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Explanations of social change اسم المحاضرة الثامنة باللغة الإنكليزية

Explanations of social change

One way of explaining social change is to show causal connections between two or more processes. This may take the form of [determinism](#) or [reductionism](#), both of which tend to explain social change by reducing it to one supposed [autonomous](#) and all-determining causal process. A more cautious assumption is that one process has relative causal priority, without implying that this process is completely autonomous and all-determining. What follows are some of the processes thought to contribute to social change.

Natural environment

Changes in the natural [environment](#) may result from climatic variations, natural disasters, or the spread of disease. For example, both worsening of climatic conditions and the [Black Death epidemics](#) are thought to have contributed to the crisis of [feudalism](#) in 14th-century Europe. Changes in the natural environment may be either independent of [human](#) social activities or caused by them. Deforestation, erosion, and [air pollution](#) belong to the latter category, and they in turn may have far-reaching social consequences.

[Demographic processes](#)

Population growth and increasing population density represent [demographic](#) forms of social change. Population growth may lead to geographic expansion of a society, military conflicts, and the intermingling of [cultures](#). Increasing population density may stimulate technological [innovations](#), which in turn may increase the [division of labour](#), social differentiation, commercialization, and [urbanization](#). This sort of process occurred in western Europe from the 11th to the 13th century and in England in the 18th century, where population growth spurred the [Industrial Revolution](#). On the other hand, population growth may

contribute to economic stagnation and increasing [poverty](#), as may be witnessed in several [Third World](#) countries today.

Technological innovations

Several theories of social evolution identify technological innovations as the most important determinants of societal change. Such technological breakthroughs as the smelting of iron, the introduction of the plow in agriculture, the invention of the [steam engine](#), and the development of the computer have had lasting social consequences.

Economic processes

Technological changes are often considered in conjunction with economic processes. These include the formation and extension of markets, modifications of property relations (such as the change from feudal lord-peasant relations to contractual proprietor-tenant relations), and changes in the organization of labour (such as the change from independent craftsmen to factories). Historical [materialism](#), as developed by Marx and Engels, is one of the more prominent theories that gives priority to economic processes, but it is not the only one. Indeed, materialist theories have even been developed in opposition to Marxism. One of these theories, the “logic of industrialization” thesis by American scholar Clark Kerr and his colleagues, states that [industrialization](#) everywhere has similar consequences, whether the property relations are called capitalist or communist.

Ideas

Other theories have stressed the significance of ideas as causes of social change. Comte’s [law](#) of three stages is such a theory. Weber regarded religious ideas as important contributors to economic development or stagnation; according to his controversial thesis, the individualistic [ethic](#) of Christianity, and in particular [Calvinism](#), partially explains the rise of the capitalist spirit, which led to economic dynamism in the West.