Chapter 15: Social Change and the Environment
Chapter Overview

- How Social Change Transforms Social Life
- Theories and Processes of Social Change
- How Technology Changes Society
- Social Movements as a Source of Social Change
- The Growth Machine versus the Earth
How Social Change Transforms Social Life

• Four Social Revolutions
• From Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft
• Capitalism, Modernization, and Industrialization
• Conflict, Power, and Global Politics
Theories of Processes and Social Change

- **Cultural Evolution** – involves unilinear (all societies follow the same path) and multilinear (different routes lead to the same stage of development).

- **Natural Cycles** – civilizations are like organisms: They are born, come to maturity, then decline as they reach old age, and finally die.

- **Conflict over Power** – Marx believed that each thesis (a current arrangement of power) contains its own antithesis (contradiction or opposition)
Theories of Processes and Social Change

- Ogburn’s theory – social change is based largely on technology
- **Invention** – combining of existing elements and materials to form new ones
- **Discovery** – a new way of seeing reality
- **Diffusion** – the spread of invention or discovery from one area to another can have extensive effects on people’s lives
- **Cultural lag** – some elements of a culture lag behind the changes that come from invention, discovery, and diffusion
Table 15.2  Ogburn’s Processes of Social Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process of Change</th>
<th>What It is</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Social Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invention</td>
<td>Combination of existing elements to form new ones</td>
<td>1. Cars</td>
<td>1. Urban sprawl and long commutes to work</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Computers</td>
<td>2. Telework and Global Positioning System</td>
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<td>3. Graphite composites</td>
<td>3. New types of building construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>New way of seeing some aspect of the world</td>
<td>1. Columbus—N. America</td>
<td>1. Realignment of global power</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Gold in California</td>
<td>2. Westward expansion of United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. DNA</td>
<td>3. Positive identification of criminals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffusion</td>
<td>Spread of an invention or discovery</td>
<td>1. Airplanes</td>
<td>1. Global tourism</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Money</td>
<td>2. Global trade</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Condom</td>
<td>3. Smaller families</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: For each example, there are many changes. For some of the changes ushered in by the automobile and computer, see pages 413–416. You can also see that any particular change, such as global trade, depends not just on one item, but on several preceding changes.

Source: By the author.
How Technology Changes Society

- Technology is:
  1. The tools and the skills needed to make and use those tools
  2. The skills or procedures needed to make and use tools

In postindustrial societies it greatly extends our abilities to communicate, to travel, and to analyze information.

The social significance of technology is not the apparatus but how technology changes our way of life.
The Cutting Edge of Change

- Computers in Education – Distance Learning is becoming very popular in college
- Computers in Medicine
- Computers in Business and Finance – Businesses are wired to suppliers, salespeople, and clients around the country
- Changes in the War on Terrorism
Reservations about the Computer

• *Big Brother* – people worry about their identity being stolen

• *Cyberspace and Social Inequality*—we could end up with information that some people could not access due to social inequalities
Social Movements

• **Social Movements** - People Organizing to Promote or Resist Social Change

• **Proactive Social Movements** – some find a particular condition of society intolerable and the goal is to promote social change

• **Reactive Social Movements** – Some feel threatened because some condition of society is changing and they react to resist that change
Types of Social Movements

- **Alternative Social Movement** – seek only to alter some specific behavior
- **Redemptive Social Movement** – targets individuals but the goal is total change
- **Reformative Social Movement** – the goal is to reform some specific aspect of society
- **Transformative Social Movement** – seek to reform the social order itself
- **Transnational Social Movement** – wants to change some specific condition that cuts across societies
- **Metaformative Social Movement** – wants to change the social order itself
Propaganda and the Mass Media

- The leaders of social movements try to manipulate the mass media to influence public opinion (how people think about some issue)
- Propaganda is used to present information in order to influence people
- The mass media plays a crucial role in the success of social movements
Stages of Social Movements

- Initial Unrest and Agitation
- Resource Mobilization
- Organization
- Institutionalization
- Organizational Decline or Resurgence
Environmental Problems

• Most Industrialized nations

• **Fossil Fuels** – burning fossil fuels to run factories, motorized vehicles, and power plants has been especially harmful.

• **Greenhouse effect** – burning fossil fuels releases gases allow sunlight to enter the earth’s atmosphere but inhibit the release of heat

• **Global Warming** – the buildup of heat causes global warming
Environmental Problems

• Most Industrialized Nations (cont.)
• **Environmental Justice** – the minorities and the poor suffer the most from the effects of pollution as many toxic plants are located in the areas where they live.
Figure 15.3 The Worst Hazardous Waste Sites

Note: These are the waste sites so outstandingly threatening to public health that they made the national priority list. New Jersey is in a class by itself. This small state has 20 more hazardous waste sites than its nearest competitor, Pennsylvania, with 96.

Source: By the author. Based on Statistical Abstract of the United States 2009: Table 367.
Environmental Problems

• Most Industrialization Nations and Least Industrialized Nations
• The Most Industrialized Nations have become major polluters
• There is a lack of environmental laws in some of the Least Industrialized Nations and as a result chemicals can be produced that are outlawed elsewhere
• Rain forests – they have been destroyed and are essential for humanity’s welfare
Environmental Sociology

• Main Assumptions:
  1. Physical Environment a Variable in Sociological Investigation
  2. Humans One Species Among Many
  3. Human Actions have Unintended Consequences
  4. The World is Finite
  5. Economic expansion requires increased extraction from the environment
  6. Increased extraction of resources leads to ecological problems
  7. These problems place limits of ecological expansion
  8. Governments create problems by encouraging the accumulation of capital
Environmental Sociology

• Technology and the Environment: The Goal of Harmony

• Abuse of Environment Not Inevitable

• Must Discover Ways to Reduce or Eliminate Harm to the Environment