

Cultural Diffusion

AP HG

SRMHS

Mr. Hensley

Space-time compression:

- The reduction in time it takes for something to reach another place
- Because of technology, connections have reduced distance (not literally in miles, but in space)



Space-time compression

- Promotes rapid change
- People in distant regions now have access to the cultural traits and economic initiatives of people in other regions & may adopt them
- This is called DIFFUSION



Dell computers opening its first call center in India

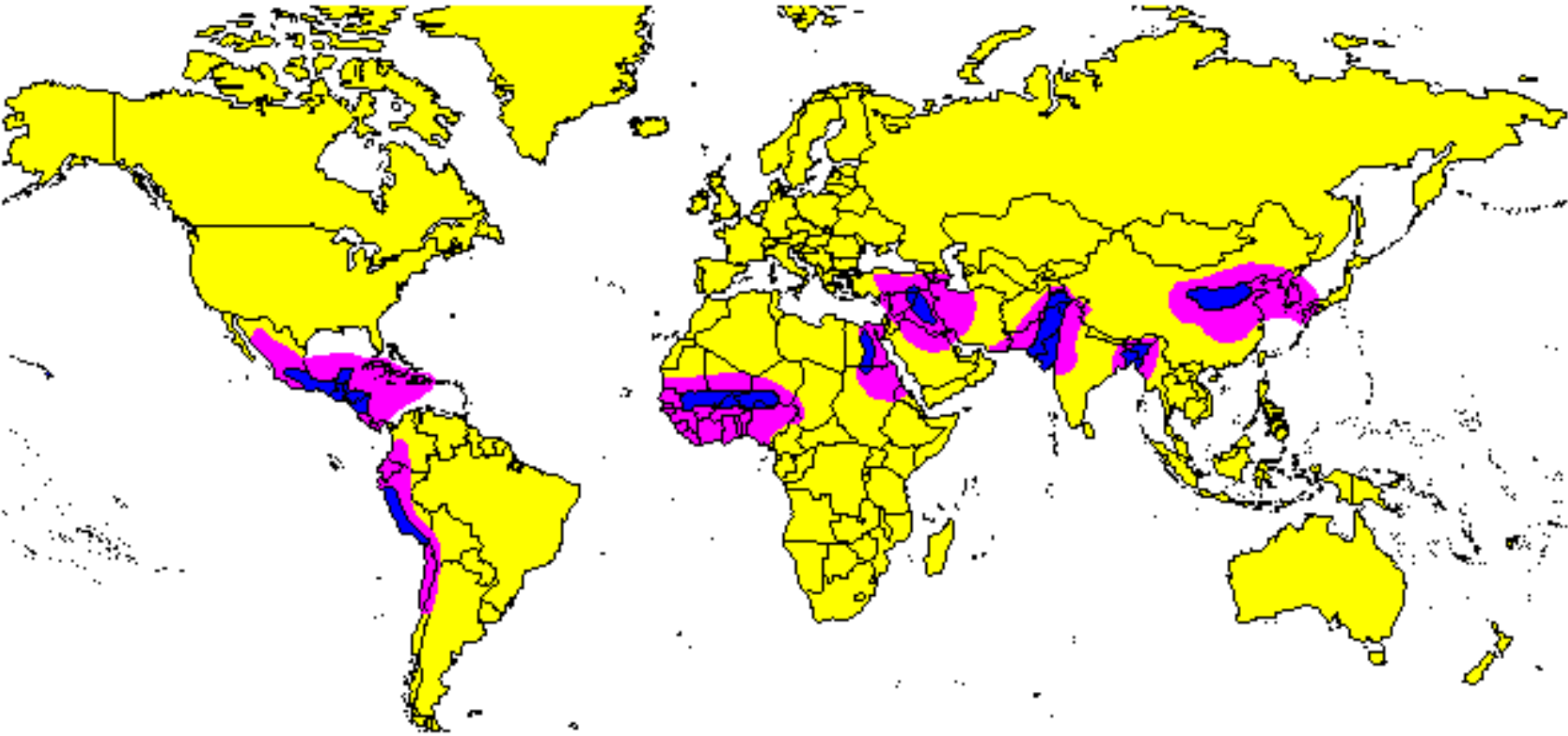
Distance Decay

- Typically, the farther away one group is from another, the less likely the two groups are to interact.
- BUT - technology and globalization have removed many of these barriers

Diffusion

- The process by which a characteristic spreads from one place to another over time.
- Hearth - place where innovation originates (also known as a “node”)
 - Geographers locate hearths and document how things diffuse from there.

Location of the World's Ancient Culture Hearths



Requirements for a hearth

- A cultural group must be
 - Willing to try something new
 - Able to allocate resources to nurture the innovation
 - Technical ability (education and infrastructure)
 - Economic ability (financial institutions)
- (dominant cultural, political, and economic features of US can be traced to Europe and the Middle East)

Types of Diffusion

- **Relocation Diffusion**
- **Expansion Diffusion**
 - Hierarchical
 - Contagious
 - Stimulus

Relocation Diffusion

- Spread of an idea through the physical movement of people from one place to another



Relocation Diffusion

- Language, religion & ethnicity are carried with migration
 - The most common languages in the Americas are English, Spanish, and Portuguese because of the people who came from those countries in Europe and settled in the New World.



Expansion Diffusion Type #1

- **Hierarchical diffusion**: spread of an idea from persons or nodes of authority or power to other people. (I.e. ideas from politicians, social elites, religious figures, or areas of influence such as urban centers)
 - Rap and hip-hop (from urban centers to rural)
 - Fashion
 - Ideas such as philanthropy, conservation, specific family values, ideas about education and political agendas, etc

Expansion Diffusion Type #2

- **Contagious Diffusion**: rapid, widespread diffusion of a characteristic throughout the population, like the spread of a disease. (moves like a wave without regard for hierarchy)
 - Internet - ideas spread through contagious diffusion - everyone has access to the same material simultaneously
 - Youtube.com
 - The spread of new medicines

Expansion Diffusion Type #3

- **Stimulus Diffusion**: the spread of an underlying principal, even if the characteristic itself fails to spread.



Diffusion in the Global Economy

- Transportation & communications networks are set up for rapid diffusion of raw materials, goods, services & ideas from nodes to other regions.
- Everyone is connected in the global economy (The fate of a factory worker in China or a systems technician in India or a sales person in Sunnyvale are all tied to decisions made in places like NY or London.)

Core (Hearth) regions of the Global Economy

- North America
 - Western Europe
 - Japan
 - China
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- These 4 regions have large % of the world's advanced technology, capital to invest and wealth to purchase goods and services

World's "Command Centers"

- New York
 - London
 - Tokyo
 - Beijing
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- From these cities, decision makers send out orders to factories, shops, and research centers around the globe (hierarchical diffusion)

Core vs. Periphery on a Global Scale

- Countries in Africa, Asia, & Latin America
 - have 3/4 of the world's population
 - almost all of the world's population growth
 - BUT they are at the receiving end of hierarchical diffusion
 - These peripheral regions are tied up in the global economy thanks to transnational corporations (once they farmed to feed their families, now many farm to sell crops overseas or they have migrated to cities to work in factories)
 - This creates **uneven development**

Uneven Development

- Great disparities in levels of wealth and well-being between people in core vs. peripheral areas
- Because of globalization of the economy, this disparity is much greater than ever in the past
- Can even be within a country that is rapidly developing: India