COACTIVITY: *Philosophy, Communication* 2017, Vol. 25, 145–154. ISSN 2029-6320 print/2029-6339 online

DOI https://doi.org/10.3846/cpc.2017.283

METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Received 20 June 2017; accepted 8 October 2017

The term *metropolis* refers to a giant city, an urban centre that supersedes its more provincial counterparts in population, economic strength, and political influence. The term *modernity*, however, carries more than one meaning. It is thus almost an empty category, or at least a way of classification laden with some contradictions. In present paper I am going to discuss a few relationships connecting the two entities to one another.

Keywords: Budapest, giant city, imperial city, industrial city, metropolis, modernity, world cities.

Introduction

In this study I am going to discuss the intricate relationship between modernity and metropolitan development. They problem has so far attracted great interest on the side both of the theoreticians and practicing historians. The scholarly discourses informing present study encompass a wide range of intellectual endeavours, beginning with the German sociology of the late 19th and early 20th century (Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin), continuing with the arguments and theory-oriented analyses provided by some Anglo-Saxon scholars (Alfred Schütz, Richard Sennett, Peter Brooks, Marshall Berman, Rob Shields). Historians concerned either with history of the modern city and that of modernity *per se* were also engaged in raising many important issues in their monographs on urban development (David H. Pinkney, Michael B. Miller, Donald J. Olsen, Lynn Hollen Lees, Andrew Lees, Friedrich Lenger, Geoffrey Crossick, Richard Dennis). Last but not least some recent theoreticians and historians both of nationalism and the nationstate-building were also of great assistance to me in clarifying the context within which the evolution of modernity and urbanization evolved during the long 19th century (Eric Hobsbawm, Joep Leerssen, Stefan Berger).

The term *metropolis* refers to a giant city, an urban centre that supersedes its more provincial counterparts in population, economic strengths, and political influence. It had, from the beginning a negative image or connotation as being a "parasitic city", a dangerous entity

that rules society without contributing to its wealth and stability. At the same time, throughout its historical existence the giant city has had an enormous and beneficial impact on the national or imperial area surrounding it as it was a driving force behind economic and cultural innovation. Metropolises of the early modern and modern era like London in the 16th and 17th centuries, Paris in the 19th century, Los Angeles in the 20th century effectively shaped aesthetic taste and mass consumption patterns worldwide.

The metropolis as a "primate city" gains its disproportionate size and enhanced importance by sharply separating itself from, and standing above all, other cities in the area. However, it maintains close ties with giant cities whose territories are even more extensive. The metropolises, seeing themselves as "world cities", tend to form interregional and supranational communication network. The idea of the metropolis as the physical representation of an entire universe (Jerusalem, Rome) has always been an important part of the way these centres are perceived and thought about. In the age of the industrial revolution, the term *industry city* was generally applied to them. In spite of the unambiguous industrialization of many of these cities, they did their best to define their physical appearance more in opposition to the industrialization than in terms of its inevitable consequences. That is why the modern metropolis may also be perceived as a work of art, consciously conveying the images of national or imperial glory. An additional frequent image is that of the chaotic place represented by American novelist John Dos Passos in *Manhattan Transfer* (original edition in 1925), or by the German novelist Alfred Döblin in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (original edition in 1929) (Gyáni 2008; Lees, Hollen Lees 2007; Lenger 2012; Scherpe, Cohen 1992).

Modernity and *flânerie*

The term, *modernity*, and the notion of modern and modernism, also carry more than one connotation. It is almost an empty category, a way of classification laden with some contradictions. According to Weber, the main attribute of modernity is "the disenchantment of the world", the process of an increasing rationalization and intellectualization: "that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation" (1946: 139). Duality has thus been postulated, because the historical eras existing before the age of modernity are held to have been the world of enchantment, while the era of modernity is described and even defined by the rational, secular and progressive tenets and values. More recently there is, however, a growing dissatisfaction with this definition, and we thus tend to break us away from the binary model anticipated by Weber. It follows from stressing the rational aspects of all those enchantments permeating today's mass culture, and as much the hidden non-rational implications of the enchantments of the rational bound elite culture. One may even say that, "Enchantments did not disappear entirely within the binary model, but were marginalized in various ways as residual phenomenon both subordinate to and explicable by modernity's rational and secular tenets" (Saler 2006: 696). Enchantments remained basic element of constituting the popular culture, but even the rational culture represented both by the sciences and the creative arts are in no way devoid of having some (founding) myths and narratives (this has plausibly been shown and justified in terms of the academic history writing: Lorenz (2008), Berger (2009)). This looks to be one of the most important messages of postmodernism (a greatly useful guide to the topic: Brown (2005)).

The concept of modernity has closely been linked to the rise of modern urban realm both as a physical and a socio-mental construction. The work has been done by the Georges-Eugène Haussmann, the Prefect of the Seine Department of France, who carried out the grand project rebuilding contemporary Paris commanded by Napoleon III, then Emperor of

France (an already classic historical account of the story: Pinkney (1958)). The metropolis thus being created was some time later designated by Benjamin "the capital of the 19th century", in which the prototype of any (urban) modernity is or has to be viewed since that time on. His line of thought has further been refined by such Sennett and Berman, who also committed themselves to describe the historical process of a specifically European modernity.

The core of Sennett's main thesis has been that during the 19th century the metropolitan sphere underwent a profound alteration in the way people appeared in the public arena and in the way in which they participated in the life of community.

"A few people continued to express themselves actively in public [and] by the mid-19th c. [they had] become professionals at it though, they were skilled performers. Another identity grew up alongside this one; it was that of the spectator. And this spectator did not participate in public life so much as he steeled himself to observe it" (Sennett 1974: 195).

What seems to be the most essential characteristics of modernity defining the 19th century metropolis, Sennett has claimed, relates to the splitting of modern urban life alongside the line separating the private and public realm, or putting it another way: the separation of the active and non-active participation in the ever widening public sphere.

Berman also links modernity to the act of establishing a modern urban setting, by stating that:

"To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind" (1982: 15).

Berman also insists that the inner dynamic and complexity of modernity underlines a highly paradoxical unity, which is equal to the "unity of disunity", just because modernity

"pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air'" (1982: 15).

Sennett's and Berman's theory of modernity imply the distinction made between the notion of modernity and that of modernism. Modernity, in Berman's use of the term, defines the process of an economic and political modernization, the term modernism, however, denotes the artistic and cultural changes that correspond more or less to modernity in the form of an intellectual sensitivity that accompanies modernization, but at best can only react to it. All this means that although modernity is a necessary precondition for every type of modernism, it is undeniable that modernism achieves its right to existence only as a denial of modernity, i.e. modernization. The latter is thus not simply a mirror image of modernity and its adequate intellectual representation. This has also a lot to do with the fact that the modern city, actual location of modernity also embodied history. As Olsen has aptly remarked:

"The forms that were created, the language used, the ideas expressed, the institutions monumentalized, the values inculcated shared one unifying characteristic: they were employed and perceived by a culture that thought *historically*" (1986: 295).

The deep sense of history gave the 19th century modern urbanism the organizing principle – a way of relating discrete facts, ideas, and images one to another. Modernity was thus by

definition an urban entity throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, as the city epitomised the new, the newness either in its own scale, layout and material fabric. This, however, harked back to the past both architecturally and in its mental relationship to the idea of an "authentic" national past, and that kind of historicism was inevitable to the success of any nation-building project everywhere in Europe at that time (Gunn 2006: 120–127; Leerssen 2006; Berger, Conrad 2014: 1–27).

The rule of historicism was, however, radically questioned by Friedrich Nietzsche by rethinking the notion of reality and the epistemological status of the "truth" held in scholarly recognition. By stating that there is not exist an overriding rationality, and that a rationally discernible world exists at best as object of interpretations, Nietzsche exempted "modern man" from permanently searching the truth; he thus has assumed that there are only truths which are in conflict with one another. His sharp critique of modernity thus opened the gates before an alternative, maybe deviant way of perception of, and discursive approach to the project modernity. The result of all of this has been the rise of a wholly new intellectual orientation, known as *cultural modernism*, made possible by a metropolitan or at least city-like modernity, which, however, called into question the very function of the culture as it had been settled right before. The cultural modernist artist tended to represent *not* the external reality, common to all civilized urbanites, but rather the inward self, which remains hidden before the Others. He/she thus puts aside the objects being represented to the act of representation, by substituting them by the image of the self. The shift occurring in the field could thus uncover a hidden and multiple entity, sought and found beneath the great variety of the masks worn by everybody belonging to the *same* external world of modernity (Nietzsche 1997, 1998; Wohl 2002).

The scholarly discourse on the meaning of modernity linked to the city was actually advanced first by Simmel and Benjamin; they unanimously focused on the specificity of a metropolitan experience and mentality. The metropolis, which has become as much the centre as main depository of capitalism, the money economy *per se*, Simmel argued, made the urban dwellers spiritually lethargic. It plainly followed from a stimulation-rich, overrationalized urban mass culture and public domain which shaped and determined everyday life and mentality in its entirety. Being or at least becoming *blasé* was the price that the metropolitan man paid for his/her autonomy as a modern personality. Living in a city always required maximal rationality rather than deep emotional relationships as its precondition. The metropolitan man, Simmel says,

> "reacts with his head instead of his heart. In this an increased awareness assumes the psychic prerogative. Metropolitan life, thus, underlines a heightened awareness and predominance of intelligence in metropolitan man" (1950: 410).

All this follows from modernity, which makes necessary the rigorous coordination of all activities: "Punctuality, calculability, exactness are forced upon life by complexity and extension of metropolitan existence and are most intimately connected with its money economy and intellectual character" (Simmel 1950: 412–413).

Whereas Simmel's central hero has been the modern man, who necessarily becomes Stranger amidst the strangers, the "world of strangers", Benjamin's paradigmatic figure is the *flâneur*, a vigilant observer of the urban public, who "catches things in flight" (the notion of the Stranger advanced by Simmel was further developed by Schuetz (1944). Simmel's urban strangers – impacted by the metropolitan neurosis of time-and-space effects – were the dislocated individuals put to the shock of permanent changes in the face of which the attitude of being *blasé* promised them the only solution (Shields 1994: 73). Benjamin's hero,

however, is the detective-like metropolitan man, the kind of *flâneur* being an active participant of the public. This is to describe the *flâneur* of the first few decades of the 19th century Paris, the city in which the shopping arcades provided the adequate physical setting for urban strolling (Benjamin 1978).

The *flâneur* actually is a *male bourgeois*, who freely moves in the city joining in this way the "endless parade of strangers", the domain constituting the public space with fundamental characteristics of a domestic *interieur*. Due to the Haussmanization process, the total rebuilding of the mid-19th century Paris, the phenomenon of *flânerie* of a former period is necessarily doomed to disappear; the city stroller thereafter moves in a metropolis filled in by a mass, an increasingly estranged society. Charles Baudelaire, "the painter of the modern life", embodying for Benjamin the authentic *flâneur* of the day, becomes after the mid-century a member only of the crowd overwhelming the public scene of the city. For the latter it is already wholly impossible to look at and use the street like an interior, as he is not more than merely a "pedestrian who wedged himself into the crowd", somebody who by strolling, enjoys the company of people, but is always lonely among them. The *flânerie* practiced by the diligent observer with detective-like inclinations is thus replaced by the atomized individual, who quits his previous habit of performing hard work to understand and decipher the meaningful life of the Arcade City (Benjamin 1973: 50, 54). For an invaluable analysis of the whole problem, see Brooks (1977), Tester (1994)). The latter sort of *flâneur* is just an onlooker about whom contemporary essayist, Victor Fournel has aptly remarked:

"[He] is absorbed by the outside world which intoxicates him to the point where he forgets himself. Under the influence of the spectacle which presents itself to him, […] he becomes an impersonal creature; he is no longer a human being, he is part of the public, of the crowd" (quoted in Benjamin 1973: 69, note).

Baudelaire, as being prototype of the once had been, but later transformed *flâneur* has thus been banished to the semi-public, semi-private locations, like the café. A further shift also contributing to the transformation both in the content and function of *flânerie* is closely linked to the birth of the department store, symbol of the consumer culture. The department store, however, counts to represent a truly feminine public realm, "which puts even *flânerie* to use for commodity circulation. The department store is the *flâneur's* last practical joke" (Benjamin 1978: 156). The department store as incarnating the novel form of Parisian sociability comes alive in **É**mile Zola's novel *The Ladies' Delight* or *The Ladies' Paradise* (in French: *Au Bonheur des Dames*, first edition in 1883) (to the socio-cultural history of the metropolitan department store: Miller (1981), Lancaster (1995), Crossick, Jaumain (1999)).

One may thus conclude that both the Stranger and the *flâneur* is someone who excels under the stress of coming to terms with a persistently changing "social spatialization" of everyday social and economic relations created and sustained by the very process of modernity (Shields 1994: 67).

The challenge of the metropolis: admiration and discontent

In stating that the modern city comes as an obvious symbol and manifestation of modernity, does not mean, however, that it has unanimously and unconditionally been admired by all of contemporaries. The discourse of praising the city flowed from seeing the amazing accomplishments that the process of urbanization performed during the 19th and 20th centuries. The city *as a work of art* and the city *as a focal point of modern civilization* both were frequent and typical articulations of a belief applied to the European and North American metropolises. It suggested that the cities being either national or imperial monuments, created and

mirrored at the same time an entirely new, basically rational human world which matched the requirements of money economy. The city as a specific urban form and unique idea was thus held to be the material expression and symbolic representation of historical progress or evolution, the unlimited development of humankind. The Millennial festivities held in 1896 gave excellent platform in Hungary for the wide-scale and effective articulation of this idea progressivism, by declaring that Hungary has also and successfully contributed to the joint European undertaking of modernity, especially through the development of Budapest into a metropolis (to the discourse on the image of Budapest in the age of the Millennial Exhibition, see Gyáni (2004: 209–211), Barenscott (2010)). Similar opportunities were provided for praising the city through organizing the World's fairs in the mid-19th century Europe. The first of them was *The Great Exhibition*, held in London in 1851, succeeded by the *Exposition Universelle* taken place in Paris in 1855 and by several other ones both in London, Paris or Vienna. The aim of organizing such World's fairs was as much to show the city through its metropolitan enchantments, the many products of modernity to the visitors frequenting the exhibitions in great number. They also aimed at demonstrating the great potential of the human economic achievement, displayed in the various pavilions. This being the case even in London in 1851, where – as Lenger has remarked – "already on the exhibition grounds in Hyde Park, amusements competed with the organizer's aims to educate and enlighten" (2012: 15). The Parisian *Exposition Universelle* did the same impact on the visitors, not least because it was organized in a city being then under a total reconstruction with the explicit aim of transforming the French capital into the most modern urban artefact of contemporary world. When London housed the World's fair, the emphasis was placed more on displaying the unsurpassed economic achievement of the country, and the city which held the status of an imperial capital (on the formation of contemporary imperial cities see Lees, Hollen Lees (2007: 246–261)).

In viewing the city as the hotbed of every evil and abnormal events, a place deserving not more than hate and negation, was not less a preferred practice among contemporaries. The inferno-like image of the city was first applied to the "coke cities", industrial centres of England, which, however, was later extended to many of the sizable metropolised lacking as usual any transparency and reason. It was easy to compare them to the symbolic Biblical place, Babylon, not least because the unambiguous complexity of a modern city strongly reminded contemporaries the Tower of Babel, a place of confusion, arrogance and rebellion, a place known only from the Bible. The discourse on the Babylon-like new industrial and metropolitan settlements predicted a rather gloomy future for these modern metropolises. This belief was supported by a firm conviction that these sites are also destined for an eventual destruction like her Biblical reference point (Dennis 2008: 46–48; Lenger 2012: 209–218; Tiersten 1999: 118–123).

The bad connotation attached to the image of the metropolis was not even lacking in East and Central Europe. The case here was further worsened by the sharp contrast between the capital city and the hinterland, "the country" and this often provoked nationalist anti-urban public reaction. Such a critique in terms of the metropolis was emphatically articulated at a moment of the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in 1918 and thereafter. The reason was that the capital city could easily be associated with the sinful liberal political views and practices, and the non-national, the truly cosmopolitan way of life, this mode of thinking and such an ethos. The latter was held by many to be responsible for the eclipse of a former political and national dignity.

The Budapest-image shaped by this discourse suggested that the capital has greatly contributed to the later ill-fated development of the Hungary. The notable historian, Gyula

Szekfű in his influential book, *The Three Generations: History of a Declining Age* (in Hungarian: *Három nemzedék: Egy hanyatló kor története*, original edition in 1920) reviewed the weaknesses and fundamental errors of a previous ruling Hungarian liberalism, which he held liable for the fall of the monarchy and for dismemberment of the country (1940). In doing this, he also attacked Budapest with particular vehemence as the number one castle of the sinful liberal illusions. He believed that the root of all this rested in the large number of the Jews who lived at a high standard in the city and also represented vital element of the national political and chiefly the intellectual liberal thinking and mass culture (to the ideological and intellectual background of such an anti-liberal and anti-urban view, see Gyáni (2016)).

Similarly as in throughout Europe ethnic nationalism has become a pronounced form of ideology and public sentiment in Hungary too by the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Hobsbawm 1991: 101–162), and reigned during the interwar period. As a result Budapest was soon to be blamed as being the location of modernity. László Németh, an influential novelist and essayist was deeply concerned about the fate of the Hungarian nation which was always threatened by the immense migration movement heading for Budapest. Similar anxious worked behind the opinion raised by Sándor Karácsony, an educationalist and psychologist and university professor, who also condemned Budapest for not representing the nation because her population is everything, but not Magyar (more about the discourse see Gyáni (2005)).

A third possible attitude towards the metropolitan modernity got also on the agenda at around the turn-of-the century. It was the case when the negative experiences gained on the urban anomalies and injustices, following from the extreme social inequalities of a metropolitan social fabric led many to criticize the city. The urban critics concerned here came to a decision of remedying the troubles of modernity by implementing urban reform policy. These urban reform policies surfaced almost everywhere in Europe at that time (a general overview about all this has been provided: Lees, Hollen Lees (2007: 169–203), Lenger (2012: 183–187)). Intellectuals, professionals and the bureaucracy of municipal governments did their best to improve the cities in a variety of ways. Serious efforts were thus taken to ameliorate cities' physical infrastructure and space, the housing issue, the urban communication network and the hygiene. One of the most durable of all these measures was the provision of a wide scale of city services, financed and managed by the municipality. Municipal authorities reacted in this way to the disorder (crime, prostitution, pauperization, and begging, abandoned children) shaping and even determining the quality of life in a big city; they thus wanted to counterbalance the negative consequences of an uncontrolled growth of the metropolis. An urban policy of that kind was initiated in Budapest by István Bárczy, Lord Mayor of the capital city between 1906 and 1918, and the same was done by Karl Lueger, the Mayor in Vienna between in 1897 and 1910. Both Bárczy and Lueger contributed to amending the cities managed by them by extirpating the effects of a spontaneous urbanization triggered by *laissez faire* capitalism (Melinz, Zimmermann 1991; Zimmermann 2011).

The acute need for a new identity went hand in hand with the spread of cultural pessimism, subjectivism and scientific relativism. Intellectuals and creative artists, who founded and represented the movement of *cultural modernism* of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, definitely reject the city, the modernity project in its entirety. They thus also became spokesmen of an effective anti-urban, anti-modern spiritual and intellectual discourse. One notable representative of them has been the Budapest based *Sonntagskreis* (in English: *Sunday Circle*), including György Lukács, a philosopher, Lajos Fülep, an art historian, Karl Mannheim, a sociologist and Arnold Hauser,

an art historian and some others. The aesthetes mentioned before just as many other aesthetes everywhere in Europe in the 1900s, achieved an extreme degree of alienation either from the city, the liberalism, or the bourgeois modernity. Therefore, they tended to withdraw themselves from the outer world by retiring into the internal world of the soul. Lukács wrote in an essay of him at that time "If there is a culture today it can only be an aesthetic culture" (1913: 12). Material culture, the empire of modernity, however, can at best be a path toward a single form of culture and cannot be more than a possibility, because "Everything that matters takes place in the atmosphere of the soul" (Lukács 1913: 28).

Conclusions

The intricate relationship between the city and modernity was always put to many twists and changes. This is which prevents us from depicting the whole story in a linear historical narrative. Not less important has been the contradictory relationship between modernity and (cultural) modernism, also attached to the emergence of a European (overseas) metropolitan domain. The common element in them was the creation and sustaining a wholly new personal and group identity which, however, could easily be shaken from time to time as a result of the swift changes occurring in modern times. That is the most important lesson that can be drawn from an entangled history of modernity and modern-age urbanization.

Funding

This paper was supported by the Hungarian-Lithuanian joint project "Conception of Creative City within Central Europe: Historical Images and Empirical Indices" carried on within the framework of a bilateral agreement of the Hungarian and Lithuanian Academies of Sciences.

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METROPOLITETO RAIDA IR MODERNYBĖ: FENOMENOLOGINIS POŽIŪRIS

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Terminas *metropolis* nurodo miestą milžiną, urbanistinį centrą su užgožtais provinciniais populiacijos papildiniais, ekonominį pajėgumą ir politinę įtaką. Tačiau terminas *modernybė* turi daugiau nei vieną reikšmę. Kol kas tai – kone tuščia kategorija ar bent jau tam tikromis prieštaromis perkrautas klasifikavimo būdas. Šiame straipsnyje imuosi apsvarstyti keletą sąryšių, sujungiančių du tarpusavyje nesusijusius dalykus.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Budapeštas, miestas milžinas, imperinis miestas, industrinis miestas, metropolis, modernybė, pasaulio miestai.