

Paradigms of Social Change: Modernizaton, Development, Transformation, Evolution

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Social change has been a recurrent topic of social thought since the 18th century. From Condorcet and Comte, Marx and Spencer up to Durkheim and Weber, the classical authors of social science have reflected on the trajectories and dynamics of human societies. After the second World War, the emergence of a world society has challenged sociology and social anthropology, political science and economics into new sustained research. Today, with intensely felt globalization and the breakdown of once firmly held ideas about the future, the social sciences are requested to reexamine their conceptual and analytical tools. Four paradigms have guided investigations of social change: modernization, development, evolution and more recently, transformation. Confronting these paradigms, this book asks: How do different conceptualizations of social change compare? What are they mainly interested in and what are their corresponding blind spots? How and why has social scientists' reasoning about social change itself changed?

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