

Cultural Geography & Cultural Land Scape

Cultural Geography

Cultural geography may be defined as the application of the idea, or concept, of culture to geographic problems or, in the words of **Professor Sauer**, “*relating habits to habitats.*”.

The cultural geographer directs his attention to the origin, distribution, and influence of those elements of culture which give characteristic expression to an area; literally, man's role in using and modifying the face of the earth through his varying cultural means to suit his own needs and desires.

The geographic approach to culture differs from that of the anthropologist only in degree, the geographer being concerned with interactions between earth and man whereas the cultural anthropologist is interested primarily in the cultural control of human activity irrespective of the physical environment. The geographer is, in addition, interested only in those aspects of human behavior which lend themselves directly or indirectly to landscape modification.

- Berkeley school of thought in North America- Carl Sauer (1889–1975) Cultural Landscape
- The Annales school that developed in France from the work of Paul Vidal de la Blache (1845– 1918) took the attention to linkage of people and place through ‘genres de vie’;
- In British geography, a regional approach was inspired by Hettner's Landerkunde schema (see Hettner, 1907) of natural base up to social and finally cultural superstructure – starting from geology, then topography, climate, natural resources and finally leading to settlement and human culture adapted to those circumstances (Heimatkunde).

Approaches in Cultural Geography

- Cultural Determinism
- Behavioural Approach
- Humanistic Approach
- Phenomenological Approach
- Structural Approach
- Post Structural Approach
- Post Colonial Approach
- Post Modern Approach
- Critical Approach

Culture: The Concept

Famously described by Raymond Williams (1981) as one of the most complex words in the English language, culture is also one of the most influential, yet elusive, concepts in the humanities and social sciences.

Rather than look for a single, essential meaning behind the complexity of usages of 'culture', Williams held that the complexity 'is not finally in the word but in the problems which its variations of use significantly indicate'.

In short, culture best thought of as a process, not a thing. Accordingly, Williams identified three broad usages of culture:

- (i) a general process of intellectual, spiritual development;
- (ii) culture as 'a way of life' characteristic of particular groups, whether nations, classes or subcultures; and
- (iii) works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity, such as music, opera, television and film, and literature

Characteristics of Culture

- Culture is learnt
- Culture is social
- Culture is shared
- Culture is transmissive
- Culture is continuous and cumulative
- Culture is consistent and integrated
- Culture is dynamic and adaptive
- Culture is gratifying
- Culture varies from society to society
- Culture is superorganic identity

Cultural Components

- Material: Food, cloths, technology, settlement, language, symbols
- Non-material: Values, norms, aesthetic thinking, knowledge
- *acculturation*, the process by which culture is transmitted through direct contact of different cultures; and *education*, the transfer of accumulated cultural knowledge from generation to generation.
- The end result of a culture study is manifested in an understanding in time and space of individual culture traits and the resultant trait complexes and cultural landscapes.

Content of Cultural Geography

Cultural trait: It is a single attribute of a culture or the smallest distinctive and fundamental element of culture. There are three forms of culture traits.

- *Artifacts*, also called material/technological object, are those aspects of culture that have a material basis in group behavior. Pots and pans, types of clothing and bodily adornment, housing tools and implements, the layout of cities and farm fields, forms of transportation, and other tangible evidence of human behavior are among the examples.
- *Socio – facts* are also called sociological or behavioral regularities. Socio – facts pertain to those aspects of culture that place people in society.
- *Menti – facts* or ideological: for instance, abstract ideas, religious beliefs, ideologies, legends, folklore, magic, attitudes toward nature, and views of the universe. Artistic ideas and styles are part of human menti – facts.

Cultural Regions: A culture region is a portion of Earth's surface that has common cultural elements. Identifying and mapping culture regions are significant tasks of cultural geographers. This can show us where particular culture traits or cultural communities are located. Maps of culture regions provide answers to the most fundamental geographical questions like Where and what are together or away from each other.

Three types of cultural regions are there: ***Formal cultural region, Functional cultural region, Vernacular cultural region***

Cultural Hearths: As long as human communities have existed on the earth, there have been places where people have done well. Where they have succeeded, inventions and efforts have rewarded humankind with an increase in numbers, growing strength, comparative stability, and general progress. Conversely, there have been areas where communities have not done well at all.

cultural realm: A **cultural realm** is a geographical region where **cultural** traits maintain. homogeneity. The **cultural** traits are supposed to be the product of regional. geographical circumstances. It is, thus, regional geography which has become the basis.

Model of Cultural Diffusion

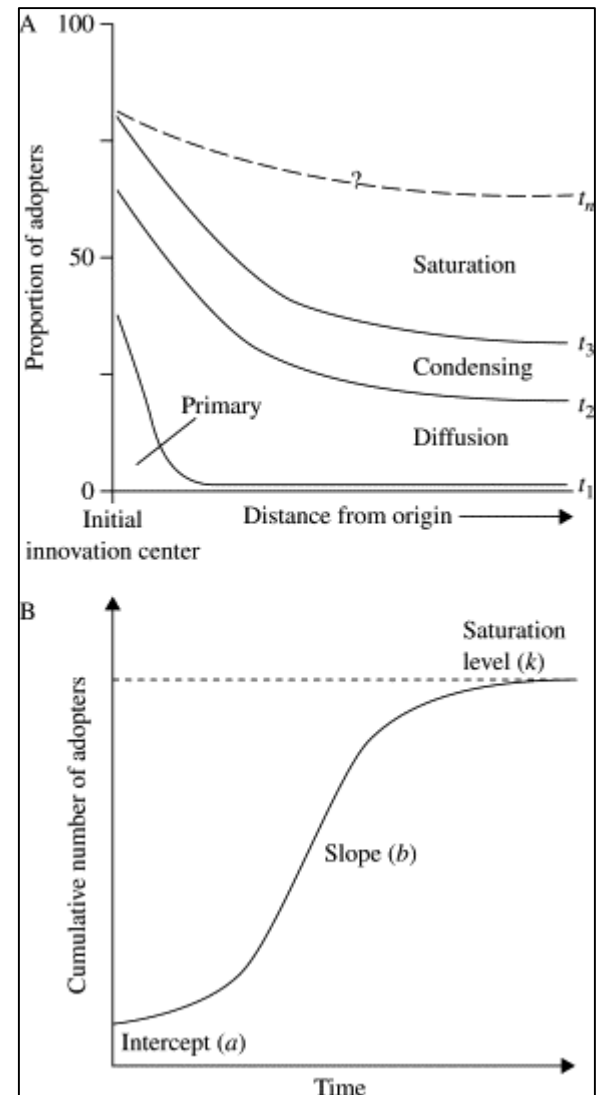
Torsten Hägerstrand (1957)

Cultural Diffusion: The term cultural diffusion is related to the spread of a culture and/or an individual trait, and the factors that account for such a spread.

- Processes of Diffusion: *Expansion diffusion*, *Relocation diffusion*, *Hierarchical diffusion*

Cultural Integration: Cultural integration could mean the interactions of different elements of culture in creating a whole system. All facets of culture are systematically and spatially intertwined and integrated. Cultures are complex wholes rather than series of unrelated traits.

Cultural Ecology: Cultural ecology describes the interactions between a culture and its physical environment. It addresses the relationships between culture and the physical environment.



- **Cultural Landscape:** The term cultural landscape is a natural landscape as modified by human activities and bearing the imprint of a culture group or society including buildings, shrines, signage, sports and recreational facilities, economic and agricultural structures, transportation systems, etc over a location.
- **The classic definition is Carl Ortwin Sauer's [1925]:** 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
- His description of cultural landscape as subject to evolutionary change echoes W.M. Davis' cycle of natural landscape evolution, but Sauer was explicitly concerned to counter environmental determinism and drew upon German studies of **Kulturlandschaft** that stressed the mutual shaping of people (**Volk**) and land in the creation of dwelling (**Heimat**) (Olwig, 2002).
- Sauer thus stressed **culture as a geographical agent**, although the physical environment retained a central significance as the medium with and through which human cultures act (see culture area). Hence such elements as topography, soils, watercourses, plants and animals were incorporated into studies of the cultural landscape insofar as they evoked human responses and adaptations, or had been altered by human activity.

Landscape has generic meaning: Every landscape has individuality as well as relation to other landscapes, and the same is true of the forms that make it up. No valley is quite like any other valley; no city the exact replica of some other city. In so far as these qualities remain completely unrelated they are beyond the reach of systematic treatment, beyond that organized knowledge that we call science.

Extensiveness of areal features: “A correct representation of the surface form, of soil, and of superficially conspicuous masses of rock, of plant cover and water bodies, of the coasts and the sea, of areally conspicuous animal life and of the expression of human culture is the goal of geographic inquiry.”

Habitat value as a basis for the determination of content: Geography is distinctly anthropocentric, in the sense of value or use of the earth to man. We are interested in that part of the areal scene that concerns us as human beings because we are part of it, live with it, are limited by it, and modify it. Thus we select those qualities of landscape in particular that are or may be of use to us.

The natural and the cultural landscape:

- “cultures that grow with original vigor out of the lap of a maternal natural landscape, to which each is bound in the whole course of its existence” [Spengler, 1920]
- Geography is based on the reality of the union of physical and cultural elements of the landscape. The content of landscape is found therefore in the physical qualities of area that are significant to man and in the forms of his use of the area, in facts of physical background and facts of human culture.

Landscape:

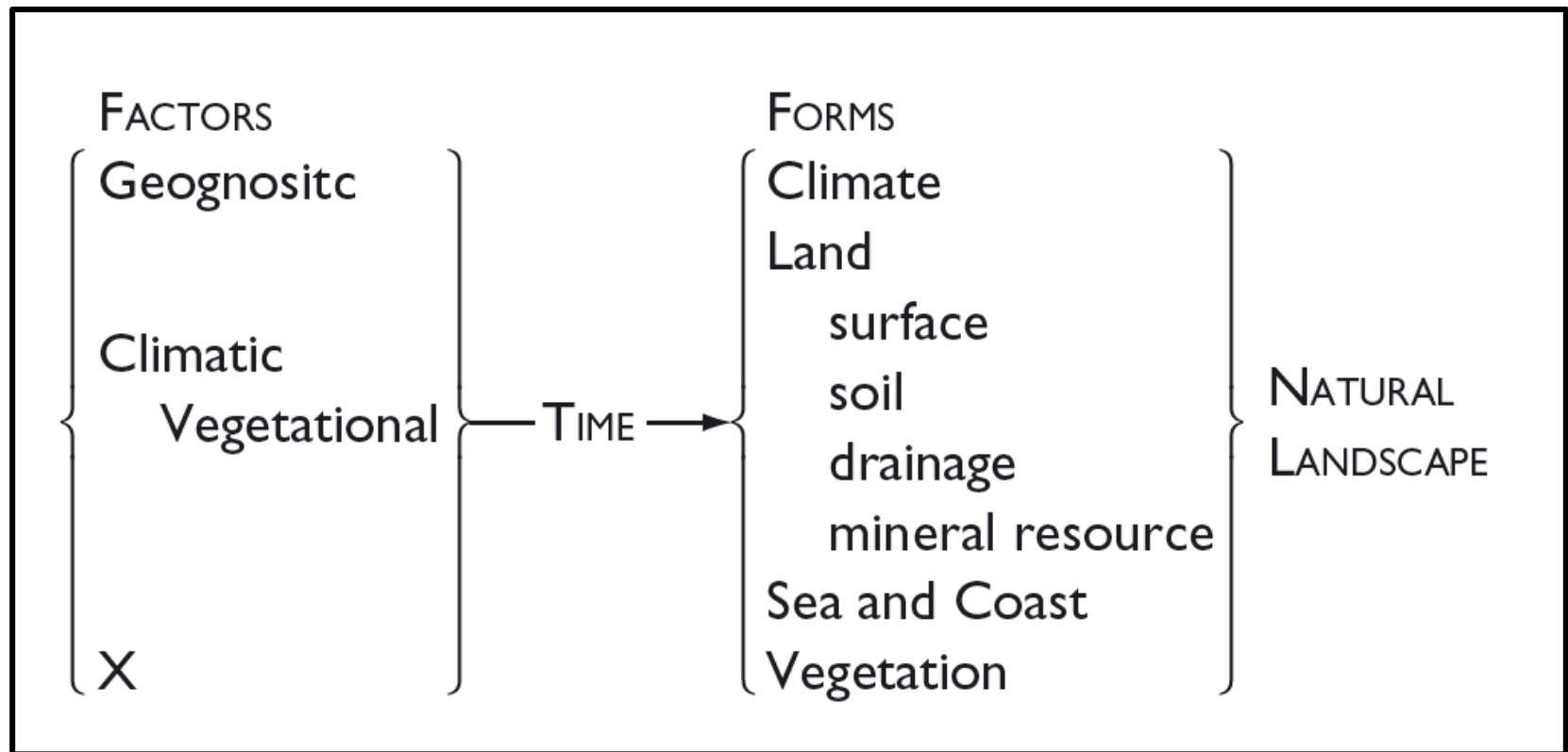
- For the first half of the content of landscape we may use the designation “site,” which has become well established in plant ecology. In this sense the physical area is the sum of all natural resources that man has at his disposal in the area. It is beyond his power to add to them; he may “develop” them, ignore them in part, or subtract from them by exploitation.
- The second half of landscape viewed as a bilateral unit is its cultural expression. There is a strictly geographic way of thinking of culture; namely, as the impress of the works of man upon the area.

Natural Landscape: The area before the introduction of man’s activity is represented by one body of morphologic facts. The forms that man has introduced are another set. We may call the former, with reference to man, the original, natural landscape. In its entirety it no longer exists in many parts of the world, but its reconstruction and understanding are the first part of formal morphology.

Cultural Landscape: The works of man express themselves in the cultural landscape. There may be a succession of these landscapes with a succession of cultures. They are derived in each case from the natural landscape, man expressing his place in nature as a distinct agent of modification. Of especial significance is that **climax of culture which we call civilization**. The cultural landscape then is subject to change either by the development of a culture or by a replacement of cultures. The **datum line** from which change is measured is the **natural** condition of the **landscape**

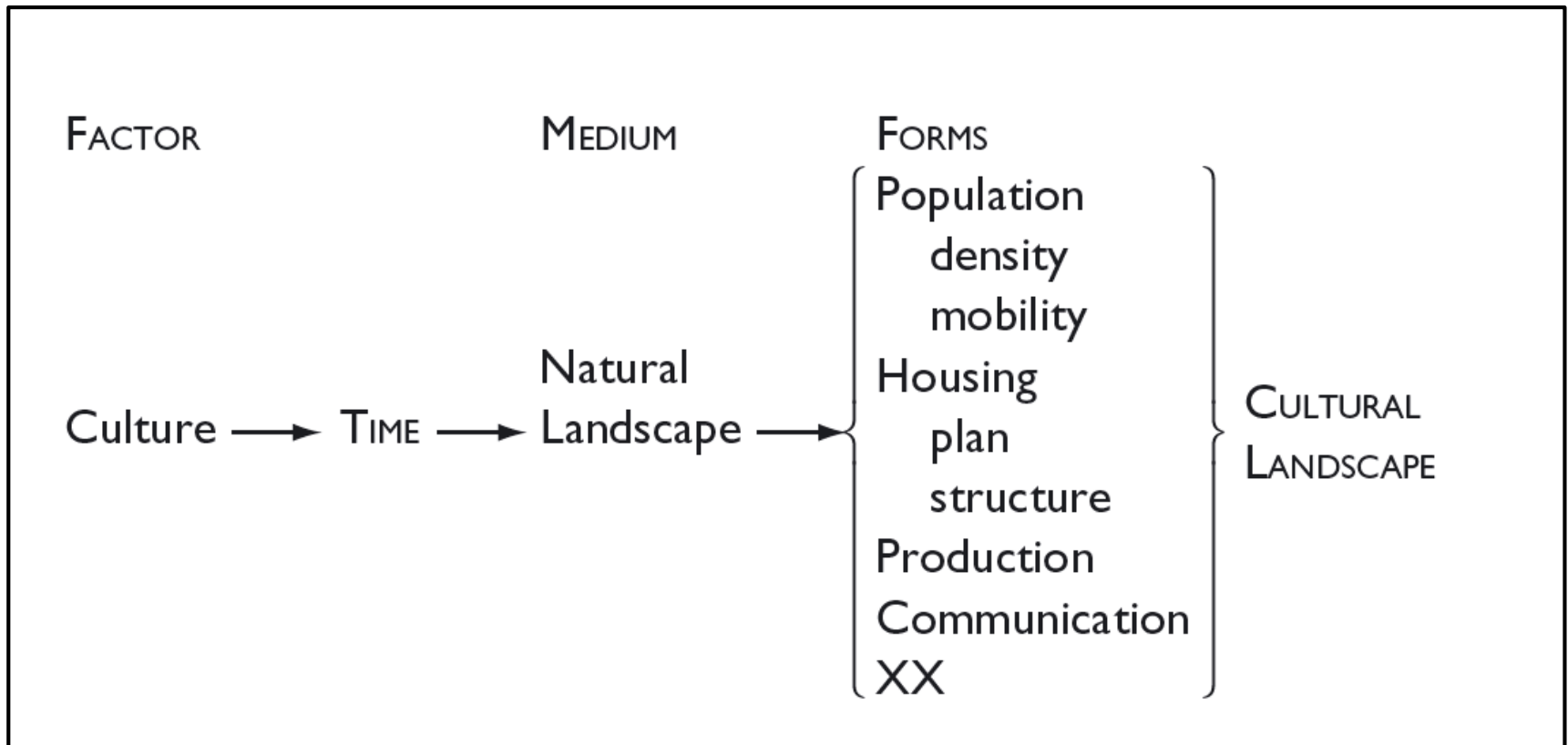
The division of forms into natural and cultural is the necessary basis for determining the areal importance and character of man's activity.

Diagrammatic representation of the morphology of the natural landscape



The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result

Diagrammatic representation of the morphology of the cultural landscape



Development of Cultural Landscape:

- 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, an alien – culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape sets in, or a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of an older one.
- The natural landscape is of course of fundamental importance, for it supplies the materials out of which the cultural landscape is formed.
- The shaping force, however, lies in the culture itself.

Criticism:

- By the 1980s, however, his legacy was undergoing a significant re-evaluation by a new generation of cultural geographers influenced by recent developments in American anthropology and British cultural studies
- Peter Jackson (*Maps of Meaning*, 1989), for example, referred to Sauer's "excessive focus on the material elements of culture and their representation in the landscape,"
- Don Mitchell (*Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*, 2000) has noted that the kind of cultural geography launched by Sauer was increasingly "irrelevant" to the social worlds that most geographers live in today.