Chapter 4: Google Earth Exercise

Exercise 1
Geographies of language

Belgium is exemplary of a multi-lingual country whose administrative borders do not reflect the underlying linguistic landscape. Sixty per cent of Belgians speak Dutch, 40 per cent speak French, and less than one per cent speak German. Despite the small minority of German-speaking Belgians, German toponyms prevail in the Eastern province of Liege. Similarly, French-speaking Walloons in Belgium have maintained French place names in the southern and western reaches of the country, whereas the Flemish (Dutch-speaking) north maintains distinct linguistic traditions and place-names.

As described in your textbook, Belgium is an artificial state with borders that do not align with cultural or linguistic patterns.

The task: Using Google Earth, visit the administrative regions of Belgium and examine the cities, their predominant languages and how they align or differ from their surroundings.

Step 1: Ensure that only "International Borders" are selected from the *borders* menu in the *layers* sidebar. Additionally, ensure that "labels" are activated from the same menu. Load Chapter 4.1.kmz to show the administrative regions of Belgium as well as three place markers that define the main linguistic territories.
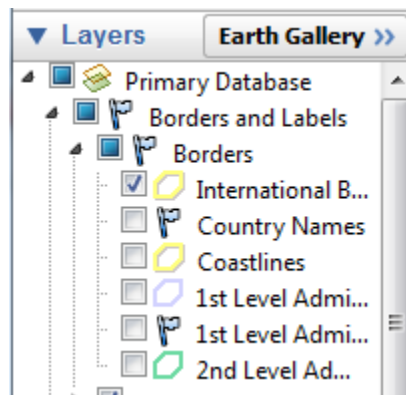

Figure 1: Only international borders are depicted

Note: Clicking on any of the regions will indicate their name. Clicking on any municipality will bring up information pertaining to it, clicking through to the accompanying Wikipedia article will provide hints as to the predominant language used there.

Step 2: Search for the city of Mouscron.

➤ **Question 1:** What language predominates in Mouscron? Where is it located (province)? Using the path or ruler tool measure the distances to the nearest large cities. What are the closest cities physically? In what jurisdiction are they located? What language is spoken there?

Step 3: Refer to pages 148–149 of the textbook for information on Belgium's history as a multilingual country. Search for the city of Menen.

➢ **Question 2:** In what province is Menen located and what language predominates there? Examine the satellite imagery. What does it suggest about the development of Menen?

Step 4: Search for the towns of Bütgenbach and St. Vith.

➢ **Question 3:** Where are these towns located (province)? What is the capital of the province? What is the predominant language? What language is spoken in Bütgenbach and St. Vith? Examine the border to the east and contrast it with the western border of Belgium. Can you account for the settlement patterns of the German-speaking population?

Exercise 2
Reading landscapes around the globe

As noted in your textbook, landscapes are symbolic in the sense that they are imbued with cultural meaning and significance. While the symbolic meaning of some landscapes is overt and intentional, the symbolism contained in others is more subtle and concealed. All landscapes project cultural meaning and thus can be subject to analysis to reveal the messages they contain.

The task: Using Google Earth, read three landscapes through three different lenses. Focusing on a particular feature can reveal the interconnections between physical, cultural, economic, and social aspects of that particular landscape.

Step 1: Open the Chapter 4.2.kmz file. There are three different landscapes, identified through three different polygon layers. Begin by disabling all layers off in the *Layers* window of Google Earth except "3D buildings." Once you have completed the exercises, you may enable other layers (such as borders and labels, places, etc.) to help complete your answers.

Step 2: Zoom in and out of each landscape study area to see it, both in detail, and in relation to its surroundings through different scales—from a large scale where the polygon boundaries define the frame, to a smaller scale where the landscape can be seen in the context of its surrounding environments.

➢ **Question:** Is the area under study an anomaly on the landscape or part of a much broader pattern of land use? How do you know? What is the relationship between this area and adjacent landscapes? What apparent relationship does it have to the natural environment? Look for evidence of networks, connections or barriers between places such as bridges, highways, fences, walls, or water bodies.

Answer the questions above as you search for (1) a landscape of consumption; (2) a landscape of production; (3) and a landscape of transportation.

[Please contact your instructor for the answers to these exercises]