

Knowledge Organiser – A Level World Sociology:

Explanations for patterns and trends – Part one

Population

In 2021 the United Nations (UN) correctly predicted that the world's population would reach 8 billion on the 15th November 2022. The UN also suggests that the global population could grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion in 2100. Nine out of ten people will live in the developing world.

Modernisation theorists believe overpopulation is a reason why developing countries are failing to develop. They argue that the economic growth necessary for industrial development is hard to achieve – any spare cash is spent on feeding the population, not reinvesting into the developing industry. Modernisation theory highlights the low status of women in developing countries with traditional belief systems and see it as an obstacle to development. Women are not usually allowed to work or receive an education and are usually denied reproductive rights – they are often denied contraception and abortion rights. Even where women do want to access contraceptives, they are unable to due to resources. Women in developing countries are often economically dependent on men and do not have the sorts of choices that we take for granted.

Dependency theorists are critical of the modernisation idea that developing countries are to blame for their own poverty because of their inability to control their family sizes. They argue that alleged 'overpopulation' is not the issue, that it's poverty as it encourages people to have large families. They also argue that if developing countries were supported to become more affluent, population growth would slow down, just as it has in more economically developed countries (MEDCs) (Adamson, 1986). Hayter argues that overpopulation not the issue; the West consumes more than their fair share of resources and produces more pollution.

Debt

Debt is when money is owed. It is part of the process of giving aid to the developing world and the debts of poor nations are well known. The 'problem' of debt can also affect trade, as investors are put off investing in a country if it looks financially unstable due to large levels of debt. The developing world is said to have a debt crisis.

Dependency theorists argue that the debt crisis has been brought about by several factors: colonialism, money not being spent on effective economic development and increased interest rates due to the global recession, resulting in further debt.

Aid

Aid can take two forms:

- a gift or grant that does not have to be paid back
- a loan with interest.

Aid can take the form of money, expertise, science, technology, medicine, contraceptives, or weapons.

Official aid is given by governments or government organisations.

Unofficial aid is given by organisations other than governments.

Modernisation theorists believe aid is beneficial to help change the economy and culture of poor countries to develop and become modern. Aid targeted at the top of society would trickle down and eventually benefit all. Modernisation theorists believe aid has benefits for education, health and stimulating the economy.

Dependency theorists believe aid creates and sustains unequal relationships. Aid does not end up where it is supposed to go, for example being stolen by corrupt governments. The main disadvantage of all forms of aid is that many developing countries have become dependent upon it for their survival.

Urbanisation

Urbanisation refers to the mass movement of populations from rural to urban settings and the consequent physical changes to urban settings. In 2019, the United Nations estimated that more than half the world's population (4.2 billion people) now live in an urban area and this figure will increase to 6 billion people by 2041.

When large numbers of people move to the cities, many problems result, particularly for the poor. Many of the urban poor live in slums that are unregulated, have congested conditions, are overcrowded, are positioned near open sewers, and restricted to geographically dangerous areas such as hillsides, riverbanks, and water basins subject to landslides, flooding, or industrial hazards. All these factors lead to the spread of communicable and non-communicable diseases, pollution, poor nutrition, road traffic and so on.

Modernisation theorists believe urbanisation has a positive impact on developing countries. Cities are better environments to promote positive economic and social change compared to the traditional rural (countryside) communities. Dependency theorists believe urbanisation primarily benefits the wealthy and creates an 'urban underclass'.