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Time: From Hegemonic Change to Everyday Life

Peter J. Taylor

Definition

Time and space form the basic physical dimensions of the universe. As such, time is used to measure change, including societal change. Social time indicates time with content: human phenomena in the process of change. Social time is invariably linked to social space as 'time-space'.

INTRODUCTION: THE MEANINGS OF TIME IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

In human geography, time has been conceptualized in two distinct ways (see Chapter 7 on time in physical geography). One view of time is as a physical dimension, something that can be measured precisely. Thus a geographer might add a 'time dimension' to a model of, say, settlements to show how patterns have developed over a given period. Such models are called *dynamic models* (in contrast to 'static models' that describe a situation at one point in time) and rely on *time-series data and analysis*. The second view of time is as social change, where the emphasis is upon the 'content of time'. Thus a geographer might study the evolution of a particular settlement pattern as an outcome of industrialization. Such an approach focuses upon *social processes*: industrialization is a bundle of such processes relating to shifting work practices with many concomitant economic, political and cultural changes. The form that such study takes depends upon the *social theory* that is used to define the nature of social change.

This chapter will focus on this second view of time. The argument consists of three parts: first, the ways in which geographers have studied time are described; second, different patterns of time are discussed; and, finally, we interpret how we use our ideas about time to interpret the present. We cannot begin the argument, however, without introducing two basic relations: time and space, and time and modernity.

For geographers, time cannot be studied independently of space. Like time, space can be viewed as either 'physical' space, which we think of as *geometry*, or 'social' space, which we think of as *place*, that is a space with content (see Chapters 5 and 9 for more the multiple definitions of space and place in human geography). In the former case, space is viewed as three-dimensional so that time becomes the 'fourth dimension'. In the latter case, social processes are studied *in situ* so that we study the composition of places as in regional geography. Because space and time are so indelibly linked, in much of the discussion below there will be reference to '*time-space*' phenomenon. In short, throughout their concern to understand time – whether measuring temporal trends or interpreting compositional changes – geographers will be interested in locations, from local to global, wherein the trends or changes occur.

We live in a world we call 'modern'. The idea of modern is a very time-laden one. Being modern is to 'move with the times', to be 'up to date', to be a user of the newest gadgets or ideas, to be a follower of the latest fashions in clothes, furnishings or games. Collectively, a society of modern people defines a state of modernity. There is a sense that when either an individual or a society does not possess the newest artefacts, then they are deemed to be somehow 'behind' in time. Note that this is pre-eminently a 'social time' idea; it makes no physical sense for contemporary individuals or societies to be in front or behind in 'real' time. However, a consequence of concerns for this social time in modernity is that the latter has come to define a society that experiences rapid and ceaseless social change. Thus the concept of time is central to the meaning of modernity and of geographers' attempts to understand this condition.

HOW TIME HAS BEEN STUDIED BY HUMAN GEOGRAPHERS

The study of time in human geography has long been the domain of historical geographers. Their traditional concern for the development of landscapes and regions was challenged through the upheavals of the discipline in the 1960s. It is from this period that concepts of time began to be incorporated more generally throughout human geography in new systematic ways (Carlstein et al., 1978a, 1978b and 1978c). Five temporal models and concepts can be identified.

The first of these is *time-space convergence*. Through noting that the time it takes to transverse distances has fallen dramatically in recent centuries, it is sometimes suggested that the world is becoming somehow 'smaller'. This idea of a 'shrinking world' is not unique to geography but its precise measurement as time-space convergence is. This concept was devised by Janelle (1969). Drawing on data for the time it took to travel between particular pairs of towns from using

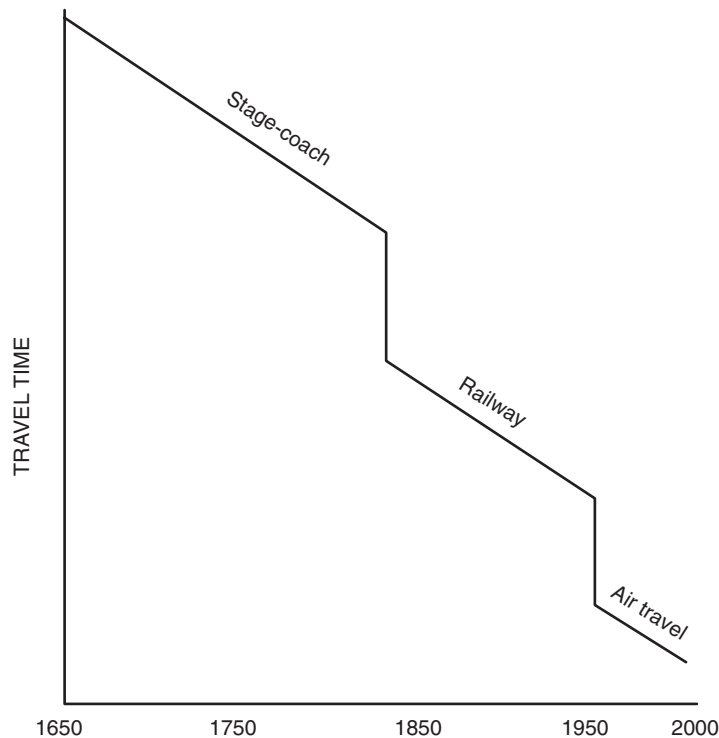


Figure 8.1 Time-space convergence between two cities

stage-coaches to flying aeroplanes, Janelle constructed graphs showing the decline in length of time from the seventeenth to the twentieth century (Figure 8.1). As a particular example, he measures travel times between Edinburgh and London, showing how they declined from taking weeks to complete the journey to just a few hours. More precisely, for the period 1776–1966, Janelle calculated an average ‘convergence rate’ between the two cities of 29 minutes per year. Subsequent researchers have used travel times between several cities to create new ‘time maps’ wherein physical distances between locations are replaced by ‘time-distances’ (Forer, 1978).

Hägerstrand’s (1973) *time-geography*, the second of the concepts identified here, is arguably the most original contribution by human geography to the study of time. Using a two-dimensional space as a base map to which time was added as a vertical dimension, Hägerstrand attempted to trace the time-space paths of individuals ‘upwards’ and sideways through this three-dimensional diagram as they carried out everyday tasks (Figure 8.2). For instance, during a single day a person would start on the base map at his or her residence, would then travel upwards (through time) and sideways (through space) to a workplace, followed by further movements on upwards through time and across the map to a lunchtime meeting, and so on until returning at the ‘top’ of the diagram to the initial spatial starting point, the home. For each individual, depending on their access to travel facilities, there is a time-space prism that defines the boundaries of what activities are possible from their home base. This defines possible

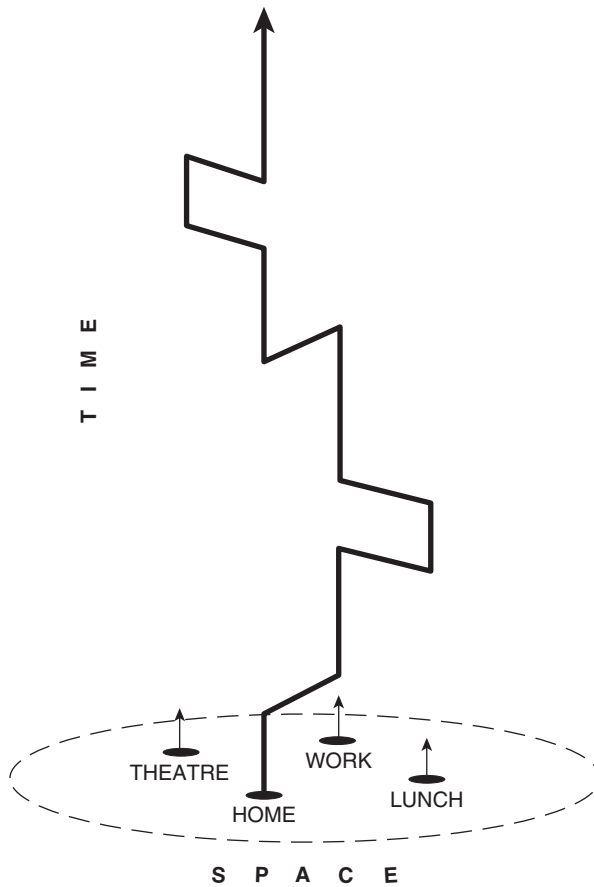


Figure 8.2 An individual time-space path

resources available to an individual: for instance, local schools but not multilingual international schools, or local general shops but not highly specialized retail outlets. In addition, movement through the prism is further constrained by necessary interactions with others, as at a work meeting or collecting a child from daycare, and where there is competition for time-space with others carrying out their everyday tasks. The classic case of the latter is a typical city 'rush hour' where commuters' time-space paths converge to create a time-space population concentration. This framework illustrates how space and time are resources routinely deployed in everyday life. The historical research of Pred (1986) is the exemplar for using the time-geography model for understanding how everyday life is altered through social changes.

For some, time-geography now has a dated image (witness here our modernist desire for the new), but other authors argue that shortcomings in the approach have been overcome:

While some may think that time-geography only concentrates on constraints, is based on Cartesian space and Newtonian time and characterized by underdeveloped

notions of power and agency (cf. Giddens, 1984; Harvey, 1990; Rose, 1993), Hägerstrand and co-workers sought to overcome many of these criticisms in the 1980s and 1990s (Lenntorp, 1999). (Schwanen, 2007: 9)

Indeed, Schwanen's (2007) own research on material geographies combines time-geography with (post) actor-network theory (a more recent set of ideas shaped by the influential writings of Latour, see for example, Latour, 2005) to elucidate the ways that 'things' are implicated in time-space routines, in his example by exploring the roles played by mundane objects (childseats, mobile phones, notebooks, toys) as working parents live out the time-space complexities of their everyday caring responsibilities (Schwanen, 2007).

Harvey's (1990) concept of *time-space compression* is undoubtedly the most influential contribution of human geography to the recent study of time. Fascinated by the nineteenth-century notion of the 'annihilation of space by time', Harvey develops an argument that links space and time to both economic necessities and cultural expressions. Starting with the rationalization of space in the cartographies of the sixteenth-century Renaissance and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment that expressed both the (spatial) power of state and property, Harvey argues that in order to 'conquer space' new space has to be produced, notably in transport and communications. This is the same reduction of 'spatial barriers' that produces the shrinking world of time-space convergence, but here it is treated as much more than the changing dimensions of society. Within modern capitalist relations this shrinking world is part of a cyclical process of 'creative destruction' as new investments are required to resolve crises of over-production. These new spaces create a general feeling of the world 'speeding up', leading to an 'overwhelming sense of compression'. It is the latter experience that is reflected in how the world is represented as cultural elites attempt to harness the maelstrom of incessant change that is modernity (Berman, 1982). The great artistic movements of modernism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and postmodernism in the late twentieth century, are both interpreted as cultural reactions to this 'speeding up' of time. Time-space compression is, therefore, a powerful organizing concept that connects economy and culture.

World-systems analysis as developed by Wallerstein (1988, 1991) offers an alternative materialist interpretation of the relations between time and space in human geography. To emphasize the indissolubility of the two concepts he coins the word *TimeSpace* to describe his particular integration. Starting with Braudel's (1980) identification of three categories of social time – the short term, the medium term, and the long term – Wallerstein adds a geographical component by attaching a spatial scale to each temporal span. Braudel's first time is episodic time, the time of traditional history that traces change through events, affairs, occasions and happenings. Wallerstein identifies geopolitical space, the immediate locales of events, as the spatial equivalent thus creating episodic-geopolitical TimeSpace. Braudel's second span is a more general patterned time (trends and cycles) to which Wallerstein adds an ideological space, locales of different divisions of the world, such as East/West during the Cold War. This produces a cyclical-ideological TimeSpace. Braudel's third span is structural time,

which deals with the long-term slow movement of everyday life that underpins society. Wallerstein interprets this as the structures of historical systems, such as the historical rise and demise of the great ancient empires. The structural space of this time is the boundary expansion of the system and its reproduction through core-periphery structures. This all defines a structural TimeSpace. Wallerstein's research focuses on the modern world-system – our 'historical system' – whose structural TimeSpace evolved from a European capitalist world-economy in the sixteenth century to a global world-economy in the twentieth century, and which was reproduced through a cyclical-ideological TimeSpace of distinctive periods that developed through the episodic-geopolitical TimeSpace of events. World-systems integration of time and space is adapted to regional geography as 'historical regions' by Taylor (1988, 1991).

Wallerstein's TimeSpace is not the only use of Braudel's (1980) social times in human geography. Historical geography has developed into a multifarious enterprise and among these different themes there has been an engagement with Braudel's work (Baker, 1984). There is a revived concern for understanding the major patterns of social change in time and space (e.g. Thrift, 1990). Dodgshon (1998) has developed a *geographical perspective on change* wherein he provides an overview of social change in different spaces. He includes a taxonomy of change which compares mechanisms of change (e.g. system-feedback), sources of change (e.g. external), products of change (e.g. expansion) and morphologies of change (e.g. non-linear change). The latter encompasses the continuity-discontinuity debate that defines a basic division in the treatment of time as social change: is change a relatively smooth phenomenon or are their major discontinuities in the nature of changes? The former position is represented by theories of progress that see social change as a 'forward march' of humanity; in contrast, many geographers identify basic disruptions where there are 'accelerations' in the degree of social change, the 'industrial revolution' being the classic case. With disruptions there is a time divide between patterns of social relations (e.g. pre-industrial and industrial society or between medieval 'feudal' Europe and early-modern 'capitalist' Europe). The remainder of this chapter will delve more deeply into these time morphologies.

MORPHOLOGIES OF TIME

The condition of modernity is generally defined by social pressure for incessant change. Berman (1982: 15) has famously described this condition as 'a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish'. Change can be both very exciting and very stressful: modern men and women (us) experience modernity as creating new opportunities while simultaneously destroying old cherished ways. The trick is to ensure that we are not mere objects of the vicissitudes of modernity but rather that we become active subjects, participants in the processes of change. Controlling change is the job of *planning*, the archetypal modern activity that focuses upon time.

A planning exercise can be defined as any project that attempts to control social change over a specified time horizon. As modern people, we live our

lives through many individual and group projects as we plan our short-, medium- and long-term futures. Modern institutions operate through various planning instruments. For instance, during parts of the twentieth century all of the following 'grand planning' activities prospered for at least a period: the urban planning of cities, the corporate planning of firms, the military planning of the Cold War military-industrial complexes, the Keynesian¹ economic planning of welfare states, the development planning of third world states, and the five-year industrial planning of communist states. The last example reminds us that planning does not always work. In fact, all the surviving examples in the list have been latterly modified to become a much more 'flexible' version of their former selves. Flexible means, of course, much less control on change, an admittance that modern change cannot be simply tamed through the application of planning. Modernity is much too complex to be 'planned'.

In hindsight we can see a common process in action here. Planning is a reaction to a social problem. For instance, urban planning developed in the early twentieth century as a reaction to the legacy of poor living conditions in the Victorian industrial city. The modernist movement in planning set about clearing the 'slums' and relocating people into new, clean, high-rise blocks of housing. All planning provides a solution to its problem as defined at a given time. But modernity is perpetual change so that as soon as grand planning projects begin they progressively get out of date. Planning is condemned to solve yesterday's problems. The classic example is the Soviet Union, which produced the greatest nineteenth-century industrial state in history; the only problem was that it was created in the twentieth century – the modern world had moved on. This is equally true of urban planning wherein high-rise housing became 'slums in the sky' and have had to be abandoned as 'urban solutions'.

There is one example of failed planning that we need to consider further because it is associated with a time-based terminology that continues to distort our thinking. From the 1950s onwards the poorer countries of the world have been encouraged to embark on 'development planning' (see Chapter 21 on development). Such planning typically involved harnessing investment in order to pass through various stages in a path that culminates in something termed 'development'. In the most famous such model, states were deemed to pass through five stages from 'traditional society' to 'high mass consumption' (Rostow, 1960). Clearly, the last term shows that what was happening here is that poor countries were being advised to mimic the growth patterns of rich countries. All countries, it seems, were expected to proceed along identical parallel paths separated only by time (Taylor, 1989). Put another way, poor countries are merely lagging behind and, given the right policies, they will soon catch up. Hence the coining of two terms: 'developed countries' for the rich states, since they have already reached the goal to be 'developed', and 'developing countries' for the poor countries still on their way to 'development'.

Now let's return to the reality that is modernity. In hindsight, we can see that economic development in the rich countries is not actually an end-point, economic change in these countries has proceeded in leaps and bounds with new high-tech industries. In contrast, most of the erstwhile 'developing countries' are economically falling further and further behind. What are termed 'developed

countries', implying an 'end-state', are developing more and more, and what are termed 'developing countries' are, to a large degree, simply not developing, certainly not in the way envisaged by development planning. The terms 'developing countries' and 'developed countries' have become topsy-turvy euphemisms for simply 'poor states' and 'rich states' derived from an optimistic time when it was thought planning could steer modernity over all the world.

Does this all mean that we are condemned to live as objects of modernity with little or no control on our futures, either individually or collectively? Fortunately not. All that planning failures illustrate is that modernity cannot be packaged into controlled, timed segments. There are many success stories within modernity and they occur through what has been called *surreptitious modes of change* rather than overt 'top-down' planning (Taylor, 2000). These modes of activity involve a multitude of decisions by ordinary people as part of their everyday lives. Where such a social movement captures an ongoing trend and recreates it as a major form of social change, then we have subjects successfully making modernity for their own needs and wants. The rise of the suburb as the dominant urban form is the classic case a surreptitious mode of change. Ridiculed by architects and planners as 'urban sprawl', ordinary people voted with their feet (actually cars) to create large swathes of single-family dwellings with gardens through the twentieth century (Fishman, 1987; Hall, 1996; Hayden, 2003). The very opposite of state planning, here was a popular and commercially profitable mode of change which – despite the problems it sometimes caused by inscribing a classed, gendered and racialized division of space on the landscape (Duncan and Duncan, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006) – continues to be popular with many heterosexual nuclear families, and hence property developers, today.

The rise of the suburb was very much a US-led process of social change and represents an element of what is sometimes called the American hegemonic cycle. This is part of a Wallersteinian cyclical-ideological TimeSpace. In world-systems analysis, the modern world-system has developed through three hegemonic cycles each based upon the economic successes of a world hegemonic state. These hegemonic states are defined in terms of their economic world leadership in production, trade and finance, which generates concomitant political and cultural leadership as well. The first example of a state achieving this status was the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century with its mercantile hegemonic cycle. In the nineteenth century, Britain was predominant with its industrial hegemonic cycle, and in the twentieth century the American hegemonic cycle was based on mass consumption (Taylor, 1996). Each cyclical phase reached its fruition when a basic enabling breakthrough was consolidated by cutting-edge economic activity. For the Dutch, it was innovations in shipbuilding that led to them being the leading traders of their era. For the British, it was the steam engine that enabled factory textiles to rule the world market. And for the Americans, it has been the communications and computer technologies, and their eventual integration, that has enabled the development of a vast advertising industry that produces the necessary demand for consumption.

This cyclical model is directly implicated in the *creation* of modernities (Taylor, 1999). As previously noted, the condition of modernity is experienced as incessant change and the economic upheavals caused by the three hegemons – new

mercantilism, new industrialism, new consumerism – intensified the degree of social change. Worlds of new opportunities and dangers were created to which ordinary people were forced to respond. Within each hegemonic state the heightened pressure of change led to new forms of everyday life that has been called *ordinary modernity* (Taylor, 1999). In effect, the traditional household was the invention of the modernist ideal of the home as a haven from the turmoils occurring outside. This is a private world of comfort, an idealized place where the family relaxes away from the stresses of social change. Multitudes of modern people aspired to this ideal place of comfort, but not all succeeded: havens can also be cages, places of hidden violence (Taylor, 2000). Moreover, as second-wave feminism highlighted, the home can be both a space of isolation and labour for women, as well as a site of resistance (Blunt and Dowling, 2006).

Under the leadership of American hegemony everyday life has been centred on historically unprecedented consumption by masses of ordinary people. The suburb is the archetypal landscape of modern consumption. This is our contemporary world of suburban living based upon machines for access (the motor car), machines for domestic work (washing machines, microwaves, vacuum cleaners, dishwashers), and machines for entertainment (TVs, video players, music centres, game players). These large, general and necessary items are supplemented by many individual items of consumption, such as furniture, clothing and toys, that make each home different and distinctive. This is a world pioneered in the USA in the first half of the twentieth century by such 'household names' as Ford, Hoover and General Electric, and diffused to the other parts of the world in the rest of the twentieth century. But this everyday consumer modernity did not arise from nowhere. Before the Americans it was the nineteenth-century British who developed the nuclear, family-centred everyday life in their new industrial world. The Victorian home may have lacked the 'modern conveniences' that we expect, but it was still, in its own way, an unprecedented zone of comfort. Famously individual in character – Victorian homes were cluttered with family 'knick-knacks' – this was when identifiable modern (comfortable) furniture first becomes widespread. But it was the Dutch in the seventeenth century who invented the modern home itself (Rybczynski, 1986). Before them, dwellings were relatively public places where business, entertainment, eating and sleeping were mixed. In seventeenth-century Dutch houses the upstairs became a separate private area for family members and invited friends only. This is the crucial separation of home from paid work and business, a hallmark of modernity. The new Dutch homes were furnished and decorated for and by the family to reflect their individuality, and this included children – the Dutch are said to have invented childhood. Thus our modern everyday life has a time trajectory that goes from the houses of Dutch burghers to contemporary suburbia, reflecting the hegemonic cycles of economic change.

Hegemonic cycles with their associated everyday modernities are a classic example of a morphology of social time. As a cyclical model of change they counter simple progress models that assume a linear pattern of advancement. However, this is not a case of discontinuity over continuity. The nature of social change in the modern world-system is too complex to be captured by such either/or models. Obviously, there must be discontinuities in cyclical models – the worlds of

mercantilism, industrialism and consumerism are different – but there can also be continuity. Alongside the differences there are enough similarities for us to identify a generic ordinary modernity of everyday life that has its own trajectory of development culminating in contemporary mass consumption. Social change in our modern world is a complex mix of cycles and trends as social times. Ultimately, however, it may be that it is the trends that are all-important to our futures.

CONCLUSION: TIME TODAY

Contemporary globalization is a classic example of how the concepts of time and space are linked together. The idea of globalization has dominated much thinking in human geography and beyond in the last decade ago or so (see Chapter 19 on globalization and human geography). It is self-evidently a spatial term since it references and announces a specific geographical scale of activity, the 'global'. But this spatial-scale reference makes sense only in relation also to time. Consider the titles of three classic books on globalization: *Global Formation* (Chase-Dunn, 1989), *Global Shift* (Dicken, 1998) and *Global Transformations* (Held et al., 1999). Each one links global with a particular process of social change: the three different terms describing change reflect alternative social-theoretical bases behind each book's argument. The point is that globalization is studied because it represents an important element of contemporary social change, so important in fact that it is sometimes said to define a new historical era. Globalization is a time-space concept *par excellence*.

The new communication technologies that make possible instant world-wide connections are the basic enabling mechanism of contemporary globalization. This has created a new relationship between time and space: information, knowledge, ideas and instructions can be electronically transmitted instantaneously around the world. It has been said to denote the 'end of geography' (O'Brien, 1991). More realistically, it marks another change in the relations between time and space. The most influential writer on this topic is Castells (1996). For him, social space is materially produced as a means to facilitate meetings – he calls them 'time-sharing practices' – between social agents. Social space has traditionally been organized so as to bring together people simultaneously so that they can interact as social beings. Such simultaneous practices had always relied upon spatial contiguity. Today, there is a global space of flows that enable social practices to occur across large distances: with electronic technology spatial contiguity and temporal simultaneity have been physically separated (Castells, 1996: 411). This does not presage the 'end of geography' but rather points towards exciting new geographies with, for instance, the development of a world city network to simultaneously facilitate global social practices within the new spaces of flows (Beaverstock et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2006).

One of the prime characteristics of our 'globalizing' times is that we are very self-conscious of intensive social change. The human geography and social sciences literatures are awash with descriptions of things being new. This is indicated by the many terms that proclaim the passing of a recent past: postcolonialism, post-industrialism, postFordism, postdevelopment, post-Marxism, post-structuralism

and, of course, postmodernism are most common. And there are identifications of many associated processes that are supposedly changing our world: restructurings, new orders, new identities, transitions and crises are the most common. The sheer number of 'posts' and related processes indicate that the modern maelstrom of incessant social change remains very much with us. In fact, the cacophony of such time-laden concerns brings up the question as to whether contemporary times are indeed a special time of change.

This is where the morphology of social time is crucial. For those who broadly follow a progressive linear social time model, then our times are but a stepping stone to more modern technological breakthroughs leading to a more advanced society. Those for whom cycles are part of the morphology have to ask whether the conditions are right for the creation of a new cycle. Who follows the USA? Given that the last hegemon has led us to mass consumption, the question is asked whether this is sustainable – is the earth big enough for ever-growing and never-ending mass consumption? Ultimately, time in human geography and the social sciences reduces to a question of social justice across generations (de Shalit, 1995). Taking a progressive position means that we should push on so that as yet unborn generations can cumulatively reap the benefits of technological advance. On the other hand, if modern consumption is not sustainable, it behoves us to make sure we bequeath to future generations a quality of environment on our planet at least as good as the one we inherited from previous generations.

SUMMARY

- Social time is a 'time with content', social process.
- Social time is inherently linked to social space or place.
- We live in modern times where change is incessant.
- Geographers have used several time-space concepts to understand modern times: space-time convergence, time-geography, space-time compression, TimeSpace and a geographical perspective on change.
- Planning is the 'top-down' modern practice for controlling social change.
- Planning is condemned to apply yesterday's solutions to today's problems.
- There are surreptitious modes of change where everyday behaviour creates large-scale historical change.
- Successful surreptitious changes are associated with the hegemonic cycles of the Dutch, British and Americans.
- These changes create time-spaces of ordinary modernity where people find a haven from incessant social change.
- Contemporary globalization is a classic time-space concept based upon new communication technologies.

- Globalization is constituted by new electronic spaces of flows that separate temporal simultaneity from spatial contiguity.
- The bottom line for globalization is intergenerational justice: will we leave the planet in as healthy a physical condition as we inherited?

Further Reading

The best starting point for following up this chapter is Leyshon (1995), who provides a comprehensive discussion of the idea of a 'shrinking world'. In terms of communications, the collection of essays edited by Brunn and Leinbach (1991) ***Collapsing Time and Space***, is useful and includes an update of his ideas by Janelle. The basic statements on time-space compression and TimeSpace are to be found in Harvey's (1990) ***The Condition of Postmodernity*** and Wallerstein's (1991) ***Unthinking Social Science*** respectively, both are difficult reads but well worth the effort. Dodgshon's (1998) ***Society in Time and Space*** provides a valuable recent historical geography contribution to studying social change, one which is well versed in social theory. Finally, the links between time and modernity are developed further in Taylor's (1999) ***Modernities: A Geohistorical Perspective***.

Note: Full details of the above can be found in the reference list below.

NOTE

- 1 Keynesian economic planning is named after the economist John Maynard Keynes, who devised a theory and practice of 'demand management' that dominated economic policy in the mid-twentieth century.

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