Thus Harvey (1989) sought to elucidate the web of connections between the cultural formations of modernism, the experience of *time-space compression* and the changing political economy of capital. *Modernity* and this in turn provoked a critique of the ways in which modernist representations like Harvey’s work to erase the gendering and sexualization of their maps of modernity (Deutsche, 1986). There have also been other explorations of the ways in which the production of modern urban space can be illuminated through the writings of Walter Benjamin (1892–1941) (Gregory, 1994; Savage, 1995; see also Buck-Morris, 1995; Gilloch, 1996), and accounts of the continuities between surrealism and anti-totalitarian interventions of the *situationists* in the modern city (Bonnett, 1992; Pinder, 1996). These reflections have had noticeable effects on both the terrain of analysis (objects, methods) and the terrain of representation (strategies, media): most obviously in the carefully and consciously modernist work of US geographer Allan Pred. In particular, his experimental studies of the constellation between commodification, the culture of ‘world exhibitions’ and the formation of *identities* in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrated that the techniques of visual and verbal montage, and have been freely informed by Benjamin’s example (Pred, 1995). Far from eclipsing modernism, therefore, this late-twentieth-century rise of postmodernism has permitted many human geographers to provide more critical, constructive and discerning readings of early-twentieth-century modernism.

**References**

Berman, M. 1983: *All that is solid melts into air*: the experience of the Western world. London: Verso. 

**Suggested Reading**


**modernity** A particular constellation of power, knowledge and social practices whose emergence is usually traced back to Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Those early forms and structures changed over time and extended themselves over space until, by the middle of the twentieth century, modernity was widely supposed to constitute the dominant social order on the planet. The terms ‘modern’ and ‘modernity’ occupy a central position within the discourse of eurocentrism, which represents Europe as the central axis around which the rest of the world is supposed to revolve. Both terms have a long and complex history. Within Europe ‘modern’ was repeatedly employed to distinguish a new social order from previous ones. In post-Roman Europe, for example, the Latin *modernus* was used from the late fifth century to distinguish a Christian present from a pagan past, and for centuries the term was used to dramatize a renewed relationship to the ancient world. Relationships with other worlds — such as the *Civility of the New World* — began to assume a particular importance after 1492. Indeed, Dussel (1993) claims that it was then, in the wake of the voyages of Columbus, that ‘modernity’ was born as a concept, since it was then that ‘Europe was in a position to pose itself against an other’ and to constitute itself as a unified identity ‘exploring, conquering, colonizing an alterity that gave back its image of itself’ (cf. Greenblatt, 1991).

The first recorded English-language use of ‘modernity’ as a noun was not until 1627, and many intellectual historians place the origins of modernity as a world-view, as a horizon of meaning and expectation, in the seventeenth century (for a critical review, see Toulmin, 1990). At that time most writers continued to speak of ‘our age’ when describing their own present, however, but in the course of the eighteenth century many scholars elected to speak of *nova aetas* (the ‘new age’). Toward the end of that century the idea of being modern acquired another layer of meaning when it came to be associated not only with ‘newness’ but also, significantly, with ‘looking forward’: with a sense of history as a process in which human beings could consciously and creatively intervene. This (new) sensibility is sometimes described as a discourse of *historicity* in which history becomes something that is made by human beings rather than something that merely happens to them. The *Enlightenment project* was of decisive significance in the formulation of these ideals, with its belief in reason, rationality and progress towards truth, beauty and universal peace (see *HISTORY, ENQUIRY IN*, *GEOGRAPHY OF*). The Enlightenment project had its critics, to be sure, and the violence of European *colonialism* in the nineteenth century, the experience of two World Wars and a host of other bloody conflicts in the twentieth century have contributed to the reconsideration of Habermas (1981) identified more generally as the project of modernity. Yet common to virtually all post-Enlightenment discussions of modernity is an emphasis on novelty, change and progress. ‘Two major axes of debate concern (1) “traditional” and “progress”, and (b) “time” and “volatility.”’

(a) Tradition and progress. Although the ‘modern’ came to be contrasted with — even opposed to — the ‘traditional’, this marks a site of considerable difficulty. On the one side, ‘tradition’ turns out to be more complex than most apologists for modernity have allowed. In particular, it would be quite wrong to think of supposedly traditional sociocultural formations (like a combination of the concepts of *orientalism* or as ‘people without History’ (one of the central assumptions of *primitivism*). In any case, modern societies have invented their own traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). On the other side, nominally modern, so-called ‘post-traditional’ societies have neither mapped a space of their own nor even given a name and sign reason nor inaugurated a world of unbounded progress. It may well have been the case that, as Bauman (1991) remarks, ‘Empires of confined and unchallenged sovereignty, of unlimited and uncontested universality, were the two arms with which modernity wished to remold the world according to the design of perfect order.’ And to its most ardent advocates modernity was indeed an unqualified and unrestricted human good. It promised to enlist Reason to banish ignorance, misery and despotism: to free human beings from myth and superstition, from disease and hunger, from oppression and arbitrary rule. In the middle years of the twentieth century these aspirations culminated in the *United Nations* whose development programmes sought to remould the so-called ‘THIRD WORLD’ in the liberal image of the West. While there have of course been many advances in science and technology, in production and politics, however, the triumph of modernity (if that is how it is) has not been accomplished without attendant violence and its critics have repeatedly insisted that modernity has always also had its dark side. Many of them have argued, in different ways, that modernity has installed novel forms of domination (see *HISTORY, ENQUIRY IN*, *GEOGRAPHY OF*). The Enlightenment project had its critics, to be sure, and the violence of European *colonialism* in the nineteenth century, the experience of two World Wars and a host of other bloody conflicts in the twentieth century have contributed to the reconsideration of...
identifies a persistent and unmarked masculinism and phallocentrism at the very centre of modern 'Reason', and by (ii) post-colonial theory, which identifies a 'white mythology' within the 'epistemic violence' wrought by the colonizing Real/Economic West (see post-colonialism). But even those writers who have tried to redeem the project of modernity in the face of these criticisms have acknowledged its deformations: hence Habermas's (1967a) claim that the rationalization processes characteristic of modernity have 'over-extended' themselves to such a degree that the ordinary lifeworld is presently being 'colonized' by the abstractions of a constitutively modernist/post-modernist (THEORY). (b) Time and volatility. Closely connected to these remarks, it has become commonplace to connect modernity to a changed consciousness of time. Many of its influential critics have worked within a cognitive-instrumental analytic that is predicated towards time as the measure of the modern (see also TIME, GEOGRAPHY AND). Thus modernity as discontinuity, a punctuation point in human history; modernity as acceleration in the speed of social change; and modernity as intensity, a transformation in the regimes of what E.P. Thompson (1967) called 'time discipline'. All three motifs appear in Marx's critique of capitalism, for example, where the construction of capitalism as a mode of production is made to revolve around time as embodied in labour, materialized in the commodity and appropriated as capital. Beyond Marx, we are also perennially led to an essential connection between modernity and the 'creative destruction' of capitalism that issued in a world in which:

All fixed and fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is stable is being pulled into question. (See BERMAN for an extended discussion.)

Other critics of modernity have emphasized an aesthetic/affective analytic, and the need to capture the movements of modern time as what the poet Charles Baudelaire described as 'the transient, the fleeting, the contingent'. Indeed, modernity may be described as the paradigmatic 'West', but it was nonetheless the one that most powerfully invaded time, a sense of restless animation, of a break with tradition, of a celebration of the new, that propelled a series of avant-garde movements through the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth centuries (see also MODERNISM). Indeed, Habermas treats modernity as 'the epoch that lives for the future, that opens itself up to the novelty of the future' precisely because it is no longer possible (so he says) to appeal to myth or tradition for legitimation:

Modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch, supplied by a normativity outside of itself. Modernity sees itself cast back upon itself without any possibility of escape. (HABERMAS, 1987b, p. 7)

Giddens (1990, pp. 38-9) similarly regards what he calls reflexivity - the constant examination and modification of social practices - as constitutive of modernity. In this way, Giddens does not mean by modernity an alteration of the human sciences - although the emergence of these specialized discourses has had an immense bearing on the conduct of social life (Rabinow, 1989) - because he is more interested in the ways in which these processes of monitoring and modification contribute to the volatility of the modern world: 'New knowledge (concepts, theories, findings) does not simply render modernity as it produces but also alters its nature, spinning it off in novel directions' (GIDDENS, 1990, p. 153). This has reached such a pitch, Giddens argues, that the world is presently in a condition of radical and deregulated modernity.

These twin preoccupations cut in different directions: the first (a) emphasizes a systematic grid of power and a process of rational ordering carried within the project of modernity, the second (b) emphasizes a process of acceleration and volatility as intrinsic to the modern world. They find common ground in constructing a threshold - a discontinuity - between the 'pre-modern' and the 'modern'. Both versions have left their constitution and conduct of human geography, but there are two other sets of issues where a more explicitly 'geographical discourse of modernity' comes directly to the fore (GREGORY, 1998). Interestingly, these other sensibilities radically challenge the notion of a 'Great Divide' and substitute a more complex, uneven and foliated process of social change. They are closely connected, suggesting in programmatic ways crucial connections between the production of the modernity and the production of 'nature'. These two axes of debate concern (c) 'space' and 'place', and (d) 'culture' and 'nature' (c). Space and place. Some historians have identified the emergence of modernity with the European colonization of the 'New World' and the formation of a 'modern world system' centred on Europe as early as the sixteenth century (WALLERSTEIN, 1974; cf. WORLD-SYSTEMS ANALYSIS). This series of events established new patterns of global trade and the possibility of new spaces - and was folded into significant changes in modes of artistic, literary and scientific expression (ALBANESI, 1996). Other writers have suggested that processes of globalization (e.g. THE COMPRESSION OF HISTORY) have intensified to such a degree in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that other, still more profound crises of representation ensued. What Jay (1992) described as the dominant 'ecopic regime' of modernization - the notion of 'race', and they could be traced in artistic, literary and scientific registers (LEFEBVRE, 1992). Many of those that impacted most directly on everyday life have been traced back to the creative destruction of the site of the restructured landscapes of ACCUMULATION (Harvey, 1989); to the intensified production of colonial forms of spatiality that sought to impose metropolitan, 'rational' spaces over indigenous 'natural' milieus (MILLS, 1996; BERTLAND, 1997); to the physical separation of information transmission from the movement of people (through the development of the telegraph, the radio, television and new electronic media); that produced dramatically new representational spaces (KERN, 1983); and to the experience of modern forms of warfare that shattered established conceptions of landscapes of military conflict (HARRIS, 1991).

These accounts typically flow from and feed back into a scenario in which modernity is realized through the production of an abstract, rational, planned space that characteristically generates a collective alienation from the particularities of place. The theoretical vocabularies differ from one discourse to another: the space of modernity has been described as an optical-geometric-phallocentric space, a panoptically partitioned-disciplined space, a space with a measured-directed-standardized space (cf. HARRIS, 1991). But this is literally a 'master-narrative' that, to some critics, ceres far too much power to a singular and transcendent modernity (see KRONICK, 1990). What is needed are descriptions of all these characterizations as moments in the discursive production of a "rape-script" that normalizes an act of non-reciprocal penetration in which non-modern forms inevitably become damaged, violated, fallen; mastered by the spaces of an advancing modernity that are situated and dark, always overpowering targets for invasion, submission, colonization. Against this one-dimensional narrative, several writers have urged the careful recognition of complex, foliated spaces of 'strategic ecological zones' of encounter and entanglement in which cultures interpenetrate and interrupt one another. In place of the binary model of the 'Great Divide', for example, Ogbonnaya (1998) described 'the hybrid relationships and connections between places'. He emphasizes that this differentiated and plural understanding of modernity distributes transactions 'across a range of connected sites, scenes and networks' and, equally important, that these 'geographies of connection are moments in the making of modernities rather than being matters of their transfer or imposition' (see also PED and WATTS, 1998; cf. REGIONS AND REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY). (d) 'Culture' and 'Nature'. Many accounts of modernity depend upon a Eurocentric opposition between 'culture' and 'nature' that is put in place through strategies of domination (GREGORY, 1998). The first involves the discrimination of nature. Thus non-modern cultures are supposed to be 'at one' with nature, creatures of their natures, intimately embedded in and even indistinguishable from their surrounding ecologies; whereas modern cultures are distinguished precisely by their distance from and domination over nature. Claims like these were given a special force in Europe, when 'disordered, active nature' was made to subject to the probe of new experimental science and a new, mechanical technology. As the smelting powers of nature were released, harnessed, domesticated and turned to productive account through AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTIONS and INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS, so this aggressively modern culture turned its attention to the colonization of 'other' nature. This activated a second discursive strategy, the normalization of nature, in which European, temporal constructs of normal nature from which privileged position all other natures - seductive and terrifying by turns (ARNOLD, 1996) - were seen as extremes, departures, or deviations. These two discursive strategies have had important political-consequences, but they also had profoundly important politico-cultural consequences
because they were shot through with implications of class, ‘race’ and gender. Both turned on a process of purification in which the achievement of modernity was signalled through its supposedly triumphant separation of ‘culture’ from ‘nature’.

In Latour’s (1993) view, however, this is profoundly mistaken. He insists that the so-called project of modernity rests not only on this acknowledged and sanctioned process of purification but also on its unacknowledged and subversive dual: on a process of translation that creates ‘entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture’ (see also Whatmore, 1998). These creations are extraordinarily consequential, Latour agrees, but he insists that their various powers do not reside in any ‘modernity’: rather, they are released through the production and proliferation of ‘networks’ (see Actor–Network Theory). Latour accepts some of these networks have become more extensive than others and thereby allowed for the differential accumulation of power and knowledge at particular sites. But he insists that this asymmetry does not sustain any ‘Great Divide’ between the ‘pre-modern’ and the ‘modern’. On the contrary, Latour argues that ‘we have never been modern’: from which it logically follows that neither can we have become postmodern (cf. Postmodernism; Postmodernity).

DG

References

Suggested Reading

modernization A process of social change resulting from the diffusion and adoption of the characteristics of expansive and apparently more advanced societies through societies which are apparently less advanced (see Dual Economy). Modernization involves social mobilization, the growth of a more effective and centralized apparatus of political and social control, the acceptance of scientifically rational norms and the transformation of social relations (see Mode of Production; Taylor, 1979) and aesthetic forms. The five linear stages of economic growth proposed by Rostow (1960; 1978; see Rostow Model) point to the importance of the Cold War as a crucial formative context in which notions of modernization were developed. Indeed, the sub-title of Rostow’s book – a non-communist manifesto – makes