

# Regional Modernities

The Cultural Politics of Development in India

*edited by*  
K. SIVARAMAKRISHNAN  
ARUN AGRAWAL

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## *Regional Modernities in Stories and Practices of Development*



K. SIVARAMAKRISHNAN AND  
ARUN AGRAWAL

I promise you the labyrinth made of the single straight line which  
is invisible and everlasting

—*Jorge Luis Borges, A Personal Anthology, 1987*

'Fairy while You are so beautiful.'

—*Goethe, Faust, [1832] 1976*

One would be quibbling with de Certeau (1984) only a little in claiming that discussions of modernity are becoming universal.<sup>2</sup> Habermas tells us that modernity is characterized by a rationalization of life worlds that became most distinctly visible in eighteenth century Europe with the universalization of norms of action.

1. The original in German reads as 'Verweile doch, du bist so schön.'
2. Habermas [1985] 1996; 2. Berman (1982) remains a confident text on this score. A number of essay collections have appeared recently, including Appadurai's *Modernity at Large*. Others include Jameson and Mivoshi (1998) and Ross (1988). Works specifically dealing with India include Breckenridge (1995) and Nuanjana *et al.* (1993). Comaroff and Comaroff (1993) provide a collection of essays engaging developments in postcolonial Africa.

generalization of values, and patterns of socialization centered on individuation.<sup>3</sup> This commonly accepted portrayal of modernity can serve as a blunt but useful point of departure. Modernity as a condition or a concept, however, needs more careful contextual and historical specification. Attention to history and context is necessary whether one deploys the concept of modernity for analytical purchase, or attempts to understand its construction. This volume of essays proposes the concept of regional modernities in moving toward such an objective.

Harvey reminds us that the core aspiration of modernity 'was to use the accumulation of knowledge... for the pursuit of human imagination and the enrichment of daily life.'<sup>4</sup> He could have been talking about development. If modernity is the figure to which social theory unavoidably refers itself, development is the prime index we use to assess efforts toward modernization. Development, in its various guises, has surely been the most powerful influence structuring social and economic transformations in the non-Western world in this century.<sup>5</sup> The rhetoric around it helped legitimate colonial consolidation in the 1930s and the 1940s. Visions of

3. See also Lefebvre's (1995: 1-2) discussion of modernism (modernization) and modernity. He sees the two as antithetical: 'By modernism, we mean the consciousness which successive ages, periods and generations had of themselves; thus modernism consists of phenomena of consciousness, of triumphalist images and projections of self ... By modernity, however, we understand the beginnings of a reflective process, a more-or-less advanced attempt at critique and auto-critique, a bid for knowledge.... Modernity differs from modernism just as a concept which is being formulated in society differs from social phenomena themselves, just as a thought differs from actual events'. Despite their differences, Lefebvre's explicit references to the rise of skepticism as a feature of modernity is shared by Habermas ([1985] 1996: 2) when he argues that modernity is a reflective treatment of traditions that have lost their quasi-natural status. On the other hand, Taylor (1999: 153) articulates a somewhat different conception of modernity when he argues for a cultural theory of modernity in which it is characterized less by the development of a universal transformation, and more by the emergence of a new culture that is comparable to its predecessor as well as to other contemporary cultures. This view runs into the obvious difficulties of treating cultures as independent separate entities (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

4. Harvey 1989: 12.

5. See discussions by Escobar (1995), Ferguson ([1992] 1994), Hirschman (1971), and, of course, Rostow (1960).

development formed a rallying cry for independence movements that led to decolonization in the 1950s and the 1960s. And in the post-Second World War period, development became the *raison d'être* of newly independent states.<sup>6</sup> It continues today to colonize our imaginations about how modern men and women can assert their dignity and control their lives. For example, in his critical essay on development, Esteva suggests, 'Development occupies the center of an incredibly powerful semantic constellation. There is nothing in modern mentality comparable to it as a force guiding thought and behavior.'<sup>7</sup>

One reason the concept of development seems so powerful is the apparent irreplaceability of a congeries of claims made by development theorists that address, and promise to redress, the misery that continues to be the home of billions: 'the power to transform old worlds, the power to imagine new ones.'<sup>8</sup> Another might be the

6. There is some controversy about the period to which thinking about development can be traced. To be sure, the 1930s are no more the magic decade than the 1940s or 1950s when development suddenly became the concern of state policy. Berman (1982) draws an evocative portrait of Goethe's Faust (written in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries) to elaborate the inescapable, transformative power of development. Cowen and Shenton (1995), in their historical essay on the intellectual roots of development, trace it back to the writings of European political economists in the early nineteenth century. Standard histories of development at least refer to writings from the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries as founding more recent theories of development (Arendt 1987; Rostow 1990).

7. Esteva (1992: 8) goes on to indicate the difficult nature of the term when he says, 'At the same time, very few words are as feeble, as fragile and as incapable of giving substance and meaning to thought and behavior as this one'.

8. Crush 1995: 2. More generally, Crush (1995: xi-xiii) provides one account of the power of development when he describes how between 1990 and 1994 legions of development agencies and experts set up shop in South Africa. The new missions, reports, institutions, and planning documents were only the latest in a series of local reinventions of development that had occurred between the 1930s and the 1980s. One can call such missions and reports a public appropriation of societal transformations in the name of development. Similar discursive appropriations of the 'public face' of political and economic transformations have taken place in nearly all developing countries in this century. These appropriations of social processes lead to empirical and analytical 'data, debate, research, and policy' (Ludden 1992: 251).

very elusiveness of this slippery word whose meanings proliferate in blatant disregard of all attempts to fix and stabilize its referents.<sup>9</sup> A measure of the seductive appeal of development is how it is visualized as a naturalized process and common sense objective, its connections with power hidden, veiled, unknown: what else can one strive for if not to develop?<sup>10</sup> In the tensions between the particular performances of development at cascading levels of social aggregation, and the universalist, 'anti-political' claims of its advocates lie clues to its nature. The ensuing essays recognize the complex nature of development and provide some conceptual tools to assist a fuller, more plural, comprehension of these complexities. Two tools we discuss in this introduction—regions and stories—signal flexibility and dynamism in their very description, especially in comparison to 'global/local' and 'discourses of development' that have animated much anthropological study of development and environment in the recent past.

Instead of underwriting a globalized, homogeneous vision of modernity that development is supposed to inscribe, we direct attention toward 'regional modernities.' We highlight the regional nature of development performances and bodies of writings. We assert, with Bourdieu, that 'regionalist discourse is a performative discourse which aims to impose as legitimate a new definition of frontiers'<sup>11</sup> but do not restrict our definition of region to subnational

9. See the contributions in Sachs (1992). In general, writings on development proceed through a British-clearing exercise where they first define development, and then embark on their particular elaboration about what is wrong with development and how it can be brought about. Some other instances are Arndt (1987), Black (1991), Hobart (1993), and Norgaard (1994).

10. As an instrument of state policy, the objective of development not only allows its framers a sense of control in a time of disorder but also possesses and confers the capacity to pacify. Development possesses a global appeal that underwrites the paths of economic reconstruction and cultural homogenization pursued by many postcolonial states with a more or less single-minded devotion. Thus theories of development have been globally shared even when territorially circumscribed in practice by national or regional boundaries.

11. We are referring here to Ferguson's ([1990] 1994: xv) view of development as an 'anti-politics machine, depoliticizing everything it touches, everywhere whisking political realities out of sight, all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state power'.

12. Bourdieu 1991: 223.

formations as he seems to do. Further, instead of viewing regional forms of development simply as variations on a global theme we see them as layered acts that contribute to an effect of development glossed as universal.<sup>13</sup>

We also believe it is important to explore the multi-faceted relationships of development to modernity. James Ferguson has recently provided some valuable guidance on this subject.<sup>14</sup> He notes, first, that modernity continues to provide perceptual categories shaping peoples' lives well after specific processes of modernization—often named development—collapsed or were exposed for their role in other nefarious purposes. But experiences of disillusionment have not turned Third World subjects into anti-development crusaders as many new social movements and their scholarly sympathizers<sup>15</sup> often expected. In fact, when social movements have resulted in political power for their leaders, the leaders have usually embarked on new development projects or moved unfinished programs to completion.

Second, Ferguson recognizes that development did not 'invent' Third World poverty and other such manifestations of social inequality on an international scale. He reminds us that development became—for a period historically coincident with the Cold War, decolonization, and modern nation-state building in many Third World locations—the hegemonic way of looking at inequality and managing it. This historical turn in the study of development is welcome and it is something that several scholars have advocated in the last decade.<sup>16</sup> This turn recognizes that colonialism shaped, both explicitly and implicitly, the ideal-material frames from which development could emerge as it did at a certain historical moment following the end of Second World War.

We argue that the historical turn also entails two other acknowledgments that become crucial to continuing scholarly

13. In this regard, see also Applegate (1999: 1172) who argues that 'the most promising (direction) is moving toward an understanding of regional politics that sees them everywhere...as constitutive...in effect the infrastructure of the political process altogether'.

14. Ferguson 1999: 14

15. Cf. Sachs 1992; Escobar 1995; Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998; Roy 1999.

16. Larkin 1992; Cooper and Packard 1997

engagements with development. One links the unfinished projects of development to the unfinished projects of modernity. As scholars grapple with how, to paraphrase Dilip Gaonkar, non-Western people everywhere are beginning to engage critically their hybrid modernities, they are revising the distinction between societal modernization and cultural modernity.<sup>17</sup> The other acknowledgement we wish to highlight draws attention to the political struggles in which categories of development are critical—citizenship, agency, privacy, and subjecthood. These political processes around development retread the ground covered by the politicization of the categories of colonialism in struggles over identity, resources, and freedom in the postcolony.

The following essays enact arguments and tell stories situated in India. In part, of course, their geographical focus reflects the expertise and limitations of the authors. But at least in equal part, this location is also an argument about the continued necessity of globalization. A greater emphasis on the nation-state is critical to understanding the emergence of regional modernities as development policies and projects are enacted.<sup>18</sup> This claim contrasts with recent writings on development that emphasize either its local performances, or its global/international discourses and agents. The modern state, however, serves both as an agent, and as an arena in which other social agents pursue specific visions of growth, democracy, and nationhood. In this pursuit of modernity, development has been the link that provides a common theme and unites programs around economic, political, and cultural reconstructions. Projects of state formation, their links outward to an international political economy, and strategies of localization in relation to internal actors need insistent attention if we are to understand development—both as performed practice and also as a formation to be interpreted.

17. Gaonkar 1999: 1–2.

18. Recently, supranational economic networks and various subnational formations like autonomous districts, export promotion zones or conservation areas have emerged and can also be taken as examples of how we consider regions. In this paper, however, we focus on the nation-state as an example of the region for two reasons. The nation-state remains perhaps the most important actor in the context of development. Additionally, it is likely the most counter intuitive example of the concept of a region.

A second move we make is to highlight the construction of stories of development and underline the contingent nature of such construction. A number of recent analyses of development have argued that those who are supposedly subjected to development are also the subjects of development.<sup>19</sup> We focus upon storytelling as a critical element in the construction of agency that subjectivity always entails. The justification for such an emphasis on agency stems from some obvious antinomies in the account of development provided by its new radical critics. These antinomies set up oppositions between a dominating global vision of development purveyed by international agencies, and conquered localities characterized as anti-developmental.<sup>20</sup> Such a view is oriented to presenting 'development' as an accomplished fact instead of attending to its constantly shifting nature and contested programs. Our emphasis on stories indicates the importance of variable power held by different actors in the creation of the discourse of development and thus complements an existing emphasis on narratives and discourse.

We begin by drawing from recent writings on globalization and the production of locality. Using the implicit division between the local and the global in these writings as a foil, we develop our arguments about regional modernities. We follow our elaboration of the idea of regional modernities by examining some of the debilities in recent writings on development. This includes the instantiation of the concept of region in the form of the national state. It is easy to see that region can refer both to subnational and supranational social and political formations. In focusing on the national variant of the regional, we aim to show its suppleness. We finally show why stories are important to understand the construction of development discourses and narratives.

#### GLOBALIZATION/LOCALIZATION

Early scholarly writings on globalization saw in it a logic of homogenization that resulted from cultural and material forces with a cross-national, even planetary, sway. These pressures were

19. Pigg 1992.

20. The infirmity of such reasoning is captured succinctly by Comaroff and Comaroff (1993: xii) when they say, '[s]uch binary contrast, we would argue, are a widespread trope of ideology-in-the-making; they reduce complex continuities and contradictions to the aesthetics of nice oppositions.'

seen to emerge from Western metropolises and were disseminated by an intrusive media and political-economic domination. Every McDonald's and every Mickey Mouse was evidence of westernization at work.<sup>21</sup> Such totalizing theories of globalization inevitably saw local cultures as existing independently of contact with a putative outside culture and viewed globalization as a process of contact and integration that made the world more unified and homogeneous.<sup>22</sup> Some scholars saw pressures toward globalization emerging from the movements of a truly global capital.<sup>23</sup> Others have seen a greater disjuncture between economic and cultural processes, mapping the cultural to differentiation, and the economic to homogenization.<sup>24</sup> But for many, cultural globalization remains a process of diffusion and homogenization outward from a core located in the West.<sup>25</sup>

21. This continues to be an influential approach that assumes barriers for international economic integration are progressively being broken down. Thus, world is rapidly being integrated as 'that set of processes by which the world trade, the internationalization of production and financial markets, and the internationalization of a commodity culture promoted by an increasingly networked global telecommunication system' (Gibson-Graham 1996: 7, 1).

22. For a critique see Appadurai and Breckenridge (1995), Featherstone (1996), Gupta and Ferguson (1992), and Massey (1994). For disagreement and restatement of globalization as cultural imperialism, see Szeman (1997).

23. Such postulations of the relationship between the economic and the cultural, where material forces, in the famous Althusserian last analysis, dominate and underpin cultural production, have not ceased. See Dirlik (1996), who, despite expressing reservations about assigning a fixed meaning to 'local, capitalism, but is also a site where building blocks for a future politics of difference might emerge. Mitchell's (1996) questions about the celebration of hybridity, mobility, and multiculturalism also stem from a postulated close link between the economic and the cultural.

24. In a recent essay, for example, Jameson (1998: 56-7) suggests that cultural analyses of globalization are more likely to discover difference and differentiation but a focus on economic issues brings to the fore identity, assimilation, and integration, making globalization appear as a 'picture of standardization on an unparalleled new scale.'

25. Some of the more interesting recent work on globalization is contained in the collection of brilliant essays by Appadurai (1996), and in the insightful volumes edited by Breckenridge (1995), Featherstone (1995), King (1997), and Wilson and Dissanayake (1996). See also Meyer and Gescheire (1998).

The agonistic poles in the continuing debate on globalization—the local and the global—are not constructed accidentally. For all the difficulties in interpreting the meanings of global and local, these powerful terms facilitate particular narratives of cosmopolitanism vs. parochialism, of oppression vs. emancipation, of conforming homogeneity vs. agency, of placeless power vs. powerless places. The global stands for a certain free-wheeling movement of capital, ideas, and people. The local in contrast is often believed to be locked into timeless tyrannies of tradition. As Gupta and Ferguson remark, there is a surprisingly frequent tendency to use local and global in ways that replicate dualisms opposing tradition to modernity, cold society to hot ones, or *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*.<sup>26</sup>

More recently, of course, these meanings of the local and the global have registered a shift. As one comes to accept the connections of local spaces and social formations with other localities,<sup>27</sup> it also becomes more difficult to view globalization simply as a process of integration and homogenization.<sup>28</sup> As Featherstone argues, believing that 'globalization is basically modernity writ large' is to 'miss the cultural variability of non-Western nation-states and civilizations.' It is insufficient to assume that other cultures will just give way to modernity or regard their formulations of national particularity as mere reactions to Western modernity.<sup>29</sup> In different ways the articulation of global flows with the local context has to be made visible.<sup>30</sup> Such an articulation can take

26. Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 28.

27. Appadurai (1996: 178-99) presents an insightful discussion about the production of locality. Hall (1997) presents a view of the relationship between the local and the global that still relies on analogies with the logic of capital. He suggests that globalization proceeds unevenly primarily owing to varying localities that it encounters and the ways in which localities reconfigure global forces.

28. See Giddens (1990: 64) who defines globalization as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'.

29. Featherstone 1996: 46-7. See also Appadurai and Breckenridge (1995) on a heterogeneous modernity as the hallmark of the current globalization we are experiencing.

30. See for example, the recent collection of essays brought together in Meyer and Gescheire (1998: 602), who argue, 'it is important to develop an

the form of violent identity politics as manifested in ethnic conflict or more localized violence among neighbors and others having some prior social familiarity.<sup>31</sup> It can also lead to the marginalization of national economies rather than their integration.<sup>32</sup>

Take two specific contexts in which these points become evident. A number of recent studies of gender and women in Asia have focused on encounters related to globalization and industrialization. These studies each highlight dynamic and industrialization in processes prompted by inflows of capital into communities and households.<sup>33</sup> Wolf shows, for example, that for some women involvement in capitalist exploitation has empowered them in struggles to redefine traditional gender roles.<sup>34</sup> The cases of migration and international mobilization are similarly instructive in highlighting disjunctures between economic, political, and cultural flows in the era of 'globalization.' In some situations workers have created dense international circuits that mimic those of capital.<sup>35</sup> In others they have mobilized across national boundaries to federate into associations that can counter the strategies of regional and international consolidation evinced by capitalism.<sup>36</sup> Significant place attachments and new identities often seem to be the outcomes of the uneven impact of globalization as it is mediated by regional forces and creatively appropriated by the subjects of development and modernization.<sup>37</sup>

understanding of globalization that not only takes into account the increase in the mobility of people, goods, and images, but also the fact that in many places, flow goes hand-in-hand with a closure of identities which often used to be more fuzzy and permeable'.

31. Appadurai 1998.

32. Discussing the fate of copper export-dependent Zambian economic participation in global economies, Ferguson (1999: 373-4) argues that when fibre-optics replaced copper cable in telecommunications industry it signaled Zambia's disconnection from the modern world. The example highlights the more general point: processes of globalization may differentiate the world as they link parts of it.

33. Ong 1987; Safa 1990; Kondo 1990; Rofel 1998.

34. Wolf 1992.

35. Rouse 1991.

36. Edelman 1996.

37. Holmes (1989: 9) makes this point elegantly. His work shows how worker peasantries evolve from the basic demands and constraints of rural

It is evident that scholars of cultural globalization now generally accept globalization as a variable process, producing effects that cannot be predicted as a simple gloss on or reflection of the cultural productions of the metropolis. The disjunctions between different types of globalization—economic, financial, cultural, demographic—may be such as to preclude any simple understanding of the metropolis or the margin as stable or fixed sites of cultural (re)production. In recent statements about globalization, the world is seemingly becoming one without borders owing to the facility with which people, images, and objects travel. Communications and the media are contributing to the erosion of national borders, simultaneously making all of us translocal consumers of cultural products and de-territorialized producers of meanings.<sup>38</sup>

But the one world that is emerging is of a rather special type. It may be one, but its oneness derives from the increasing contact among its parts, rather than from some mythical unity or similarity of world-wide social relations that link distant localities.<sup>39</sup> For some cartographers of globalization, the intensification of social relations produces labyrinthine complexity, and leads to effects such as illegibility,<sup>40</sup> hyper mobility,<sup>41</sup> and time-space compression.<sup>42</sup> But as Thrift (1995) argues, these 'barometers of modernity'<sup>43</sup> cannot simply be taken at their face value. They need to be seen as 'a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another... converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method.'<sup>44</sup>

Modernity may be a global experience, but it is an experience that is multi-locally produced. This recognition should move us toward an effort to understand the patterns in the multi-local productions of modernity. Once we make a distinction between the global and the universal, it becomes obvious that the 'oneness' of modernity livelihood, favoring the integration of diverse productive involvements rather than the creation of narrow occupational identities.

38. Hannerz 1992; Robertson 1992.

39. Giddens 1990: 64.

40. Jameson 1991: 51-2.

41. Castells 1996, 1993: 6, 20.

42. Harvey 1989: 306

43. Descombes 1993.

44. Foucault 1977: 138 cited in Thrift 1995: 33.



scarcely refers to homogeneity of experiences. We come face-to-face with the reality that agents produce many different meanings even out of the same experiences, and that the production of meanings is made sensible only in an appreciation of common elements.<sup>45</sup>

A similar story can be told about current conceptualizations of the local. Whereas earlier discussion of the local saw it as the refuge of the particular, the specific, or the different, we no longer view the local as a site of purity, where difference emerges to haunt tales of global uniformity and homogenization. Localities exist not because of something innate within a particular site in space or inherent to a specific geographical point. Rather, discrete points in an abstract spatial grid have little meaning in themselves, and spaces become localities because of how they are situated in particular networks with other people, places, and social entities. Localities are produced as nodes in the flows of people and ideas, and are thoroughly socially constructed.

In their current uses, therefore, global and local have moved rather far from their traditional connotations of universality and particularity, or of a generalized spatial context versus a specific place. Nor can these terms easily be mapped on to referents that signify homogenization and overwhelming dominance on the one hand, and difference and resistance on the other. Those who have theorized carefully the nature of the global and the local have made it evident that in a very real sense there is no global—since there is always rupture, disjuncture, and variation in what is imagined as the global. In the same manner, not only is it necessary always to be aware of the politics behind the use of the term local, but there is no specific location or site that can be considered as a locality. The local is produced in systematic articulations of social, economic, and cultural processes that may have a far more regional character than a resolutely independent local one or a thoroughly overdetermined global one.

The old meanings of global (universalism) and local (particularism), however, constantly overwhelm the sense in which the terms

45. A related point is that such a view of modernity as multiply and continuously produced allows us to steer away from ethnocentric claims about the end of modernity. I here fully endorse Gaonkar's (1999: 13) observation that 'modernity today . . . no longer has a governing center and master-narratives to accompany it . . . we have to continue to think through the dilemmas of modernity . . . from a transnational and transcultural perspective.'

are currently used. The contradictory excess that characterizes the meanings conveyed in each deployment of local and global threatens to render them meaningless. The traditional spatial referents of these terms—large, homogeneous, universally applicable vs. small, heterogeneous, and particular—jostle with the new significance they have acquired, making them internally contradictory. If the concreteness of the local is only an illusion made real to the extent and in the ways a locality is connected to other localities, and if the meanings people give to such connections, it makes little sense to insist upon the independence or the autonomy of the local. Both global and local are to be understood in terms of the relations they signify. It is in the context of this particular incoherence of terms such as local and global that we propose the concept of regional modernities. Even if the new experience of modernity is about a particular kind of complex relationality and connectedness, it is difficult to support the notion that this connectedness is unfolding at a global scale. The variations in the nature of connections make it necessary to adopt a regional approach to understanding modernity. At the same time, our understanding of regionality needs to be attentive to differences of scale in social and political processes rather than insist on the primacy of a particular subnational or supranational scale.

#### REGIONAL MODERNITIES

We use the term regional to qualify the multiple modernities that were and are being produced. Our deployment of the term is a self-conscious effort to move away from the tyranny of the global or the local, as also from their not-so-interesting juxtapositions such as 'global/local' or, even worse, 'glocal.' 'Regional modernity,' like modernities that are qualified by the terms global or local, has a spatial connotation, but it seeks to map the space between these binary polar extremes, refuses attempts at identifying it with a specific scale or geographical size, and focuses instead on the need to attend to the social networks and flows that give it particular form and content.<sup>46</sup> Although a spatial locution may be important

46. Our use of the term 'regional,' thus, is in stark contrast to its use in earlier writings on regional analysis and by regional scientists. For a review of some of these earlier uses, where region connotes a fixed space, see Bookman (1991).



to define regional in particular contexts and agendas, the attempt to yoke the term to a definite size or scale is as misplaced as attempts that try to pin down the local or the global through purely spatial metaphors. Indeed, it would be appropriate to suggest that there are no places that can be located as the necessarily appropriate referent for the terms 'local,' 'global,' or 'regional': these terms emerge only in a relational form.

Although regional, local, and global all have seemingly spatial reference, none has a *necessary* spatial location. We suggest, however, that the semantic and theoretical move we propose regarding regional permits analysis to proceed without being captured by the endless proliferation of difference that 'local' necessarily produces and in some sense enforces. Regional also breaks up the monopolistic, hegemonic, and monolithic connotations of modernity that global invariably introduces and stabilizes. Instead it denotes the possibility of investigating variable patterns in the production of different modernities. It is precisely because the production of modernities occurs in sites with variable spatial and relational features that our proposal of regional becomes meaningful. Unlike local or global, the term regional denotes levels that span subnational to multinational formations.

We propose regional as a descriptor for modernity not just because of its semantic attractions, as a sort of halfway house for a traveler between the global and the local. Instead, we propose regions also because we consider them the social and discursive sites where the production of modernity occurs. Our proposition draws from and builds on the work of a large number of social scientists who have sought to consider the constitutive effects of political, institutional, and cultural processes upon a region's formation and development. They have argued that the regional is neither reducible to an empirical given, nor merely a 'container' for social processes. It should be seen in terms of the practices of individuals and institutions at a variety of spatial levels.<sup>47</sup>

Our arguments about region emphasize the need to take seriously the variations among the many processes that are often loosely and quickly conjoined together to denote a putative globality. Simply because it is possible to witness and highlight multiple kinds of connections across many different parts of the

47. MacLeod 1998; Murphy 1991; Paasi 1991; Pred 1985; Warf 1990.

globe does not imply that all the connections together constitute an emerging global marketplace or community. In much recent work on globalization, however, it is precisely the inattention to how differences characterize processes cited as part of a new globalization that allows analysts to club them together and classify them as markers of globalization. The interconnections among participants in a chat site on the internet, among viewers of TV programs transmitted to more than a billion people at a time, between individuals and corporations asymmetrically located in economic exchange networks, or tourists who bridge vast distances in a search for the exotic may all denote time-space compression. But because these processes have quite different sources, effects, and trajectories it is important to examine them in their specific regional manifestations rather than view them as the basis of something called globalization.<sup>48</sup> Only by focusing on the 'strategic concentrations' among the 'multiple linkages' that characterize seemingly global processes might it become possible to decode globalization. It is toward this that Ong points when she argues for an 'approach that embeds global processes in a regional formation.'<sup>49</sup>

Chatterjee's argument about modernity fits well with this conceptualization of region: 'There cannot be just one modernity irrespective of geography, time, environment, and social conditions. The forms of modernity will have to vary among different countries depending upon specific circumstances and social practices.'<sup>50</sup> Pred and Watts make a similar point when they approvingly cite Octavio Paz, 'There are as many types of modernities as there are societies.'<sup>51</sup> We agree with their recognition that modernities are multiple, but use the term regional to provide a positive content so as to discuss how modernities assume particular forms in regions.<sup>52</sup>

48. See the recent special issue of *Third World Quarterly* in which several contributors highlight the need to pay attention to the variable processes of articulation that connect regions (Boas and Shaw 1999; Boas, Marchand, and Shaw 1999).

49. Ong 1999: 240.

50. Chatterjee 1997a: 198.

51. Paz cited in Pred and Watts 1992: 1.

52. It may be useful to point out, however, that the phrases 'multiple modernities', and 'alternative modernities' are somewhat empty of meaning. Modernities, by definition, are multiple, and there is little need to talk of multiple modernities if they were not being produced as alternatives.

Chatterjee 1997a: 207) to specify a universe of distinctive non-Western modernities that map onto postcolonial nations and in this vein says, 'it is precisely the cultural project of nationalism to produce a distinctly national modernity.'<sup>53</sup> We would suggest, in response and amplification, that any particular national modernity is but a species of the genus regional modernity. National modernity describes the contingent dominance of political and cultural forces that come together to produce nations in a particular historical period. Regional modernity, thus, is a mid-level concept that allows for geographic divergence, varying temporal rhythms, and institutional differences. It recognizes the influence of historically sedimented social, economic, and spatial structures that shape development.

Regional modernity also describes the different levels of social aggregations at which the cultural unification necessary for the production of modernity takes place. The different terms our authors use in the following essays to qualify modernity—whether it is Skaria elaborating his concept of a colonial or bureaucratic modernity, Subramanian drawing together the elements of a Mukkuvar modernity, or Kumar speaking suggestively of immigrant modernities—the effort is always to specify further the cultural and material politics that is the concomitant of particular regional modernities. Their discussions recognize and emphasize the influence of historically sedimented social, economic, and spatial structures that shape the regional influences within which development occurs.

The recent and powerful discussion of nationalism and patriotism in India by Bayly provides an excellent illustration of our argument. Bayly refutes the idea that Indian nationalism was entirely constructed in dialogue with Western liberal nationalism of the nineteenth century. He suggests instead that 'the particularities of Indian nationalism have to be understood in the context of Indian forms of social organization and ideologies of good governance that pre-date the full Western impact even if they had, in turn, been modified by colonial rule.'<sup>54</sup> In a series of chapters (especially 1–4), that develop a valuable distinction between patriotism and

53. Chatterjee 1997a: 207. For a similar point with regard to Nepal, see Pigg (1992: 512).

54. Bayly 1998: vii.

nationalism, Bayly argues that late nineteenth-century Indian nationalism drew upon and recast some patterns of social relations, sentiments, doctrines, and embodied memories that had come into existence before British rule was established in the subcontinent. He refers to the precursors of Indian nationalism as old patriotisms and political ethics of Indian homelands that assumed a more defined form after the seventeenth century decline of the Mughal Empire and emergence of regional Indian kingdoms.

Bayly's critique of liberal theories of nationalism and its discontents historically anticipates our argument because it points to problems with bifurcating Indian state–society relationship into a local/global dyad where colonial modernity is the global force and local resistance is provided by fuzzy decentralized communities. He is arguing for the recognition of regional formations, of patriotism in his case, that create the social networks and political structures on which both colonial government and nationalist mobilization came to depend after the 1870s. These networks and structures were regional in the double sense of being supralocal and distinctly Indian. They were also seriously transformed by colonialism and nationalism but it would be wrong to argue they were erased or fully replaced by arrangements fashioned entirely in the faithful image of global or even continental models.<sup>55</sup> Bayly's emphasis on the regional and, therefore, on the construction of modernity in non-European locations also stems from a desire to analyse historical change as a dialectic between ideological and material processes.<sup>56</sup>

Given the need to discuss cultural and political–economic aspects of modernity together, our focus on regional modernities is also an attempt to move away from the kind of disciplinary divisions in discussions of the global and the local to which Michael Watts points when he writes about reworking modernity.<sup>57</sup> Watts argues that anthropological work rooted in ethnographic and cultural

55. A similar argument, in respect of China, can be found in Wigen (1999).

56. Bayly 1998: 316.

57. Arjun Appadurai's recent contribution to the debate on globalization, *Modernity at Large*, and the rising tide of interest among economists in the same topic remind us that these analytical and discipline-based separations continue to be pervasive. Reporting on the recent intensive conversation on development and the social sciences, Cooper and Packard (1997: 16) point to a tension between contextualizing and universalizing disciplinary tendencies.

relations tends to be weak in situating local knowledges and meanings on a map of capitalism.<sup>58</sup> Correspondingly, geographers and political scientists often do not incorporate struggles over meaning into the study of late twentieth-century capitalism or globalization. Thus, for Watts the local/global dyad also represents the working out of disciplinary histories. Regional modernities is our conceptual effort to overcome the stultifying influence of disciplinary boundaries identified by Watts.

We would add, however, that reworking modernity by attending to regions is not only a matter of attending to the embeddedness of local forms of capitalism. Recent scholarship has already pointed to the need to deal with 'worldwide facts of colonial and postcolonial coercion... yet not slight the role of parochial signs and values, local meanings, and historical sensibilities.'<sup>59</sup> In counterpoint, Taussig points to the constructed nature of the 'parochial' when he refers to the 'mimesis of the mimesis,' and illustrates it by the example of Cuna women weaving the RCA Victor-dog motif into clothing sold in the United States.<sup>60</sup> In this instance, there is no self-contained or autonomous local, nor a global that is untouched by local processes. We take such observations as pointing toward the need for attempts such as ours: to deploy 'region' to understand how political, economic, and cultural forces articulate to facilitate the production both of local and global processes. Localities, themselves always in a state of production,<sup>61</sup> transform the nature of what is counted as the global only by being aggregated into regional forms. To move the terms of the debate, we need to consider the mechanisms and conditions that are critical to the construction of regions and regional modernities.

The ensuing essays indicate that regions become important when we recognize the enduring importance of the power wielded through state systems and other political institutions in the reworking of modernity. States, for our purposes, need not only be imagined as a locus of national authority but can also be seen as governance structures in which power is increasingly crystallizing

58. Watts 1992a: 15.

59. Comaroff and Comaroff 1993: xiii.

60. Cited in Fox 1997: 66. He provides a useful story about the meanings of Gaudhan nonviolence that traces the relationships between the global and the parochial beyond diffusionist models of change and transformation.

61. Appadurai 1996: 178-9.

around subnational and supranational political formations. The imperatives of trade have facilitated continental alliances like the European Union, the North American Free Trade Agreement, or the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. An important mode of analysis for these phenomena has been to treat the regional political economy as a series of networks.<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, the new Balkanization of Eastern Europe and the emergence of regional political parties in India are but two examples of subnational politics that represent the uneasy co-existence of multiple identities and interests that cohere around the concept of region.<sup>63</sup> As Appadurai says in the context of ethnic strife, in an argument that implicitly endorses our concept of regional modernities

ethnic names and terms become highly susceptible to transnational perturbation... modern state-level forces tend to generate large-scale identities (such as Latino, Scheduled Caste, and Serb) which become significant imagined affiliations for large numbers of persons, many of whom reside across large social, spatial, and political divides.<sup>64</sup>

In all these cases localism or globalization poorly describe the processes at work because they do not adequately illuminate the coalition-building and differentiation that on a graduated scale characterizes regional modernities.

In addition to suggesting that a flexible notion of regions is important to understand the variable spatial loci where modernity is produced, we also claim that regional modernities are constantly in a state of production. In this sense we wish to push further Chatterjee's intuition<sup>65</sup> that non-Western modernity is an incomplete project and that elites in non-Western societies are always engaged in a pedagogical mission that seeks to modernize the rest of the society. We should note that the predicament of incompleteness is not peculiar to non-Western modernities because the signifiers

62. As Bernard (1996: 653) points out, in this approach 'regionalization is... seen as an integral part of the broader process of the globalization of production structures.'

63. A nice illustration of this process of conflict and collaboration is provided in Diawara (1998: 114-19), where he discusses the creation of regional pathways of trade and exchange by West African merchants in the context of globalized structural adjustment programs.

64. Appadurai 1998: 906.

65. Chatterjee 1997b: 31.

power are always constricted, diverted, or overflowing depending on the micro-topography of conduits in a region. Continuities and disjunctures of power, we suggest, are a product of the regional geography of landscapes, institutions, and culture complexes,<sup>70</sup> and it is by attending to these variations that the spread and effects of power may be mapped.<sup>71</sup>

To insist on the regional production of the experience of globalization is precisely to argue for the description of networks, struggles, and differentiated place-making that people recreate in everyday contexts. The National Alliances of Peoples' Movements in India, and the movement for the province of Uttarakhanda in northern India are different manifestations of the regional imaginary. The first is tied primarily to a belief in the common ground shared by those engaged in a struggle against the high modernist projects of the Indian state. The second is more tied to place, but the place-related ties themselves are produced by a belief in the political and economic discrimination faced by those living in Uttarakhanda.<sup>72</sup> To varying degrees the issues these movements raise about development and modernity are circumscribed by regions that are interlocked physical, discursive, or socio-spatial expressions of struggles about place-making.<sup>73</sup> In other cases we

70. Watts (1992b: 31) also recognizes the salience of the region when he talks of three Nigerian regions as 'products of quite different colonial and precolonial histories.' Sivaramakrishnan (1997) provides an example of this from the case of modern colonial forestry in India. His argument about different Bengal regions and their diverse experience of forest conservancy is built on both ecological-geographic and social-political conceptions of the region.

71. Similar points are made in different contexts by Sangren (1995) and Cooper (1994).

72. For a current European example where a similar argument may be found see Lem (1995). A fuller discussion of the different strands of European regionalization can be found in Applegate (1999).

73. This point is in consonance with the recent questioning of teleological and dichotomizing accounts of development in India. In an essay dealing with the first part of the twentieth century, Bose (1997) judiciously shows development emerging from particular combinations of rival nationalist visions that overtake colonial government initiatives. In a companion essay dealing with more recent times Gupta (1997) reminds us that struggles around development in India do not neatly oppose modernity to community, but reveal complex coalitions between cosmopolitan members of international organizations and local social movements.

## 25 Regional Modernities

of modernity are always under debate, in all places and at all times.<sup>66</sup>

The concept of regional modernities also allows us to rethink discussions of power that are so important to the study of globalization and locality. In much extant writing globalization is an expression of the working of 'placeless power'—discourse formations, footloose capital, unaccountable international institutions. Against this formulation the local is identified as the place that makes visible the other face of power: resistance. Alternatively, more nuanced scholarship argues that local cultures, social structures, and environments mediate placeless power and significantly shape the actual consequences of globalization—a line of reasoning that strongly informs the notion of 'reworking modernity.'<sup>67</sup>

Power is surely never placeless. We suggest, however, amending some appropriations of Foucault, that power relations among various social actors are always capillary and nodal, social and institutional.<sup>68</sup> In contrast to Foucault, we would argue that it is impossible to know *a priori* whether it is through institutions that power is constituted or power that constitutes institutions. Indeed, if we think of institutions as social mechanisms that structure future expectations of actors,<sup>69</sup> it may not even be possible to know where institutions begin and their social context shades off. Channels of

66. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Latour (1993) notes that we will never be modern.

67. A similar point about the role of different historically and spatially situated actors in shaping development outcomes is made by Cooper and Packard (1997: 18) when they say, 'development initiatives came about as much through the initiatives of impoverished workers in Jamaica as those of visionaries in London.'

68. Foucault (1983: 222) in his essay on 'The subject and power' suggests that 'one must analyse institutions from the standpoint of power relations, rather than vice versa... [because] the fundamental point of anchorage of the relationships, even if they are embodied and crystallized in an institution, is to be found outside the institution... [p]ower relations are rooted deep in the social nexus not reconstituted 'above' society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of.'

69. See Bates (1989), Calvert (1995), North (1995), and Ostrom (1992) for discussions of institutions and their role in structuring relations among actors. These accounts of institutions have been important in the creation of the new institutionalism, especially as it has come to be known in political science and development studies.

may have to trace the circuits iterated by seasonal migrants whose numbers shrink or swell with agricultural slumps or commodity-led industrial booms. In this sense, we agree with Kelly who argues that regions are produced by 'a reconfiguration of employment patterns, social relationships, cultural identity, and political allegiance.'<sup>74</sup>

Regional modernities, thus, encompass multiple terrains of localization and point toward the search for patterns generated by socio-political and cultural forces as they act to produce localities. It implies that localities are always produced such that they remain nested in larger networks of relationships best understood as regions. The idea that an imagined locality does not map onto a single place has led many to the concept of de-territorialization. This concept<sup>75</sup> has become a powerful tool in the hands of those creating images of the global ecumene.<sup>76</sup> But there is a concurrent re-territorialization that we have to note and examine, especially in relation to the place-referents of the re-territorializing imaginary.

Imaginations about the homeland of people who see themselves living in a diaspora are a valuable case in point. Constructions of home frequently conflate several nested localities: Indians in the US are able to think themselves South Asians, Indians, Maharashtrians, Bombayites, or natives of Thane with greater ease, perhaps, than

their counterparts whose lives remain tied to the tenements and suburban trains of Greater Bombay. Kumar's essay (Part III) on immigrant Indian identities in the diaspora provides a portrait of the workings of the textual imagination in ways that cannot be contained. As he shows how the presumed homogeneity of globalization is shattered precisely in the imagination, he argues that this makes regional modernities always already contested projects. Exploring the expanding discursive terrain of Indian writing in the diaspora with brilliant virtuosity, drawing and contrasting themes always under the surface in the works of Rushdie and Kureishi, Spivak and Chakrabarty, Hall and Appadurai, Kumar is most at ease in drawing unexpected parallels and striking contrasts. His text, invoking themes of dispossession, interstitiality, hybridity, desire, imagination and memory, refuses to cleave to a particular narrative or develop the fiction of living subjects whose lives and experiences can wholly be captured through texts. It constitutes self-conscious evidence about simplifications that become necessary in the construction of representations in the diaspora, representations that can have oppressive, disruptive, or oppositional consequences.

What Kumar is attempting to portray about the production of modernity is insufficiently described by talking about how locality comes into being in a global or transnational public sphere. Instead, we are presented with an interlocking hierarchy of localities that the local/global dyad obscures. The concept of the region enables an explicit discussion of this hierarchy and a simultaneous recognition of how every level in the hierarchy is a product both of contingent construction and historical sedimentation of meanings and institutions. In deploying the term 'regional modernities,' we are attempting to write a history of development encounters without being chained to a modernization discourse, or feeling compelled to produce postmodernist narrative fragments. Our effort is to turn instead to dialogic stories about regional modernities.

Three features of 'regional modernities,' in the sense we deploy the phrase, may, therefore, be emphasized. One, it is more a product of cultural, economic, and socio-political forces than a reflection of points or areas on a spatial grid; as much a result of ongoing processes within the non-Western world as a distinctive socio-cultural formation that emerged with high capitalism in the

74. In an elegant and perceptive article Kelly (1990: 224) uses region as a new way of conceptualizing the urban-rural (read 'global-local' for the purpose of this discussion) relationship where material and cultural flows jointly constitute many regions in Japan as peripheries of a national state and metropolitan culture. Kelly discusses the emergence of part-time and part-family rice farming in Japan. The regional modernity of this phenomenon can be observed at several levels, where the region would be defined by social, physical, or cultural parameters. Thus, inside individual rural families demarcations of authority and responsibility emerge as the modern reorganization of living spaces and domestic work creates new intra-family groups and divisions. Operating on a larger scale, regions can also be geographically deciphered within rural areas in the gendered and generational distribution of farm work across agro-climatic zones. Lastly, we have new referents for intra-national regional modernity when the countryside relates to the city as the place of rice production, where the economic irrationality of surplus rice production can be offset by the cultural-political rationality of producing worthy national citizens (pp. 213-20).

75. *Pace* Deleuze and Guattari 1988.

76. See Soja 1989; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 1996.



West. Two, in contrast to scholars like Appadurai<sup>77</sup> who insist on the newness of recent globalization processes, we insist, in agreement with Bayly,<sup>78</sup> on the historic continuities that mark the emergence of regional modernities. The term also interrogates the easy dichotomization of modernity and tradition and points to the incomplete and diverse ways in which modernity remains at the center of a social imaginary in different parts of the Third World. Three, modernity is alive and well in distinctive forms and with distinctive concerns in non-Western societies across the world. This makes postmodernity a peculiar concern of postcapitalist societies like the US.<sup>79</sup>

We use 'regional modernities' as an organizing concept to explore the contested histories of development and the shifting links between ideas about development in different locations. The experience of development across nation-states indicates that far from entering a postdevelopment era,<sup>80</sup> we seem to be in a period when development has become an object of distributed and decentralized production.<sup>81</sup> Urban intellectuals, power elites, forest-dwelling tribes, 'first nations,' poor dryland farmers, and their various interlocutors like NGOs, international consultants, petty

77. Appadurai 1996.

78. Bayly 1998.

79. See the introduction to Kaplan (1996), who remarks on the political freight and stakes associated with discussions of modernity, postmodernity, and postmodernity.

80. See Escobar (1995) for an elaboration of the notion.

81. Consider the construction of super-highways. Such roads have always been emblematic of the implementation of large-scale development in hitherto remote parts of the world. To index the effects of such development projects by the number of miles of super-highways constructed would be to miss the highly variant political coalitions, economic transformations, and social disruptions that are the concomitant of all development projects. To describe the wider consequences of a generalized discursive formation called development that the construction of a super-highway might index we have to document the unstable micro-politics of its performance. It is important, therefore, to scrutinize more closely the details of the transformations experienced in the places where development occurs. This may be the reason for the insistence by some scholars on the need to look at how local cultures process the flows of global capital and modernity (see Pred and Watts 1992). The difference between the local and the global is, of course, just one level of differentiation in examining international development activities and their consequences.

officialdom, and local politicians have joined in the enterprise of castigating, celebrating, and rethinking development. Ironically, with the growth in the numbers of purveyors, consumers, and publicists, the scope and activities of the development industry have also increased rapidly.

### THE RADICAL CRITIQUE OF DEVELOPMENT

Our discussion of region establishes the ground for investigating some of the recent literature on development. We focus especially on analyses of development discourses that see development as a project that took birth in the North and has then been used to victimize populations in the South. This literature flows from the attempt to use Foucauldian and other poststructuralist insights to critique the development project. In its focus on the global and the local, in its identification of these terms with particular idioms of domination and resistance, and in its relative neglect of the nation-state it is emblematic of precisely those weaknesses that we wish to highlight and address through the concept of regional modernities.

Scholars in development studies have long documented how social-structural features like class and spatial features like regional asymmetries have distorted the distributional effects of development. It is now clear that development objectives are also redefined as they travel from the rarefied drafting rooms of international agencies to the realpolitik of national and subnational delivery systems, or as they are imagined by analysts hired by international agencies on the basis of experiences in the 'field.' Thus, its power to frame thought notwithstanding, the discourse of development has always been riven by debate. The tremendous energies engaged in producing development, unleashed through the tension between its desirability and challenges to its operations and implementation, are evident in the rapidity with which goals of development have shifted, especially in recent years. Planning, growth, growth with equity, basic needs, participation, appropriate technology, alternative development, sustainability, liberalization, good governance, social capital, and indigenous knowledge are only some of the shibboleths that for varying periods have colonized the lexicons of development practitioners and theorists alike. Each marks a phase shift. The curious characteristic of such shifts—evidence of the

remarkable absorptive powers of development—is that instead of dying out, earlier views become part of an increasing unwieldy conceptual formation.<sup>82</sup>

In contrast to these internalist critiques of development which accept the need for development even as they seek ways to improve achievements in its name, the new radical critiques have focused on discourses of development.<sup>83</sup> They suggest that the very processes that were supposed to deliver humanity from oppression and injustice may be at the core of continuing dependency and exploitation. They highlight the tremendous homogeneity of development encounters, evident in such iconic expressions of development as large dams, super-highways, project-based implementation, green revolutions, industrial complexes, and planned cities. The objective of such criticisms is nothing less than exposing the complicity of development with the power of national ruling elites and the hegemony of international reformist ideologies.

New critics of development<sup>84</sup> have important differences among them to which we attend later, but they all denounce the presumed homogeneity of the developmentalist imagination, suggesting that it leads development practice into predictable channels and uniform solutions to diverse problems in manifold contexts. They trace this homogeneity to epicenters in such US-dominated institutions as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). These institutions have formulated and empowered a particular view of what development stands for and requires. For Sachs, development is not just an oppressive frame of reference guiding the policies of developed countries toward the South. It also embodies a set of assumptions that 'reinforce the occidental worldview' to such an extent that 'people everywhere have been caught up in a Western perception of reality.'<sup>85</sup> Esteva echoes this sentiment

82. For discussions pertinent to our argument, see Cooper and Packard (1997) and Bardham (1993).

83. This critique is present in its most developed form yet in the works of Escobar (1995) who selectively borrows from Foucault to frame his criticisms of the development discourse. See Agrawal (1996) for a critical review of some development writings animated by a poststructuralist idiom and tone.

84. Escobar 1984, 1988, 1991, 1995; Ferguson [1990] 1994; Apfel-Marglin and Marglin 1990; Parajuli 1991; Sachs 1992; Slater 1992

85. Sachs 1992: 5.

when he proclaims, 'The metaphor of development gave global hegemony to a purely Western genealogy of history, robbing people of different cultures of the opportunity to define the forms of their social life.'<sup>86</sup>

This focus on a global discourse of development in what has come to be glossed as the 'poststructuralist critique of development' contains debilitating elements of the structuralist logic it grows out of and wishes to transcend. James Ferguson, one of the pioneering authors in this genre, writes, 'structures can take on life of their own that soon enough overtake intentional practices... the most important political effect of a planned intervention may occur unconsciously behind the backs or against the wills of 'planners' who may seem to be running the show.'<sup>87</sup> Escobar, similarly, tells us that development must be understood as a discourse by looking not at the elements of the discourse but by looking at the systematic relations that are established among them.<sup>88</sup>

It is no surprise, then, that such a structural and relational description of development starts at a historical juncture when the structure and the relationship within its parts can be shown to have crystallized and become clear. Escobar seems to be arguing that development emerges as a cultural formation from the structure of the conjuncture between various prior formations.<sup>89</sup> Even these prior formations are of recent origin and mostly traced to the middle of the twentieth century. He identifies them as the consolidation of US military supremacy after the Second World War, the division of the world into Cold War camps, the emergence of science and technology as a transformative ideology for agriculture-based societies, and theories of welfare economics that demarcated a set of economic institutions as modifiable by public policy.<sup>90</sup>

86. Esteva 1992: 9.

87. Ferguson [1990] 1994: 17, 20.

88. Escobar 1995: 40. To mention scholars such as Escobar, Ferguson, Esteva, or Sachs as representatives of the 'poststructuralist' moment in studies of development is not to deny the substantial differences across their writings. One significant difference lies in the yearning for a postdevelopment era that characterizes the work of Escobar, and by which Ferguson is scarcely affected.

89. Marshall Sahlins (1981) introduces and exemplifies the notion of the 'structure of the conjuncture.'

90. Escobar 1995: 35–40.



Identifying development post-1950s as vitally different from colonial policies that were somehow an expression of the will of imperialist states is crucial to the argument that development in the postcolonial Third World is an imposed discourse without agents.<sup>91</sup> Both Ferguson and Escobar build their powerful arguments very self-consciously along these lines.<sup>92</sup> Their critique cites dismally regular failures of development projects to meet stated goals. They show how such projects produce other effects: unintended extension of state capacity and its legitimation, instantiation of asymmetric relations of power, and the undermining of challenges to the status quo.

Earlier critics of development, in the face of its failures, attempted to identify alternative strategies. The new radical critics follow a lock, stock, and barrel approach. Some of them advise that the very concept of development be abandoned, together with the institutions, experts, projects, and ideologies that give it shape and substance. They wish to inaugurate a new global postdevelopment era.<sup>93</sup> Others prefer instead, an elaboration of the effects development produces and refuse on principle to explore alternatives.

Among the new critics of development, the works of Sachs, Esteva, and Escobar<sup>94</sup> share some common problems. Their discussion of the origins of development as a beast springing fully formed from the forehead of Truman in 1949 is implausibly abrupt and ignores the complex genealogies that have contributed to its makeup.<sup>95</sup> As Ferguson notes it was not Truman's speech in 1949

91. Critical to this point is our view of agency that we elaborate later in this essay.

92. Ferguson [1990] 1994: xiv-xv; Escobar 1995: 68-73.

93. Ferguson, we should say in qualification of this assertion, participates in this argument more selectively than others, and is willing to acknowledge the colonial antecedents of some aspects of the development discourse. More recently, he (1999) has also expressed dissatisfaction with the poststructuralist critique of development in a way that comes close to our position. We appreciate his efforts to point out the similarities between his position and the one outlined in this paper.

94. Sachs 1992; Esteva 1992; and Escobar 1995.

95. See Cooper 1997, Ludden 1992; Cowen and Shenton 1995; Washbrook 1997; and Sivaramakrishnan 1999: ch. 8. Development is more appropriately and fruitfully considered as a continuous intellectual project, an ongoing

that sent Africa and other colonial territories to the "back of the queue,"... conquest, colonial rule, and centuries of predatory violence and economic exploitation saw to it that they were already there. "Development" was laid on top of already existing geographical hierarchies.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, for reasons to do with the political complexities of colonial encounters where development was created in distinct regional discourses, views that regard development as an imposition of the West are likely to be empirically unsustainable.<sup>97</sup> Such views are also hard to connect theoretically to Foucault.<sup>98</sup> It is worth pointing out that for Foucault power always possesses multiple faces, is never simply domination, and is seldom exercised only institutionally.<sup>99</sup> The idea that development is a Northern imposition can only be sustained by holding at bay the immense evidence on the polyvocal, polylocal nature of development performances and appropriations. Almost all the papers in this volume emphatically demonstrate the multiple sources of developmental ideas.

material process that bears a complex genealogical link to late colonialism. These historical links have been explored by a number of different scholars (Arendt 1987; Cowen and Shenton 1995; and Watts 1995). A historical approach that traces the origins of development to the colonizing process would need to shade and nuance the story of development to take into account the shifts and modulations in the project that occurred in the 1945-95 period. But the production of the discourse of development, it can be argued, was well under way by the turn of the century, certainly in places like India and the Indies. Ferguson 1999: 379. For similar assertions in the context of South Asian

writings on development, see Ludden (1992), Rose (1997), and Gupta (1998).  
97. This point is effectively made and illustrated by Rofel (1997: 155-9) who says, 'we must... remain wary of creating unified readings out of local Euro-American practices and allowing them to overpower interpretations elsewhere... polysemous histories are located in several sites in the interpretations of scientific management by local factory managers: in architectural histories rooted in the early years after liberation, as well as the pre-revolutionary era, and finally in workers' memories of past spatial relations... as a result modernity in China does not neatly replicate the hypothetical transnational—that is, European—model.'

98. We make this observation in light of the efforts of several new critics of development, especially Escobar (1995) to find the theoretical wellspring of their arguments in Foucault's writings.

99. Foucault 1978: 95-6; 1977: 122.

The radical critique of development also troubles because it conjures up a particular and singular image of the relationship between the global and the local. It is a picture in which the global is the homogenizing juggernaut of domination, and the local the crucible in which variable forms of resistance are given birth. In this vision, the World Bank, the IMF, and the producers of theoretical writings on development construct and impose particular visions of development on the world, and residents of indigenous, marginal, local spaces resist such impositions with variable results. It is worth mentioning that in this form the new radical critique of development recalls an earlier model of core-periphery relations postulated by scholars belonging to the 'dependency school.' They saw the movement of western capital, an interlocking state system, and unequal terms of trade to be the source of exploitation.<sup>103</sup> The focus in the new critique is on discourses rather than on economic relations, but the direction and nature of the flow of influence remain substantially similar.

Thus, there are troublesome zones that new radical critiques of development share.<sup>104</sup> But it is proper to differentiate between at least two subgroups within this radical critique, each vulnerable to a different criticism.

If the arguments of these critics are taken seriously one might seek from them alternative forms of engagement that could lead to social change that is more in favor of the dispossessed. But one subgroup of the new radical critics of development refuses to outline general programs of political action. The lack of a political program rushes these radical critics of development headlong into

100. For a recent discussion of these writings in the context of globalization, see Hoogvelt (1997).

101. Consider, for example, another tension. Ferguson (1990) suggests that the real consequences of development projects such as roads, entrenchment of coercive state capacities, and establishment of new infrastructure can be considered as unintended. Yet, he also believes that international donors and aid agencies, when designing projects with the help of state officials, mistakenly view them as apolitical. But if state agencies and officials are political creatures and entities, one must be careful before seeing entrenchment of state power and extension of the capacity of state agencies as unintended effects of development. Indeed, state actors interested in development, because they are political animals, may view development quite self-consciously as an instrument to extend state capacities.

a paralyzing wall of inaction.<sup>102</sup> Ferguson, for example, prefers to talk about the effects and the mode of operation of the apparatus of development without 'providing any sort of prescriptions.' He asserts that his book 'never intended or presumed to prescribe.'<sup>103</sup> Such a principled refusal to advocate for others must be respected. At the same time the unwillingness to visualize a program of action, especially on a subject as implicated in livelihoods as development, ultimately stems from an inertia-inducing stance that implicitly assumes 'centers of calculation' to be the sources of agency,<sup>104</sup> and a strict separation between those localities where development is experienced, and other locations from which it is criticized. The consequence, then, is the concession of political responsibility to those situated in 'centers of calculation.' Ultimately, this concern about political inaction forces even Ferguson to outline a sketchy and limited statement about supporting 'typically non-state forces and organizations that challenge the existing dominant order,' and 'counter-hegemonic alternative points of engagement.'<sup>105</sup>

The other subgroup develops alternative politics in greater detail. A yearning for a postdevelopment era marks their arguments. But this yearning is unrealistic about the limits of pragmatic politics, ignores the historical consequences of similar aspirations for utopias, and remains unfair in assessing the multiple forms of development. Escobar, for example, turns to grassroots movements, local knowledge, indigenous peoples, and the power of popular protests in his search for a postdevelopment era.<sup>106</sup> He focuses on hybridity as the metaphor to denote the political responses that are necessary to replace development. Esteva talks about a 'new commons' where the laws of economics and scarcity do not operate and suggests that common men on the margins are likely to lead the way out of development.<sup>107</sup> Rahnema finds the

102. Agrawal 1996.

103. Ferguson [1990] 1994: 279.

104. 'Centers of calculation' is a term we borrow from Latour (1987) who uses it to discuss the institutions in which imperial science was produced. In the context of development it conveys the same sense of an imbalance in favor of powerful First World institutions and passive Third World regions.

105. Ferguson [1990] 1994: 286, 287

106. Escobar 1995.

107. Esteva 1992: 22.

reason for hope in 'traditional and vernacular ways of interaction and leadership.'<sup>108</sup>

These solutions from the new critics of development are founded on the recognition that the problems to which development has been portrayed as an answer are 'real.' They are intended to alter the conditions that existing development solutions have failed to change. But whether the proposed new strategies can be more effective in changing the lives of those who have borne the lash of modernity on their bare backs<sup>109</sup> is not particularly obvious. Apart from the dubious distinctions to which one must resort in drawing lines that favor indigeneity, locality, non-party politics, and NGOs, it is not even clear that these concepts and social formations possess the kind of transformative capacities their advocates believe them to have. A more careful assessment of development strategies would not only consider the multitude of manners in which it is produced, but also recognize the emancipatory politics it can encourage.

One of the most important development ideas to emerge in recent years is that of indigenous knowledge. Brodt's paper (Part III) focuses on how indigenous knowledges come into being. Her discussion explodes the belief that development discourses are imposed from above. She shows the role played by actors in the locality, in the region, and within state structures in the generation of what is later conceptualized and reified as indigenous knowledge. Brodt notes the uneven distribution of knowledge across differently situated actors, and in so doing emphasizes the power/knowledge relationship. But since her engagement is with 'indigenous knowledge,' often glossed as the knowledge of the impoverished or the marginal, she exposes the differences within the field of even such knowledges. Her emphasis on knowledge as the product of local experimentation with ideas derived from all manner of sources is a useful corrective to views that see it as an imposition.

This recent critique of development also neglects the different modernities that have emerged in various parts of the world, except as a reflection of discourses popularized by international funding agencies and Western scholars of development. Regional modernities emerging out of the varied histories of colonialism,

108. Rahnama 1992: 127.

109. We are indebted to Anuraj Kumar for this metaphor.

colonization, and nation-building have powerfully shaped experiences of development.<sup>110</sup> Consider the example of rural development projects in the different political contexts of single-party socialist, multi-party democratic, and authoritarian regimes. The design of these projects, the experiences of their implementation, and the distributive outcomes that attended them have traced different paths. Such variations in the culture and politics of development at the local level can be understood only by attending to the differences in regional modernities that are often embodied in state policies.

Some aspects of these differences are visible when we contemplate the regionally variant development policies of the nation-state implicit in the experience recounted by Prashad (Part I), Skaria (Part II), and Robbins (Part III).<sup>111</sup> Prashad's concern is the politics around urban land and housing in India, especially in the formative years of the 1950s and the 1960s. He locates the regional modern as well as 'the housing question' in the politics of class cultures. Drawing on this idea, and surveying the politics in the early years of the nation, he identifies particular kinds of rights with the interest of different classes: the right to shelter with the interests of the homeless, and the right to property with those of the bourgeoisie. Given the alliances upon which the modern Indian state was and is founded, he suggests it was a foregone conclusion that the housing question would be resolved in favor of those who claimed the right to property. Nonetheless, the process whereby this particular resolution came into force was intensely political.

110. For example, a recent study of urban development in Bogota (Colombia) has effectively shown how the construction of a modern national capital took shape through complex coalitions between international donors and regional elites with the latter leaving their distinctive stamp on the whole process. The precise projects undertaken in the modernization of Bogota reflected more the self-fashioning of an urban elite, and their vision of urban modernity, than any plan thrust upon them by US agencies (see Everett 1995: 45-50). Somewhat earlier, and in another context, Bates (1983) points to the distinctive politics of redistribution in many African countries that left the impress of the state on peasantry in the name of modernization and development.

111. Again, the regional variations within India are evident in the descriptions of development politics that many of the papers in this volume attempt. See especially the portraits by Klingsmith (Part I) and Sinha and Subramanian (Part II).

We see a very different face of the nation-state and politics of development in the Dangs, the region from where Skaria draws his story of development. In a brilliant set of suggestive reflections, he explores the regional politics of the Dangs through the medium of the Dangs Darbar, a royal gathering of Dangi chiefs institutionalized by the British and continued by the Indian state despite Mrs Gandhi's abolition of the Privy Purses in the late 1960s.<sup>112</sup> Thoroughly historicizing development, Skaria draws connections and highlights contrasts between the nature of the colonial and bureaucratic national modernities within which the Darbar is to be located over time. Neither, he suggests, escapes the primitivism of development. His paper, as Moore points out in his commentary, produces a fusion of cultural politics and political economy that is shared by several other papers in this volume, and must be a hallmark of all attempts to articulate regional modernities.

Where Prashad and Skaria look mainly at how development-related politics of the nation-state intersected with particular regional politics of development, Robbins focuses his attention on the constitution, permeability, and self-image of the state itself, in part by focusing on a particular forestry official. Like Brodt's paper about the multiple locations where indigenous knowledge is produced, Robbins also provides an effective lens into environmental narratives of access and control, degradation and rescue. In contrast to Prashad and Skaria, Robbins's paper introduces how regional modernity and politics unfold in the form of discursive tropes within the institutional bureaucratic space of the nation-state.

These three essays, among others in this volume, provide examples of how the literatures on globalization and development alter when it comes to treating the nation-state or other intermediate structures between what they see as the global and the local. Scholars of globalization have yet to move beyond the local/global poles in a meaningful way. Even when they have recognized that the local does not emerge autonomously but always in connection with other localities or in articulation with forces that have a long spatial reach, they do not theorize the particular and systematic ways in which such articulations occur.

112. Privy Purses were stipends to royal houses in India, annual payments from the Indian government until 1969, as compensation for the kingdoms held before Independence.

In a similar fashion, radical critics of development see it as a global discourse that originates in Western institutions and is, then, exported through multiple channels of transmission to sites of application in the Third World. The sites where development is applied and the people that such sites contain are seen as victims of development. A strong version of development discourse that sees such discourse as being produced in international institutions and as producing social subjection also undermines attempts to attend to mediating structures such as the nation-state or other social locations that form sites for the production of development. Almost all the essays in this volume show that an understanding of development as originating in the West not only produces an impoverished sense of how development and modernity are linked, but it also refuses to recognize the actions of literally countless millions of those outside the West who constantly shape and produce development.

The key mid-level structures that exemplify the region in the context of development are the different forms taken by the nation-state. In directing our engagement with writings on globalization and on development along a somewhat circumscribed path—their vision of the connections between the local and the global—has allowed us to pick other themes as well, but a discussion of the nation-state in relation to the emergence of regional modernities permits the clearest articulation of these two provocative literatures, usually thought distinct.

#### NATION-STATE AS REGION

Those pursuing a poststructuralist analysis of development discourses find sometimes that the state is strengthened in the implementation of development, in the very failures of development projects. This strengthening of the state takes place, Ferguson would argue, not because of the intent behind the actions of subjects, but in the systematic nature of the social reality that results from the actions of these subjects: an unintended consequence.<sup>113</sup> This simple cause and effect relationship between development discourse and unintended state building is untenable. It may be more fruitful to see certain historically emerging state formations

113. Ferguson [1990] 1994: 18.

as accompanied by scientific and developmental worldviews that serve such formations.<sup>114</sup> Further, the strengthening of states may also be accompanied by processes that strengthen those upon whom states seek to impose their will.

Arguments about the relationship between the nation-state, international development agencies, and development discourses need to recognize the changing character of this relationship. There have been, in broad terms, two main phases of development practices and discourse in the post-Second World War era that coincide with a major shift in the global political economy. The first phase was that of international Keynesianism and state-mediated capitalism, Fordist production, American international dominance, and the decolonization and emergence of the Third World. Institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF worked in this period with postcolonial states to create and further development-related policies. The second period is the deregulated neo-liberal capitalism that emerged during the late 1970s, gained force with Thatcher-Reaganomics and the decline of the Soviet Union, and is well with us.<sup>115</sup> This period is often characterized as having flexible production and footloose capital.<sup>116</sup> In the 1990s, the Second World was dismantled, the Third World differentiated into newly industrialized countries, and a Fourth World is constantly poised at the edge of disaster. In this latter period, international institutions have used the idioms of decentralization and participation to argue for a dismantling of the state.<sup>117</sup>

Once we realize the shift in the global political economy that has taken place since the 1980s, we can appreciate that the nation state was always a lynchpin of development in the first phase. The proliferation of government departments and their field offices, ministries, and related public sector undertakings was central to

114 Scott (1998) provides a comparative treatment of this topic, that is also instructive in the issue of state autonomy and discursive formations.

115 Moore (1995: 2; Peet and Wats 1996: 20–3).

116 The consequence for patterns of foreign aid in this period has been that post-war development assistance has grown, but has declined rapidly after the 1980s as a proportion of total resource transfers. This means that the second period discards a massive wealth from available to private sources of development funds. See Colclough (1993: 23–8) for details.

117 For a discussion of the emergence of decentralization as a shaping theme in development politics, see Agrawal (1997a).

development planning that often took the form of state-led industrialization and large-scale area development projects. The strengthening of the state in this phase took place with the support of international agencies, and the United States and the Soviet Union alike. It is in the second phase of development practices and discourse that there is a dramatic shift in the role assigned to the national state, especially when we witness the concurrent emphasis on alternative development<sup>118</sup> and the need to give free rein to market forces. Arguments about state expansion being an unintended instrument effect of development can plausibly be made only for the second phase. In the first phase, expansion of state capacities in the service of development was necessarily an intended effect.

Much work on globalization is also rather inattentive to the nation-state. On the one hand, theorists of globalization see tremendous variation that they attribute to differences in the many sites where modernity is being produced. At the same time, they see the nation-state as a less than significant actor in the production of these multiple forms of modernity, besieged as it is by transnational flows of people, ideas, and capital, and subnational challenges to its authority. But it seems scarcely credible that the nation-state, its agencies and personnel, and other national level actors have ceased to be significant players in the production of localities, or the production of variable modernities in local sites.<sup>119</sup> Empirical investigation of what are called globalization processes more often reveals that globalized supervision and control of economic processes become localized not by bypassing the state but rather through the agency of the state and of locally-based powerful social forces.<sup>120</sup>

118 Veltmeier (1997).

119 Garrett (1995), for example, questions those writings on globalization that postulate consistent domestic effects because of increasing exposure to trade and capital mobility. He suggests that the political power of the left and the strength of organized labor within the nation-state continue to have a marked bearing on macroeconomic policy. For OECD countries, Thygesen (1997) suggests there is no convincing proof that increasing international exchanges have been responsible for such domestic effects as de-industrialization, a growing gap in income distribution, or the contraction of social policies, or for variations in these effects.

120 Bennett (1996: 657).

To address some of these weaknesses in the literatures on globalization and development, we suggest that it is necessary to attend both to the nation-state, and to the regional production of modernities. We propose that the ideational and material aspects of development come together in the construction and the legitimation of the modern state. By serving as the arena for the pursuit of growth, democracy, and a single nation, development has linked the progressive state with the economic, political, and cultural programs implied in this three-part goal. Efforts of those who led liberation movements during specific moments of colonial rule were aimed at an independence that would secure growth, stable political organization, and cultural unity. Development, as the index of a desired modernity, was throughout implicated in a political discourse of national statism. In all locations, development came to be marked by the specific combinations of state projects aimed at growth, achievement of coherent political form, and/or cultural unity.

In India, for example, the development ideologies and priorities of the late colonial state were shaped significantly by its place in the geopolitical interests of British colonialism,<sup>121</sup> shifts in the regional economy, and the relationship between nationalist and colonialist politics.<sup>122</sup> The transformative potential of the commitment to universal democracy and planned development after independence was muted nonetheless, by the shape of the legal structures and bureaucratic apparatus of control that India's new rulers inherited from the British.<sup>123</sup> The nationalist program of development that was initiated considered the nation-state as the most significant actor in creating a new India, and development planning to be the instrument that would allow Indians to harvest the fruits of a benign development process. The consolidation of state-centric development in India, the changes that took place in the contours of development orientations beginning from the 1980s, and the variations within the territorial confines of the Indian nation-state cannot be understood by seeing development simply as the reflection of a global process writ regionally, or the

121. Washbrook 1997:49.

122. Bose and Jalal 1998.

123. For the massive reliance of the Indian constitution on the Government of India Act of 1935, see Washbrook (1997:37). A more specific sectoral instance of forest law and colonial legacies is discussed in Sivaramakrishnan (1995).

state simply in charge of promoting development and extending authority.

At least two papers in the following pages show the intimate, explicit, and intended links between the state as the main producer of development, and programs of development initiated in its first phase. Klingensmith's paper in Part I about the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), India's Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and Abraham's paper (Part II) about the Asian-African Conference of 1955 are written with different objectives. But they both agree on the crucial and self-important place that the nation-state arrogated to itself in developing visions of modernity. The inception and implementation of these programs was aimed precisely to legitimize the postcolonial state as the prime agent of development.

Klingensmith's paper establishes that even in the context of such likely projects as large dams, the kind of borrowing of development ideology that took place was ineluctably shaped by the evolving interests and desires of politicians and technocrats in India. The relationship between the Indians involved in the DVC and their TVA counterparts was less of tutelage; instead it was one that was used to support a variety of different claims on authority and resources. The range of claims that were made is truly astonishing; from the cultivators, supported by local politicians, who refused to pay irrigation levies, to the DVC officials who saw in it means to garner prestige, to national level politicians who viewed the DVC as the key to state-led development. The intended effects were related to state strengthening; the unintended effects more to the appropriations, corruptions, and manipulations of state objectives.

Abraham's paper elaborates a somewhat different genealogy of power in relation to development. In the context of space research, national development was inextricably bound with national security, and both with the postcolonial state. Elaborating this relationship through a fascinating story of espionage and discovery, Abraham clearly brings home the valence that national planners and scientists attached to the state leading the multifarious enterprise that is development. The leadership of the state can be seen in its organization of time and space, instantiation of boundaries, and orderliness of architecture. But juxtaposed to these intended modernizing effects of state-led modernity stand the signs



of the recalcitrant 'immodern' that can be transformed only through recourse to violence.

The second phase of development, manifest in structural adjustment programs in various countries, shows again the usefulness of regional modernities in thinking about the process. Consider two instances. An interesting shift seems to be occurring in the relationship between political reform and economic reforms when one looks at some countries in Latin America and in South Asia comparatively. In Bolivia, Mark Robinson<sup>124</sup> shows us, structural adjustment programs went along with the rapid rise of a technocratic neo-liberal elite government supported by World Bank ideas in favor of a strong central government working for swift and substantial economic reforms. The 1994 Law of Popular Participation in that country is working to dilute the centralized culture of governance that has really emerged in the second phase of development. India's comparable 73rd Constitutional Amendment mandating Panchayati Raj in all states, passed in 1993, works not only to strengthen earlier attempts at devolution but also to provide new powers to the central government for direct political communication with regions by circumventing provincial governments. Here, structural adjustment has a very different relationship to political reform that cannot be understood outside a regional Indian modernity and the political negotiations in a putatively federal form of government.

We would also argue that structural adjustment policies constrain the political agenda of nation-states engaged in sweeping macro-economic reforms. They reduce the scope of intra-national discussion on national planning. A political sphere, thus, partially emptied of economic issues is filled by an expanding realm of identity politics. As identity becomes a major factor in formal politics it becomes more relevant to study regionally distinct modernities as they are manifested in middle-class culture—with its combination of corporate assurance and expanding civic participation, new kinds of production and trade, and distinct social movements caught up in regional struggles. To understand development processes that unfold within nation-states, therefore, we need to understand them as a consequence of how efforts of multiple actors came together in diverse arenas within the region.

124. Robinson 1998

The essays by Sinha and Subramanian (Part II) both provide hints of the multiplicity of actors that come together in diverse arenas within a region, and how actors involved in distinct social movements can get caught up in regional struggles. Sinha takes us to a landscape familiar for its long history of social movements—the forests in the Uttar Pradesh Himalaya in India. He focuses on the Chipko movement. Locating his project contrastingly to those who claim that development is dead and that it should be replaced by an alternative politics based on social movements, Sinha argues that in fact social movements often find their energies in pursuing the goals that have always been espoused by believers in development. Providing a window into the strategies and objectives of many of the actors related to the Chipko movement, Sinha argues that modernity is alive and well in many parts of the Third World, and that it is constructed in the context of the desires of specific regional actors rather than by the theoretical abstractions presented in development narratives. The radical development critique, Sinha would argue, is one such abstract development narrative.

Where Sinha situates his study in the northern geography of the subcontinent, Subramanian moves us to the southern tip of the country in the district of Kanyakumari. She provides a rich portrait of the cultural politics of modernization that brought together the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party and the local low-caste Catholic fishers as uneasy electoral allies. In the process she forces an examination of the strange intersections of narratives of Dravidianism, Hindu nationalism, developmentalism, and environmentalism. The outcomes in this case can only be understood by attending carefully to the politics of the region and the locality. As in the papers by Berry and Klingsmith, we see the actors in this story making claims to multiple identities and sources of power. The two essays by Sinha and Subramanian are concrete illustrations and elaborations of what we earlier called interconnected and networked hierarchies of localities. Their discussions uncover the regional politics that the local/global dyad obscures, and shows that is not reducible directly to any national or statist visions of development or modernity.

It is useful to remember here that globalization processes may accentuate certain kinds of cultural heterogeneity and aggregate them.<sup>125</sup> A complementary point follows from the growing

125. Kelly 1998.



scepticism about market triumphalism accompanied by Western models of democracy, as being the panacea for societies where the heavy-handed developmental state is perceived to be in retreat. As White suggests, 'autonomous state capacity depends heavily on the presence of institutional coherence in the constitutional arrangements for the distribution and use of political power, in the relations between different sections of the bureaucratic apparatus, and in the nature of party systems in political society.'<sup>126</sup> The resulting discussion of 'embedded autonomy' or 'inclusive embeddedness'<sup>127</sup> also underscores the importance of regional modernities by showing how state capacity and its constellation of political institutions are shaped by regionally specific patterns in the construction of state-society relations.<sup>128</sup>

#### STORIES OF DEVELOPMENT

The multiplication of relevant actors in development (state officials, NGOs, grassroots development agencies, villagers, politicians), the differences even within these cursorily identified groups, and the divergences in the processes of development that their goals and strategies introduce forcefully remind us of the impossibility of looking at development through a singularizing lens. For our purposes this means that even where development has become linked to international discourses of conservation, human rights, public health, and economic stabilization, projects and attempts to develop remain a temporally and spatially bounded theater in which whole episodes of development may be played out as a revelatory crisis. We use the idiom of performance wittingly, to serve as reminder that development is most fruitfully studied at the several loci of its practice, and in the multiple genres of its enactment. An advocacy of the histories of doing rather than an

126. White 1998: 30.

127. Evans 1996; Leftwich 1996; White 1998.

128. A good example of this point is provided by the study of welfare administration as a major feature of the Indian state by Jayal (1999) who shows, using the example of calamity relief, that the regional state is a crucial arena for shaping development action as it is forced to negotiate and translate between strident local assertion and diffuse national benevolence. Here the region acts as an intermediate level between local and global perceptions of calamity and concrete development strategies for tackling it.

attention to discourse formations separates the thrust of our argument from that in the works of the radical critics of development. We are distinguishing here between analysis based on the agency of historically grounded actors—individuals and institutions—and the presumption that the discourse of development, as a field of power relations, generates the subjectivities informing the micropolitics that concern us. Foucault provides a salutary note of caution that we take seriously: 'One should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with "dominators" on one side and "dominated" on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies.'<sup>129</sup>

Both the terms partially and the term strategies are crucial here. Arguably the Foucauldian formulation of power and resistance can be extended, in ethnographic contexts, along the lines suggested by Gupta and Ferguson who point out that 'practices that are resistant to a particular strategy of power are thus never innocent of or outside power, for they are always capable of being tactically appropriated and redeployed within another strategy of power, always at risk of slipping from resistance against one strategy of power into complicity with another.'<sup>130</sup> But to grant that power works through strategies that are multi-form, and partially realized in relations of domination, is to create the possibility for a theory of resistance that is not entirely encapsulated by particular fields of power.<sup>131</sup> This brings us to the question of agency in an effort to grapple with the post-Foucauldian subject.<sup>132</sup>

We suggest that the expression 'strategies of power' requires attention to a particular concept of agency, one that can come to terms with the notion of strategies. The idea of strategies without authors is particularly dissatisfying in the context of development.

129. Foucault 1980: 142, emphasis added.

130. Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 18–19.

131. One such theory has been worked out compellingly by Scott (1990). At least one contributor to Gupta and Ferguson (1997) presents a reading of Foucault in debt to Scott and close to our position. Rofel (1997: 174) says that the project of Foucault is to 'excavate—and hold in tension—the discursive production of subjectivities and equally the ways in which ordinary people embrace, appropriate, and transform these as they recast their embodiment of past practices'.

132. We are grateful to Angelique Haugerud for the phrase

Without a relationship with authors, it becomes particularly difficult to connect strategies with effects. These considerations turn us towards a theory of agency that is grounded in discussions of lived experience. Livelihoods and identities are constructed in historically formed regions of understanding and action. The micropolitics of these processes have to be viewed from multiple locations.

Considerations of de-territorialization, political immediacy, and collective value do not answer the question of agency which requires, as Homi Bhabha suggests, an articulation of effect and circuit of action and communication that so radically resists a "return" to the subject.<sup>133</sup> To ask this question is not to advocate a return to an autonomous, fully formed subject. Nor is it to advocate that to anchor strategies to agents, it is necessary to appeal to knowing subjects who are capable of comprehending all the unfolding implications of their actions in relation to the social contexts they inhabit. Rather, we advocate a subject who is always in the process of formation, but who, nonetheless, is also an actor. The agents we have in mind define interests and relate interests to actions, always in specific contexts, admittedly in an imperfect fashion. Their stories may define subjective interests at a point in time but over time their stories are also always struggling to control changes in the definitions of interest.

It is only through such a redefinition of the concept of the subject that we can more satisfactorily begin to harness ideas of the subject agency, and subjecthood to the analysis of development strategy. The paper by Rebecca Klenk (Part I) examines the socialization of young women along Gandhian principles at Lakshmi Ashram in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand in north India. Her examination opens the space for precisely such a linking of subjecthood and development. The Gandhian Lakshmi Ashram educators wish for inner strength for their graduates, wish for them the ability to stand on their own feet. For such an objective the existing conventional government syllabi are not very useful. Among modern nation builders, Gandhi perhaps had the most articulated vision of the relationship between the fashioning of the self, and the possibilities of development understood as self-reliance. But

133. Bhabha 1998: 126.

this production of modern selves in Kumaon, a self-formation process that may be recognized as roughly parallel to that in other Gandhian ashrams in India, is in stark contrast to official visions of development inscribed by the nation-state: visions that require graduates with formal college degrees, diplomas, and certificates. Klenk's paper points insightfully to the regional processes of the construction of the self where different elements in the regional imaginary cohere around Gandhi's thought. It also brings home the disjunctions between such regional self-transformation processes and those promoted by official development efforts.

If Klenk's paper points to how regional processes of self-development may run counter to official needs, Berry's paper in Part I on the development of women, and Luthra's paper (Part II) on the education of entrepreneurs highlight two very different strategies and relationships in the production of modern selves.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, both these papers also articulate several of the features of regional modernities that we emphasize. Both the papers take NGOs, actors that have become increasingly prominent on the stage of development, as one of the institutional sites where modern women and modern entrepreneurs are produced. Berry's paper focuses on women. She shows the transnational links between US Department of Agriculture Programs for rural American women in the early 1900s, reinterpreted implementation of similar programs by the Nehru government, and the appropriation of such programs in conjunction with a feminist reading of Sanskrit texts about *shakti* by the NGO Sutra in Himachal Pradesh. Showing these links alone make hers a remarkable paper. But she goes further and also examines how women in Changar, Himachal Pradesh, transform the programs sponsored by Sutra because their views of their health needs are born in a very different social and discursive space in comparison to the ones that government officials had in mind when creating women's programs for the entire country. In the process of elaborating these links, Berry also emphasizes how the concept of 'woman' is itself a product of particular conditions, interpreted in multiple ways by particular publics of development.

134. These, again, are not the only two papers that invoke the relationship between the transformation of the self and of the nation. See also the essays by Skaria, Robbins, and Abraham in this volume.

Luthra (Part II) also focuses on NGOs and the relationships between seemingly grassroots strategies/stories and global visions of development. But she has a different focus and objective. She (SEWA) creates women entrepreneurs and the tensions between efforts to craft women's subjectivity into a mold resembling that of an entrepreneur, discourses of feminism, and the emphasis on social development. Each of these objectives can be linked rather easily to larger discourses of development. But the actual practices of development that SEWA undertakes and to which its women members relate underline the difficulties in constructing the seamless discourse of development and in classifying its clients into subjects or victims. In no small measure are these difficulties the result of the obstacles that are born as a part of the processes of active self-transformations that projects of development generate (see also Gupta's commentary in Part I). Both Berry and Luthra's papers provocatively indicate that development projects are transformed by those who are supposed to be the victims/beneficiaries of such projects, often because of the multiple positions they occupy. Indeed, the very fact that people occupy multiple subject positions reveals the possibilities of and for agency. Not all subject positions are determined in the power-resistance dialectic.<sup>135</sup>

New options arise for even the most disempowered actors because power works through multiple social and institutional locations—where institutions are broadly defined to include structures, rules, and norms. In this conception, structures, rules, or norms are not static entities, fixed in time and space. They are constituted by mutually sustaining cultural schemas and sets of

135. Berry (1993) makes an analogous point when she shows how the spread of cocoa cultivation in west Africa led to the multiplication rather than consolidation of claims to rural land both through the spread of tenancy and because the definition of tenant hinged on issues of descent and/or citizenship as well as land use. This points to the increasing bases for claims and power in the modernization process as community and tradition become rallying cries for traditional elites who feel undermined by the modern state. Berry concludes: 'by simultaneously courting supporters in the name of customary social solidarities and disparaging ethnic loyalties as backward and politically disruptive, African governments have both intensified ethnic tension and political competition and rendered them more uncertain—thereby reinforcing peoples' propensity to invest in multiple social networks (p. 132).'

resources that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that action.<sup>136</sup> Structures do not just constrain. They also empower particular actions of agents who possess knowledge of the cultural schemas that enables mobilization of resources and by their access to resources enact schemas. Again, to insist on the ability of agents to shift the structural context within which they are located is not to adopt a starry-eyed vision about the lack of limits on human possibilities. Rather, it is to focus on the impossibility of structures to constrain actions to a unique singular point. To deny that strategies have authors or agents logically leads to an insistence on the tyranny of the social.

These are some of the reasons that lead us to make two final points. One, there is an urgent need for the ethnographic, micro-historical, micropolitical turn in the study of development and regional modernities. Two, this turn cannot leave the empirically oriented researcher stationed in the locality while the global is left to analysis by modelers and hermeneutically inclined scholars. We are signaling the various ways in which development is a powerful center that is constantly being redefined and reimagined. Stories and practices of actors situated in the flexible realm of regional modernities have to become central foci of inquiry. This requires institutional histories, ethnographies, and accounts of micropolitics in relation to development.

Our critique of poststructuralist anti-development discourse makes clear that its infirmities are produced by the debilitating disease Sherry Ortner recently called 'ethnographic thinness.'<sup>137</sup> Our focus on practice, in turn, leads to a focus on mediation—between local and global, between developed modern agent and development object, between the realm designated modern and the one characterized traditional—or the ways in which nation-states, regional politics, villages, NGOs, MNCs, and multi-layered governmental bureaucracies create an imagined regional as the variable interface between a mythical local and an equally mythical global.

Rather than a single systematic discourse of development, understood as an overarching cultural logic of globalization, we propose the exploration of stories of development. These stories may seem to resonate in global quarters, but their authors are located in sites within the institutions of regional modernities and local contexts.

136. Sewell 1992: 27.

137. Ortner 1995.

This point can be made clearer by briefly returning to our claims about modernity. We have argued earlier that the origins of modernity cannot be easily traced to western Europe in a particular historical period. If we grant that modernity grows out of the exigencies and exchanges of European empire building, then we have to concede its history is longer and more ambiguous than something neatly emergent from eighteenth century debates on reason and rationality in western Europe.

Outside a highly abstract philosophical realm of consideration it is not even clear that modernity has only a few stable referents like progress, teleological beliefs, the privileging of reason and skepticism, and the reorganization of collective identities around the territorial nation-state.<sup>138</sup> In the everyday world of livelihood and identity, social struggles and statemaking, signifiers of modernity are drawn very quickly into contentious debates and contested practices. It is in these debates and practices that the stability of such signifiers as progress and reason is called into question as they become imbued with more specific meanings.

We find the idea of stories, therefore, useful in that it can consciously be used to move beyond the limitations imposed by the notion of discourse that has come to inform writings on development. The use of the terms stories draws attention to multiple vocalities, multiple points of production, and the more intimate and unpredictable processes through which development as practice has outcomes we too easily attribute to development as rhetoric or discourse. Through an interest in stories, it also becomes possible to attend to issues of human agency at many levels—even if some forms of it are thwarted or only partially realized.

The focus on stories also allows attention to the contingent production of development in many sites. Stories are less closely tied to a schema than discourses or narratives, even if persuasive stories appeal to specific elements of well accepted development narratives. In contrast to a discourse, stories are far less committed to elaborating a hidden structure that underlies and presumes to explain how development works out in practice. They are a more conscious montage of patchy and sometimes distinctive experiences. Unlike narratives, stories have a limited commitment to

138. A working definition of modernity that Gupta (1997: 321) feels is likely to excite both anti-imperialist and global debates on modernity

linear development. They are more suited to reporting the unpredictability that is part of the process of any attempt to alter a social status quo.

Our focus on stories recognizes that a growing body of scholarship has come to distinguish a variety of narrative forms. If Jameson's account<sup>139</sup> provides one of the earliest discussions of 'meta-narratives' that exemplify the most monologic and authoritarian forms of narratives, Bakhtin's work has allowed the discovery of polyphony, intertextuality, and dialogism in the analysis of narratives.<sup>140</sup> However, the structure, linearity, and cohesion implied by the use of the term narrative means that multiple narratives only refer to the existence of several competing coherent and meaningful accounts. Stories, in contrast, refer to the more contingent process of narrative construction—a micropolitics of narrative production, if you will. They foreground, thus, all the messiness involved in the power-plays of assembling narratives.<sup>141</sup> We suggest that a 'narrative' comes into focus only when the tensions and indeterminacies of its construction have been relegated to the background if not completely erased.<sup>142</sup> 'Stories' return us relentlessly to the moments of production, to a wide cast of authors, editors, publicists, and critics. The concept of 'stories' becomes all the more important when we recognize that development or modernity are incomplete projects whose characteristics are subject to disagreement and whose impacts are unevenly felt.

When Pigg speaks of how Nepali villagers reappropriate and remake development projects to insinuate within these projects their own versions of how development should work,<sup>143</sup> or when Gupta describes how the leaders of the Bharatiya Kisan Union turn populist development slogans against the government,<sup>144</sup> or when

139. Jameson 1981

140. Bakhtin 1981

141. We are grateful to Rebecca Klenk for pushing us to clarify this point. She reminded us of several of the important authors who have reflected on the issue of narratives. Anagnost (1997), Basso (1996), Daniel (1996), and Stewart (1998) are divergent examples of recent studies that make sophisticated use of the narrative concept.

142. Discourses have the added disability of a mysterious production and untraceable transubstantiation

143. Pigg 1992

144. Gupta 1997

Rofel tells us how Chinese factory workers reinterpret factory discipline,<sup>145</sup> they are describing processes that concepts such as discourse and narrative can address only inadequately. Stories allow the accommodation of complex historical contingency, multiple sites of production, and contention within presumed arenas of consent. As a construct they are far more useful to represent the incoherence that lurks at the heart of all development efforts.

#### CONCLUSION

This introduction situates the following essays in the context of existing works by scholars interested in theorizing the cultural politics of globalization and development. These important literatures have provided new insights to rethink the links between the global and the local, the core and the periphery. For scholars of development, the proliferation of development discourse signals a new form of international domination, a new form of governmentality. For many observers of globalization, a newly resurgent aftermath of colonialism, these two distinct literatures argue with a common voice that localities have come to be transformed by global forces in particular and troubling ways. Other scholars, in contrast, have argued for an independent status for the local and the parochial. They have also asserted, using persuasive examples, the impress of the local on the global.

These arguments about the relationship between the local and the global help us move away from formulations that see the local and the global as distinct, and allow us to acknowledge the continuing and substantial connections across social formations and levels of analysis. This volume, starting from the conviction that there are local histories and agencies at work in any modern context, nonetheless, argues for greater attention to the region as a conceptual device to understand how the local is constructed and how supralocal, regional political-economic formations selectively empower or undermine particular local processes and phenomena. This is the reason for our insistence on the flexible concept of regional modernities and for its deployment to analyse different enactments of development. In contrast to terms like alternative modernities, our proposed alternative has a substantive content.

145. Rofel 1997.

And, in contrast to terms like local modernity, it has the virtue of focusing attention on patterns that mark relations among localities. Representations of the relationship between the local and the supra-local, whether in the context of development or globalization, require a supple treatment. To discuss this realm of imagination and cultural construction, we have advocated the use of 'stories' in preference to discourses or narratives. Our advocacy of stories is not intended simply as call for a celebration of ambiguity and difference. Turning to a representational device such as stories is better suited to destabilize preconceived notions of authority and sequence in the practices of development and address more adequately the question of agency and the complex processes of subject formation. At the same time, it is through stories that narratives of development and change come to be constructed.

Indeed, this introduction, this volume, and its essays can also be seen as examples of how stories are told, the connections that radiate from one story into another, and the elisions that are necessary to construct narratives. Our representations of the essays that follow have been 'interested' borrowings, appropriations aimed at the production of a particular kind of coherence related to the consolidation of our critique of existing writings on globalization and development. It is only in this sense that we claim that the following essays are nested in our introduction, not in the sense of the nested relationship among the units of a Russian dolls set. The stories that our authors tell contain many other themes, several extremely powerful, that we have necessarily not examined. Take just one instance. Skaria's insights about the primitivism of development, concretized in his discussion of the Dangs, the Koknis, and the Bhils, go beyond the by now usual claims about the appropriation and manipulation of development by subalterns. To cite this example is only an invitation to explore the other stories that this volume attempts to recount.

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