**Introduction**

The introduction to Unit 1 noted that many geographers and others think of geography as being about humans and nature. It can similarly be noted that many geographers and others think of geography as being about regions. From the very beginnings of the study of geography it has been usual to look at the world and to observe (1) that some locations are similar to other locations, and (2) that these similar locations are often close to each other. This observation is common sense, of course, but it does allow geographers to classify the spatial data in which they are interested.

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In short, geographers look at a large area, say Africa, and, in order to make some sense of the complex geographies, they proceed to regionalize. They note that locations close to each other are probably more alike than are locations that are as far apart from each other. Regions, then, are simplifications, generalizations, and classifications. Because they are defined by geographers who are trying to simplify their data, they are not real things. In common with any other classification, it is always possible to identify a different set of regions.

There is a close parallel here with the concept of a time period as used by historians. These are simply divisions of time that historians use because it assists their analysis of the temporal data that they study. Geographers identify sub-Saharan Africa; historians talk about the colonial era in Africa. In both cases, region and period are simply devices to assist scholarly discussion and interpretation.

The above comments are probably not telling you anything that you do not already know. But they do highlight a fundamental tension that is evident in the current text chapter. What tends to happen is that regions, once defined, tend to assume a life of their own—they are assumed to exist and to be meaningful entities. Do not lose sight of this point as you work through this unit. You will have ample opportunity to think about this matter and to develop opinions.

**Learning objectives**

After completing this unit you should be able to:

* distinguish between the terms landscape, region, area, and place as these are employed by cultural geographers;
* distinguish between three types of region, namely formal, functional, and vernacular;
* describe what is meant by the process of region delimitation;
* state and discuss four difficulties encountered by cultural geographers as they engage in the process of regionalization;
* describe and appraise eight concepts developed by cultural geographers and employed in the process of region identification and delimitation as follows:
  + cultural hearths;
  + first effective settlement;
  + duplication, deviation, and fusion;
  + core, domain, sphere;
  + stages of regional evolution;
  + culturally habituated predisposition;
  + preadaptation; and
  + cultural islands;
* discuss the core, domain, sphere concept as it relates to the Mormon region of the American west and to North America more generally;
* discuss the cultural preadaptation concept as it applies to the Upland South of the United States;
* understand what is meant by the concept of homeland as this term is used by cultural geographers conducting regional studies;
* evaluate the suggestion that the following regions merit designation as homelands:
  + French Canada;
  + French Louisiana;
  + the Mormon region; and
  + the Hispano region;
* describe the transformation of the Mormon region;
* describe the European region;
* describe the pioneering cultural geographic contribution to the evolution and identification of major world regions in the textbook, *Culture Worlds;*
* describe and evaluate the identification of major world regions in the book, *The Clash of Civilizations;*
* describe and evaluate the identification of major world regions in the book, *The Myth of Continents;*
* briefly describe geographic attempts to classify language and religion;
* discuss the legitimacy of distinguishing distinct groups of people and related distinct regions;
* summarize both the ‘European miracle’ explanation as to why some nations are rich while others are poor, and also the idea of the ‘European myth’;
* describe world systems theory; and
* define what is meant by “globalization” and discuss:
  + the gap between rich and poor countries;
  + the possible demise of the state; and
  + cultural globalization and links to identities.

**1. Transforming the Mormon region**

The Mormon west is one of two principal text examples of a people and a place that are especially distinct and, further, that might qualify for designation as homelands. Both Mormon people and Mormon place have been seen as different since the first settlement in the mid-nineteenth century. But, of course, the Mormon west is no different to any other part of the world. Both people and place do change through time (Jackson 2003; Yorgason 2003). In this case study some of these changes are discussed.

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A first reason for regional change concerns non-Mormon intrusions. Although these first occurred as early as the late 1840s with the discovery of gold in California, the nineteenth century witnessed minimal impact from such intrusions. There were some attempts to boycott non-Mormon businesses and these, combined with experiments at communal economic systems and the ongoing in-movement of new converts served to maintain and enhance Mormon identity. But the isolation could not last. A decisive moment occurred when Utah became a state in 1896, formally ending Mormon aspirations to control their chosen Deseret.

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| Salt Lake City, August 2012. Photo by Garrett. [Creative Commons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons) [Attribution 2.0 Generic license.](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en) |

By about 1900 two Mormon wests were evident. The rural agricultural landscapes remained largely unchanged, but Salt Lake City and some of the towns to the north and south were becoming less and less Mormon in terms of identity, behaviour, and observable landscape. Indeed, these urban areas are American rather than Mormon with the usual freeways, expanding suburbs, fast-food chains, and strip malls.

There is, of course, a second reason why the Mormon west has changed and continues to change—Mormons themselves change. Most notably, nineteenth-century Mormons were polygamous, communally oriented, and even anti-American. Today, Mormons are socially and politically conservative, emphasizing traditional family values—a far cry from their radical past.

One of the principal changes within Mormonism concerns ideas about the family and gender relations. Although women have always played important roles in Mormon life, it can be argued that polygamy served to devalue their contributions. Consider the following two statements.

* “Mormonism is one of the most heathenish and anti-christ-like frauds on the face of the earth. It destroys the majesty of the godhead, robs Christ of his glory, substitutes wild fancies and wilder dreams for the infallible word of God, introduces misery into the family, and subverts the whole system of our government” (quoted in Bender 1996:135). This 1878 statement is clearly a very harsh judgment, but it is certainly suggestive of the hostility that Mormonism encountered, primarily because of the practice of polygamy.
* “In virtually all pursuits, the rapidly changing conditions in the world are bearing down on families. They are causing a sense of uneasiness in parents and children. These conditions, coupled with the steady erosion of moral values, can best be dealt with in the family” (Tobler 2004). This statement is included in the official webpage of the Mormon church and stresses the importance the church attaches to families and presumed family values.

Another change concerns the transition from communalism to capitalism. Today, Mormon economic life is capitalistic, individualistic, and urban—in other words, American. This is a far cry from the land-based, isolation seeking, communities established in the nineteenth century. A final change relates to the Americanization of Mormon behaviour. Today, Mormons are preeminent American boosters, superpatriotic citizens supportive of American imperial ventures.

Both people and place of the Mormon west have changed significantly in a short time. But, if you have the opportunity, visit the rural agricultural small town Mormon landscape. In many respects it is unchanged, remaining recognizably different from surrounding landscapes.

**2. The European region**

In a discussion of European regional geography, Ostergren and Rice (2004:3-9) discuss three types of regions that are rather different to the types discussed in the text. As you read about these you might like to compare this classification with that in the text.

**Instituted regions**

Most familiar to the lay public, these are created by authorities to facilitate administration. Once created, these regions become real. They have boundaries that are generally agreed to. In some cases there is a hierarchy of instituted regions.

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| European Union. Photo by Yukiko Matsuoka, 2013. [Creative Commons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons) [Attribution 2.0 Generic license.](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en) |

Historically, Europe has not been an instituted region having been home to many political entities. There have been unsuccessful attempts to unify Europe politically. But, some remarkable changes have occurred since the end of the Second World War with a realization among European countries that there was need to unify in order to compete effectively with the United States and the Soviet Union (prior to the early 1990s). Today, the European Union (EU) comprises 28 member countries with others waiting to join. Here is a basic chronology of European unification.

* 1950: the French-German politician Robert Schuman presented his proposal of a united Europe, known as the Schuman Declaration, which is considered to be the beginning of what is now the EU.
* 1951: a forerunner of the EU, the European Coal and Steel Community, was founded by Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (the Benelux countries), and (West) Germany, France, and Italy.
* 1958: the six ECSC countries formed the European Economic Community that became the European Community and then the EU.
* 1973: the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Denmark joined.
* 1981: Greece joined.
* 1986: Spain and Portugal joined.
* 1990: East Germany joined West Germany adding the former East Germany to the union. This increased the area and population of the union, but not the number of member states.
* 1995: Austria, Sweden, and Finland joined.
* 2004: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined.
* Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007.
* Croatia joined in 2013.
* As of 2013, candidate countries are Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey; potential candidates are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo.

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As this listing indicates, the precise identification of Europe as an instituted region changes regularly and will change again. Indeed, to join the EU, a country has to demonstrate that it fulfils three main criteria:

* *Political.*It must be a democracy with stable institutions that guarantee the rule of law, and must respect and protect human rights and minorities.
* *Economic.*It must be a functioning market economy and be able to cope with joining the single market.
* *Legal.*It must be able to comply with the obligations of EU membership, including the adoption of the body of EU law.

The debate about the possible admission of Turkey revolves also around a number of other factors, including whether or not Turkey, as a predominantly Islamic state, is European.

**Naively perceived regions**

These are informal creations that have no official basis. Rather they appear through popular recognition by those living within and those living outside. Boundaries may not be formally drawn but they are often well acknowledged.  
Europe can be seen as a naively perceived region. Often incorrectly viewed as a continent—the term continent refers to a land area contained within water—Europe is really a peninsula of the large land area called Eurasia. Europe has long been seen as a continent because of the perception of it a distinct culture region from Greek times onwards. The idea of Europe as a region was enhanced, first, by the division between eastern Orthodox and western Roman Catholic versions of Christianity and, second, by the rise of the region as the home of several world powers as a result of overseas expansion.

**Denoted regions**

These appear in the writings of geographers and other academics. Created by scholars for some scholarly purpose, usually to reduce the complexity of the larger area of which they are a part. Some denoted regions are uniform with respect to some particular phenomenon (or phenomena). Other denoted regions are nodal in that all locations inside the region are linked in some way to some central place.

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Europe as a denoted region is the concern of many geographical studies (for example, Unwin 1998). Northern, western, and southern boundaries are relatively easy to demarcate, but the eastern boundary continues to be problematic. Although Europe undoubtedly means different things to different people, and despite much internal diversity, there are some features of Europe that facilitate identifying it as a cultural region.

* Language: most Europeans speak an Indo-European language (mostly Germanic or Baltic-Slavic). Although the individual languages are quite different the fact that they are linked does imply a set of shared traditions at some root level.
* There is a Middle Eastern heritage in most of the realms of European human activity, including plant and animal domestication.
* Europe began to emerge as distinct in Classical Greek times. Perhaps the most important idea to emerge was that of the state as a collection of individuals with rights. This idea was diffused by the Romans and further reinforced and modified during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods.
* Religion: despite the several schisms, Europe and Christianity can be seen together. Christianity also served to reinforce ideas about the equal rights of all humans.
* It was Europe that spread overseas, further reinforcing the idea of Europe.
* Europe was home to several key economic and technical changes collectively known as the rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution, with these advances now having diffused throughout the world.