folk region, ask people what places belong together.
Boundaries of a folk region can be vague or controversial.

Fiat (Administrative) Region

Area defined by politically established borders.

- Pennsylvania
- 43rd Precinct
- Arctic National Wildlife Refuge



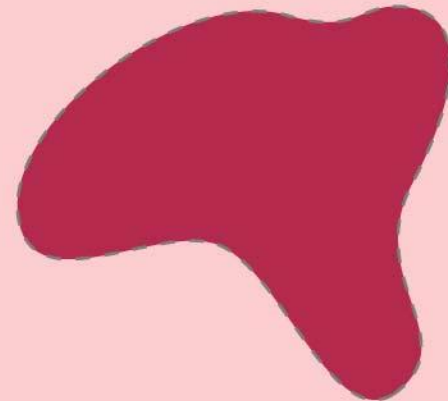
To map a fiat region, draw lines around an area and legally/officially declare it a separate entity.

Subpopulations and Regions

1

Many vernacular regions are recognized because they are occupied/used by groups within a larger population:

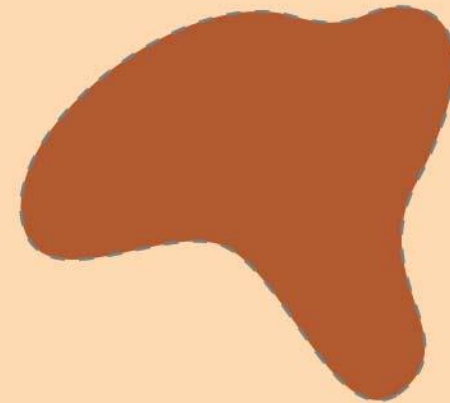
- women's shopping area
- older-kids' playground
- immigrant neighborhood
- retirement community



The boundaries around vernacular regions may be unclear, perhaps even different when described by insiders or outsiders.

Analyzing Regions

When we talk about subregions, or correlating map patterns, or transitions between regions, or the influence of a region, or similar regions on other continents, . . .



We are really talking about different kinds of spatial analysis, of which regionalization is only one (see Chapter 6).

Connections That Make Conditions

(the Wasatch Mountains and Great Salt Lake)

CONNECTION

LOCAL CONDITION

Wind blowing from west

Religious intolerance in east

Plate tectonics

Salt rising in soil

Earthquake/volcano gap

Platte River

Geographical Irony

Geographical irony: the very things that give value to a place can also pose a threat

Examples from Salt Lake City:

The "oasis in a desert" conditions that attracted the Mormons trying to get away also attracted other pioneers and a Transcontinental Railroad.

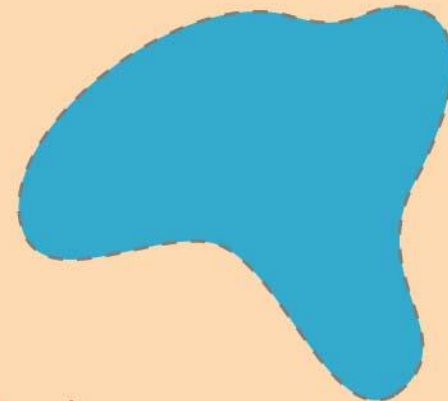
The earthquakes that built the Wasatch Mountains (that capture rain and snow and thus irrigate the fields) can also pose a threat if they occur again.

Two Caveats About Regions

1

The concept of a region has been very important for geography as a discipline.

What students need to learn is that regions, while important, are just creations of the human mind - they do not "really" exist.



A region is just a "tool" people use to simplify the complicated world and make it easier to talk about.

Two Caveats About Regions

2

The idea of making regions is very important in geography. Indeed, it is listed as one of the Five Themes of Geography.

See Chapter 5.

Chapter 6, however, will summarize some neurologic evidence that the process of regionalization is just one of eight different ways the human brain organizes spatial information.

So let's just say that the fourth cornerstone is the process of spatial thinking, and that regionalization is one good example of it!