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## Geographic Concepts

**absolute location** The position or place of a certain item on the surface of the Earth as expressed in degrees, minutes, and seconds of **latitude**, 0° to 90° north or south of the equator, and **longitude**, 0° to 180° east or west of the **Prime Meridian** passing through Greenwich, England (a suburb of London).

**accessibility** The degree of ease with which it is possible to reach a certain location from other locations. Accessibility varies from place to place and can be measured.

**activity space** The space within which daily activity occurs.

**cartography** The art and science of making maps, including data compilation, layout, and design. Also concerned with the interpretation of mapped patterns.

**connectivity** The degree of direct linkage between one particular location and other locations in a transport network.

**contagious diffusion** The distance-controlled spreading of an idea, innovation, or some other item through a local population by contact from person to person—analogue to the communication of a contagious illness.

**cultural barrier** Prevailing cultural attitude rendering certain innovations, ideas or practices unacceptable or unadoptable in that particular **culture**.

**cultural diffusion** The expansion and adoption of a cultural element, from its place of origin to a wider area.

**cultural ecology** The multiple interactions and relationships between a culture and the natural environment.

**cultural hearth** Heartland, source area, innovation center; place of origin of a major **culture**.

**cultural landscape** The visible imprint of human activity and culture on the landscape. The layers of buildings, forms, and artifacts sequentially imprinted on the landscape by the activities of various human occupants.

**culture** The sum total of the knowledge, attitudes, and habitual behavior patterns shared and transmitted by the members of a society. This is anthropologist Ralph Linton's definition; hundreds of others exist.

**culture complex** A related set of **cultural traits**, such as prevailing dress codes and cooking and eating utensils.

**culture trait** A single element of normal practice in a **culture**, such as the wearing of a turban.

**distance** Measurement of the physical space between two places.

**environmental determinism** The view that the natural environment has a controlling influence over various aspects of human life, including cultural development. Also referred to as environmentalism.

**epidemic** Regional outbreak of a disease.

**expansion diffusion** The spread of an innovation or an idea through a population in an area in such a way that the number of those influenced grows continuously larger, resulting in an expanding area of dissemination.

**fieldwork** The study of geographic phenomena by visiting places and observing how people interact with and thereby change those places.

**five themes** Developed by the **Geography Educational National Implementation Project (GENIP)**, the five themes of geography are **location, human-environment, region, place, and movement**.

**formal region** A type of **region** marked by a certain degree of homogeneity in one or more phenomena; also called uniform region or homogeneous region.

**functional region** A **region** defined by the particular set of activities or interactions that occur within it.

**geocaching** A hunt for a cache, the **Global Positioning System (GPS)** coordinates which are placed on the Internet by other geocachers.

**geographic concept** Ways of seeing the world spatially that are used by geographers in answering research questions.

**geographic information systems** A collection of computer hardware and software that permits spatial data to be collected, recorded, stored, retrieved, manipulated, analyzed, and displayed to the user.

**globalization** The expansion of economic, political, and cultural processes to the point that they become global in scale and impact. The processes of globalization transcend state boundaries and have outcomes that vary across places and scales.

**global positioning system** Satellite-based system for determining the **absolute location** of **places** or geographic features.

**hierarchical diffusion** A form of **diffusion** in which an idea or innovation spreads by passing first among the most connected places or peoples. An **urban hierarchy** is usually involved, encouraging the leapfrogging of innovations over

wide areas, with geographic distance a less important influence.

**human-environment**The second theme of geography as defined by the **Geography Educational National Implementation Project**; reciprocal relationship between humans and environment.

**human geography**One of the two major divisions of **geography**; the spatial analysis of human population, its cultures, activities, and landscapes.

**independent invention**The term for a trait with many **cultural hearths** that developed independent of each other.

**landscape**The overall appearance of an area. Most landscapes are comprised of a combination of natural and human-induced influences.

**location**The first theme of geography as defined by the **Geography Educational National Implementation Project**; the geographical **situation** of people and things.

**location theory**A logical attempt to explain the locational pattern of an economic activity and the manner in which its producing areas are interrelated. The agricultural location theory contained in the **von Thünen** model is a leading example.

**medical geography**The study of health and disease within a geographic context and from a geographical perspective. Among other things, medical geography looks at sources, diffusion routes, and distributions of diseases.

**mental map**Image or picture of the way space is organized as determined by an individual's perception, impression, and knowledge of that space.

**movement**The fifth theme of geography as defined by the **Geography Educational National Implementation Project**; the mobility of people, goods and ideas across the surface of the planet

**pandemic**An outbreak of a disease that spreads worldwide. See also **endemic**.

**pattern**The design of a **spatial distribution** (e.g. scattered or concentrated).

**perception of place**Belief or “understanding” about a place developed through books, movies, stories or pictures.

**perceptual region**A **region** that only exists as a conceptualization or an idea and not as a physically demarcated entity. For example, in the United States, “the South” and “the Mid-Atlantic region” are perceptual regions.

**physical geography**One of the two major divisions of systematic geography; the spatial analysis of the structure, processes, and location of the Earth's natural phenomena such as climate, soil, plants, animals, and topography.

**place**The fourth theme of geography as defined by the **Geography Educational National Implementation Project**; uniqueness of a **location**.

**political ecology**An approach to studying nature—society relations that is concerned with the ways in which environmental issues both reflect, and are the result of, the political and socioeconomic contexts in which they are situated.

**possibilism**Geographic viewpoint—a response to determinism—that holds that human decision making, not the environment, is the crucial factor in cultural development. Nonetheless, possibilists view the environment as providing a set of broad constraints that limits the possibilities of human choice.

**reference maps**Maps that show the absolute location of places and geographic features determined by a frame of reference, typically latitude and longitude.

**region**The third theme of geography as defined by the **Geography Educational National Implementation Project**; an **area** on the Earth's surface marked by a degree of formal, functional, or perceptual homogeneity of some phenomenon.

**relative location**The regional position or **situation** of a place relative to the position of other places. Distance, **accessibility**, and connectivity affect relative location.

**relocation diffusion**Sequential **diffusion** process in which the items being diffused are transmitted by their carrier agents as they evacuate the old areas and relocate to new ones. The most common form of relocation diffusion involves the spreading of innovations by a migrating population.

**remote sensing**A method of collecting data or information through the use of instruments (e.g., satellites) that are physically distant from the area or object of study.

**rescale**Involvement of players at other scales to generate support for a position or an initiative (e.g., use of the Internet to generate interest on a national or global scale for a local position or initiative).

**sense of place**State of mind derived through the infusion of a place with meaning and emotion by remembering important events that occurred in that place or by labeling a place with a certain character.

**sequent occupance**The notion that successive societies leave their cultural imprints on a place, each contributing to the cumulative **cultural landscape**.

**spatial**Pertaining to space on the Earth's surface; sometimes used as a synonym for *geographic*.

**spatial distribution**Physical location of geographic phenomena across **space**.

**spatial interaction**See **complementarity** and **intervening-opportunity**.

**spatial perspective**Observing variations in geographic phenomena across **space**.

**stimulus diffusion**A form of diffusion in which a cultural adaptation is created as a result of the introduction of a **cultural trait** from another **place**.

**thematic maps**Maps that tell stories, typically showing the degree of some attribute or the movement of a geographic phenomenon.

**time-distance decay**The declining degree of acceptance of an idea or innovation with increasing time and distance from its point of origin or source.

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