

Topic 3: Mini Lecture

Saturday, January 28, 2023

8:22 AM

Cultural Scale and Social Power

Question to consider

- Is it true that everyone supposedly benefits from economic growth
- Is it true that economic growth supposedly is natural and inevitable
- Are absolute poverty and environmental degradation natural or cultural?

Key Concepts

- Imperia
- Elite
- Social Power
- Scale
- Power-elite Hypothesis
- Three Cultural Worlds

Types of Social Power

- Ideological Power
 - o Refers to control over what people know
- Political Power
 - o Personal power over the institutions of governments
- Military Power
 - o The use of, or threat to use, organized physical violence
- Economic Power
 - o The ability to direct the labor of other people one's own advantage and to control and cumulate wealth, income, and material resource

The Power of Scale

The Reality that increasing scale leads to:

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- The rich get richer the poor get poorer;
- Social power is concentrated in the hands of few at the top of any hierarchy
- The cost are paid by the majority on the bottom

Five Scale Effects

When the scale of humans societies increase:

1. Per capita economic productivity and consumption increase, but the **product** becomes more **inequitably distributed**
2. **Democracy declines**, because decision making becomes more cumbersome and more concentrated
3. **Institutions and technologies** become more **specialized** more **complex**, more **costly** and more **vulnerable**
4. The pace of **change** and **instability increase**
5. All types of social power become more **concentrated**

Power-elite Hypothesis

When growth in the scale of businesses and regional economies is an elite-directed process, it may concentrate social power and diffuse cost.

How to understand growth

Conventional Understanding	From a Power and Scale perspective
Everyone supposedly benefits from growth, and growth supposedly is natural and inevitable	Growth may concentrate social power and diffuse cost, and is neither natural nor inevitable, but human elite directed