Examrace

Competitive Exams: Urban Sociological Theories

Doorsteptutor material for competitive exams is prepared by world's top subject experts: get questions, notes, tests, video lectures and more- for all subjects of your exam.

- The classical theories of urban sociology are divided from the works of European sociologists like KarlMarx, Tonnies, George Simmel, Max Weber and those of American namely Park Burgess, Lowis Wirth and Redfield.

- The reflections of the earlier sociologists throw light on the anti-urban feelings. The great city, metropolis a paradigm of an inhuman, debasing social environment for Tonnies. Simmel felt that the money economy of the cities destroyed the social life.

- Weber and Wirth explained how mass urbanization nullified opportunities or political participation. Charles Booth and Rowntree wrote the sociography of life in the cities.

- Marx and Engels condemned the consequences of urbanization under capitalism. They viewed the concentration and misery of the mass of workers in the new urban agglomerations as a necessary stage in the creation of a revolutionary force. For them pauperization and material degradation was one aspect of urbanization but equally important was the destruction of the social nexus of the traditional community and its replacement by the utilitarian world of the city. Both for theory and practice communism depended on urbanism.

- Mumford in his book 'The city in history' sees cities as enlarging all dimensions of life as the scattered as the scattered activities of society are brought together so releasing the energies of mankind in a tremendous explosion of creativity. The city has augmented capabilities for participation and widened the basis of personal experience.

- In the writings of Neo-Marxists like Mills, Marcuse, Fromm there is a consensus that conditions of capitalist urbanization are mutilative of the personality, inhibitive of community formation, destructive of social engagement or involvement and conducive to apathy, alienation and anomie. Class consciousness is inhibited and diverted in mass movements, unreason and not reason typifies social response.

- Sociologists from Tonnies to Wirth developed counter-theory to Marxism for the explication of social change led to acceptance of a fundamental cleavage between rural and urban, tradition and modernism which was in sharp opposition to any variant on Marxist theories of developement. The urban is accepted as a frame of reference and the urban society as a specific mode of social organization becomes the object of scientific study.

- Tonnies in his book Community and Society explained the impact of the market economy on traditional forms of social association; the implications of urbanization and

the development of the state for the conduct of social life and the mechanisms of social solidarity in an individualized society. The distinction he draws between the two forms of human association, gemeniscaft and gesellschaft has become the basis for a succession of typologies of which the best known are the pattern variables formulated by Parsons and folk-urban typology drawn by Redfield and Wirth.

- George Simmel presents social interaction in terms of abstract categories. The study of society could only proceed by means of logical analysis of the forms of association. The forms are cognitive categories. Simmel belonged to the neo-Kantian tradition which frankly denies the possibility of the study of the natural or the social world without selection and ordering by the observer. Simmel was trying to expound on three themes; first the consequences of a money economy for social relationships. Second the significance of numbers for social life and lastly the scope for the maintenance of independence and individuality against the sovereign powers of society.

- Max Weber in his 'The City' has defined the city on the basis of political and administrative conception. To constitute a full urban community a settlement must display a relative predominance of trade-commercial relations with the settlement as a whole displaying the following features:

- fortification

- market

- a court of its own and at least partially autonomous law

- a related form of association

- partial autonomy and voting rights.

- Weber rejects cities governed by religious groups or where the authority is enforced on personal rather than universalistic basis. He recounts a process in which the development of the rational-legal institutions that characterize the modern city enabled the individual to be free from the traditional groups and therefore develop his individuality. He emphasizes the closure, autonomy and separateness of the urban community and stressed that the historical peculiarities of the medieval city were due to the location of the city with in the total medieval political and social organization.

Urban Growth and Urbanization

Urbanization is the movement of population from rural to urban areas and the resulting increasing proportion of a population that resides in urban rather than rural places. It is derived from the Latin 'Urbs' a term used by the Romans to a city. Urban sociology is the sociology of urban living; of people in groups and social relationship in urban social circumstances and situation.

Thompson Warren has defined it as the movement of people from communities concerned chiefly or solely with agriculture to other communities generally larger whose

activities are primarily centered in government, trade, manufacture or allied interests. Urbanization is a two-way process because it involves not only movement from village to cities and change from agricultural occupation to business, trade, service and profession but it also involves change in the migrants attitudes, beliefs, values and behavior patterns.

The process of urbanization is rapid all over the world. The facilities like education, healthcare system, employment avenues, civic facilities and social welfare are reasons attracting people to urban areas. The census of India defines some criteria for urbanization. These are:

- Population is more than 5000

- The density is over 400 persons per sq. Km

- 75 % of the male population engages in non-agricultural occupations.

- Cities are urban areas with population more than one lakh.

- Metropolises are cities with population of more than one million.

Urbanism

Urbanism is a way of life. It reflects an organization of society in terms of a complex division of labour, high levels of technology, high mobility, interdependence of its members in fulfilling economic functions and impersonality in social relations. Louis Wirth has given four characteristics of urbanism

- Transiency: An urban inhabitant's relation with others last only for a short time; he tends to forget his old acquaintances and develop relations with new people. Since he is not much attached to his neighbors members of the social groups, he does not mind leaving them.

- Superficiality: An urban person has the limited number of persons with whom he interacts and his relations with them are impersonal and formal. People meet each other in highly segmental roles. They are dependent on more people for the satisfaction of their life needs.

- Anonymity: Urbanities do not know each other intimately. Personal mutual acquaintance between the inhabitants which ordinarily is found in a neighborhood is lacking.

- Individualism: People give more importance to their own vested interests.

Town

The town is intermediate between rural and urban communities. It is too large for all inhabitants to be acquainted with one another, yet small enough for informal relationships to predominate. Social behavior more closely resembles the rural than the metropolitan city pattern. Towns are places with population of 5,000 and more. Three conditions of a place being classified as a town are:

- The population is more than 5,000.

- The density is not less than 400 sq. Km.

- Not less than 75 % of the adult male population is engaged in non-agricultural activities.

City

Cities become possible when an agricultural surplus develops together with improved means of transportation and tend to be located at breaks in transportation. The most significant current developments in city structure are the metropolitan area including the suburb which accounts for current population growth.

The city pulls people from various corners towards its nucleus. The rural people faced with various economic problems are attracted by the city and start moving towards the cities. The city provides ample opportunities for personal advancement. It is the centre of brisk economic, commercial, artistic, literary, political, educational, technological, scientific and other activities.

Cities are not only the controlling centers of their societies but also the source of innovation and change. They act as the source of new ideas for production, the pace-setters for consumption, guardians of culture and conservers of order in society. Consensus and continuity in a society are maintained from the city centres. Urban culture has become the legitimation for control.

Walter Christaller explained the location of urban cities in terms of their functions as service centres. The basic assumption was that a given rural area supports an urban centre which in turn serves the surrounding countryside. There are smaller towns for smaller areas and bigger cities for larger regions. This concept permitted Christaller to build up an integrated system of cities according to their size.

His views conceiving a city as a central place within a rural area was elaborated by Edward L. Ullman with considerable modifications. He admits the vulnerability of the scheme for larger places. In highly industrialized areas the central place schemes is generally distorted by industrial concentration in response to resources and transportation that it may be said to have little significance as an explanation for urban location and distribution.

Gans and Lewis through compositional theory hold that the composition of a city's population differs from that of a small town in terms of factors such as class, education, ethnicity and marital status.

Multiple Nuclie theory given by Harris and Ullman discuss that there is not one centre but several centers for the city. Each of the centers tend to specialize in a particular kind of activity-retailing, wholesaling, finance, recreation, education, government. Several centers may have existed from the beginning of the city or many have developed later in a division from one centre.

According to Castells to understand cities and urbanism one has to understand the process by which spatial forms are created and transformed. The architecture of cities expresses the struggles and conflicts between different groups in society. City is not only a distinct location but also as an integral part of processes of collective consumption.

Hyot in his sector theory talked about the growth of cities taking place in sectors and these sectors extend from the centre to periphery.

The concentric zone theory given by Park and Burgess suggested that modern cities consisted of a series of concentric zones. There are five such zones

- Central business district

- Zone in transition

- Zone of working population

- Residential zone

- Commuter's zone

Features of Urban Society

- The urban society is heterogeneous known for its diversity and complexity.

- It is dominated by secondary relations.

- Formal means of social control such as law, legislation, police, and court are needed in addition to the informal means for regulating the behavior of the people.

- The urban society is mobile and open. It provides more chances for social mobility. The status is achieved than ascribed.

- Occupations are more specialized. There is widespread division of labor and specialization opportunities for pursuing occupations are numerous.

- Family is said to be unstable. More than the family individual is given importance. Joint families are comparatively less in number.

- People are more class-conscious and progressive. They welcome changes. They are exposed to the modern developments in the fields of science and technology.

- Urban community is a complex multigroup society.

- The urban community replaced consensus by dissensus. The social organization is atomistic and illdefined. It is characterized by disorganization, mental illness and anomie.

- Mass education is widespread in the city increasing democratization of the organizations and institutions demand formal education.

Features of Industrial City

- A large sprawling open city housing a large percent of the population of the society. Relatively low segregation; few outward symbols, segregation based on race. Good transportation and communication.

- A manufacturing, finance and coordinating centre of an industrial society.

- A fluid class structure with an elite of businessmen, professionals and scientists.

- A large middle class with technologically related jobs.

- Wealth by salaries, fees, investment. High status of business activity. Unionization at a national level. Specialization of production and marketing. Large service sector, fixed price.

- Time important and regular work schedule.

- Standardization of process and quality.

- Formal public opinion with a bureaucracy based on technical criteria.

- A weak religious institution separate from other institutions dominated by the middle class. Standardization of religious experience marked by the disappearance of magic.

- Technical and secular education for the masses.

Urban Ecological Processes

It means whereby spatial distribution of people and activities change. They include:

- Centralization clustering of economic and service functions.

- Concentration tendency of people and activities to cluster together.

- Decentralization flight of people and activities from the centre of the city.

- Invasion entrance of new kind of people or activity into an area.

- Segregation concentration of a certain type of people or activities within a particular area.

- Succession completed replacement of one kind of people or activity by another.

Impact of Automation on Society

- It speeds up the developmental processes of the society.

- It increases production.

- Brings further technological changes like information technology.

- Extreme industrialization

- Replacement of human labor with machines.

- Increase in profit margins

- Distance reduction through technological advancements in the field of communication network.

- Makes life dependent on latest gizmos and equipments.

Disadvantages

- Norms and values take backseat.

- Turns human beings into alienated beings.

- Social distance between the people within a society and diminishing impact on the primary relations.

- Increase in problem of unemployment.

- Increasing gap between rich and poor will lead to social inequalities.

- Will affect the relations of people within the society.

Environment

When physical, chemical and biological projects of the different components of environment: Air, water, soil, noise change to the detriment of living of humans it may be said that environment has been affected. Many developing countries are placing more and more reliance on industrialization. It is not only a mechanical but also a social process. Therefore it affects the environment physically as well as socio-culturally.

All aspects of pollution are directly or indirectly related to human health and well being. The excessive growth and rush of people from villages to urban areas resulting in over crowding of cities. Rapid urbanization and industrialization have led to an increase in environmental pollutant load that poses serious public health problem.

It also affects the socio-cultural environment with the close ties of groups coming under pressure. Traditional ties are replaced with new work based ones. Religion becomes secular. Thus industrialization affects the social fabric making the society more materialistic.

Terms

- First urban revolution: The historical emergence of cities and urbanism.

- Urbanism: The pattern of behaviour, relationships and modes of thought characteristic of urban life.

- Sociological city: A relatively large dense permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous persons.

- Geographic city: The continuously built-up area in and around the legal city.

- Legal city: A municipal corporation occupying a defined geographical area subject to a legal control of the state.

- Second urban revolution: The historical transformation of a city accomplished by the industrial revolution which turned the city into an industrial centre.

- Metropolis: The legal city together with the built up area surrounding it.

- Third urban revolution: The urbanization of the entire world population but sometimes specifically used to include the special form of city emerging in the developing nations and the growth of megalopolitan forms of super cities.

- Suburbanization: The growth of a ring of relatively small communities around the central city and the movement of urban population to them. Contemporarily associated with urban sprawl and deterioration of the central city.

- Suburb: A community on the urban fringe. These are of two types-residential and satellite

- Ghetto: An urban ethnic or racial community often confused with slum. A ghetto may also be a slum.

- Slum: An urban residential area characterized by over crowding and sub-standard way of living.

- Urban concentration: It is the tendency of people and activities to cluster together.

- Urban decentralization: When people go away from the centre of the city.

- Metropolitan Fringe: It is on the outskirts of many industrial cities which are meant for commuter housing. Distinctive life-styles prevail between middle class commuters and old working class.

- Primate city: An urban form now emerging in developing nations where one city dominates the entire society.

- Gentrification: Renovation of decaying urban areas for occupancy by middle or upper class residents.

- Talcott Parsons universalistic-achievement pattern variable is central to the industrial society.

- Touraine described the Post Industrial Society as technocratic society.

- Maclver emphasized that urban life has fostered the individualization of women.

- Spengler has described cities as sinks of civilization.

- E. E Muntz has classified cities on the basis of their principal activities.

- Ullman has defined the city as a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals.

- Redfield has remarked that urban groups have a reputation for namelessness.

- Christaller is associated with the central place theory.

- Burgess put forward the concentric zone hypothesis on a diagrammatic study of Chicago.

- The town encourages associative individualism.

- Commuter's zone is also called bedroom community.

- Hyat has emphasized the importance of transportation routes in the expansion of a city.

- The compositional theory is based on rural-urban differences.

- The culture of poverty refers to slums.

- Migrants from rural to urban areas adjust more smoothly to city life it they maintain kinship ties.

- Oscar Lewis has given the concept of culture of poverty.

- Wirth has remarked that urbanism is a way of life whereas urbanization is a process.

- Maclver says that cities grow wherever a society or a group within it gains control over resources greater than are necessary for the mere sustenance of life.

- Robert Redfield has given four characteristics of little community. These are- distinctiveness, smallness, homogeneity and self-sufficiency.

- Ravenstein has developed the theory of step-migration.

- Marx perceived the petty bourgeois to be a transitional class.

- Weber believed greater bureaucratization would lead to greater alienation.

- Singer and Marriot hold the social structure of civilization to operate at the levels of peasants and industrialists.

Developed by: Mindsprite Solutions