

# SOCI 309/339

# URBAN SOCIOLOGY

## Session Four

## Theoretical Perspective: The Demographic Theories

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# Session Overview

## Introduction

- Because sociology is a scientific discipline, sociological studies often require a theoretical perspective initially to guide the study; or these studies often result in the formulation of theories. Theories are the tools used by the social scientist for the explanation and prediction of behavior.
- How do urban communities emerge and develop, what is the impact of the urban process on urbanites, how can the peculiar life style in the urban communities be explained and what problems do urban residents experience and how are these problems controllable?
- These and other questions which confront the urban sociologist require a theoretical perspective from which they can be scientifically analyzed and understood and answered through research.



# Session Outline

The main topics to be covered in this session are as follows:

- Topic One: The Economic Push (Centrifugal) factors
- Topic Two: Medical and socio-cultural factors
- Topic Three: The Centripetal (Pull) factors

# Objectives/Expected Outcomes for the Session

On the completion of this session, you should be able to :

- Explain how the search for greener pastures contributes to demographic urbanization.
- Explain the medical and socio-cultural factors that compel rural dwellers to migrate.
- Identify and discuss the economic and socio-cultural factors which attract rural dwellers to migrate.

# Reading List

Abotchie, C., (2016)      Sociology of Urban communities, Accra, Olive Tree  
Printing and Publishing Chapter Two: pp 18 - 29



# Topic One

## Economic Push (Centrifugal) Factors

### Introduction

Lee (1966) postulated that the factors affecting migration can be categorized into two; namely, the „push“ or **centrifugal** factors identified as the negative forces of poverty, unemployment and boredom which force rural dwellers to seek economic refuge in the urban areas.

The positive, „pull“ or **centripetal** factors are conditions such as employment opportunities, higher incomes and exciting life styles which attract migrants to their destination areas.

# Centrifugal Economic Factors – Introduction contd.

- Demographically, urbanization refers to the spatial concentrations; that is, the accumulation or agglomeration of populations in specifically defined limits with reference either to size or density.
- Thus the most common of the demographic theories is structured around the interactive effects of both the **centrifugal** and **centripetal** factors operating to accelerate the rate of the agglomerations in the urban area, resulting in urban growth.
- To begin with, what are the factors which push people out of the peace and quiet of their rural hometowns into the noise and the humdrum of the city? The totality of these factors can be categorized as **Economic, Social and Cultural.**

# Economic Push Factors

- Economically, (1) rural incomes are much lower than urban earnings because farm incomes are held down by a variety of governmental interventions such as compulsory marketing schemes, fixed controlled prices as in the developing societies.
- The compulsory marketing scheme involves the imposition of controlled prices on cash crops, such as cocoa, copra or coffee. This way, the farmers are compelled to sell their commodities to the state at prices fixed by the government as compared to selling these commodities in a free market where the prices would be determined by the farmers themselves based on the level of supply and demand.
- Because the farmer fixes his own price in such a liberal market, his earnings are often higher than the government controlled prices.



# Economic Push Factors – Land Tenure System

- The economic push factor also includes (2) **the feudal land tenure system** in the rural areas. This system as it obtains in Ghana and most other African societies is considered by most tenants as favoring the landlord and not the tenant and constitutes a disincentive for continuing to stay on in the rural areas to farm.
- In Ghana there are two such land tenure systems, namely, a piece of farm land can be given to a tenant on lease hold under the **abunu** or the **abusa** systems

# Economic Push Factors – Land Tenure

- **Under the abunu system**, the products from the farm are divided into two equal halves i.e. 50% each; while under the **abusa** system the tenant gets one-third while the land lord gets two-thirds.
- **Considering the fact that in both systems the farmer is the one who invests much energy, risks and time into the production process, their share is considered as unfair.**
- This constitutes one of the significant factors that predispose farmers, both young and elderly to leave their home towns – predominantly from the Volta region to seek greener pastures away from home. Most of these migrants are to be found in the Afram plains and parts of Ashanti and Brong Ahafo Regions.

# Economic Push Factors – Absence of Jobs

- Additionally, **the absence of employment opportunities** in the rural areas for both the educated and uneducated, the skilled and unskilled able-bodied youth because of **the absence of industrial establishments locally means that the youth have no place to sell their skills for their survival and are pushed out into the urban areas to look for jobs.**
- This push factor finds expression in what has been labeled as the **industrial gap** between the rural and urban areas. Simply explained the industrial gap means that whereas industrial establishments (with job opportunities) are located in the urban communities, virtually little or none are to be found in the rural areas.

# Absence of Jobs – The Demonstration Effect

- The establishment of industries predominantly in the urban areas of nations in the Third world has been in response to a factor called the **demonstration effect**.
- It is suggested that under the influence of this factor, Third world nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, deliberately invest a greater proportion of their national incomes on the development of their cities – specifically their national capitals up to levels comparable to the most modern cities in the western world.
- **The purpose is to demonstrate or show off to the rest of the world that these Third world nations are modernizing.** Ironically westerners who visit these Third world capitals often live in the plush hotels built in the national capitals and return home with the positive impression that indeed these Third world nations are developing! This way, the demonstration effect is achieved.

# Question

To what extent would the NPP's proposed policy of building a factory in each district of Ghana, effectively stem the exodus of economic migrants to the urban areas? What other measures could be considered, if need be?



# TOPIC Two

## Medical and Socio-Cultural Factors

- Improvements in the **medical sciences** constitute indirectly, an additional push factor.
- The main impact made on rural-urban migrations by advancements in healthcare delivery has been **the availability of immunization against the diseases which have hitherto killed infants at birth, creating a high mortality rate in African and other Third world communities.**

# Medical and Socio-Cultural Factors -Immunization

- Before immunization, couples in African societies (as well as in other third world countries) have had to give birth to as many children as they can, in order to have a few surviving – since these children were often killed in their infancy by diseases for which immunization is now available.
- The implication is that given the development of vaccines, if a couple gave birth to ten children (as they did in the past) - all ten would survive. Thus, given the almost 100% survival rate, the expectation is that contemporary families will reduce the number of children they gave birth to.

# Medical Factors –High Fertility

- But this did not happen in the rural areas. Fertility continued to be high because the rural areas have not as yet begun to urbanize.
- **To be urbanized means having to cope with a higher cost of living. Having as many as ten children in the urban area in contemporary Ghana would be suicidal, given the low level of incomes, and the high cost of living – involving the payment of utility bills, school fees, feeding, healthcare, clothing etc.**
- As a result, the rural areas which are high in population but low in income have continued to produce in the wake of the technification (mechanization) of agriculture, large surpluses of labor.



# Medical Factor – Mechanization of Agriculture

- The **mechanization of agriculture** meant the increasing use of machines on farms. **While, on one hand, mechanization led to higher farm productivity, it contributed on the other hand to a reduction in the number of laborers employed on a farm.**
- Using a plough or a combined harvester, one farmer is able to till or harvest within a short time acres of farm land which would have originally taken **ten** farmers to complete in the same time, or longer.
- **This meant that nine out the ten original farmers would have been forced off the land as a result of mechanization.**

# Medical Push Factor: Mechanization - Redundancy

- Mechanization meant that large sections of the increasing populations in the rural areas would have become redundant.
- **Those forced-off the land this way begin to migrate to the cities at a rate far in excess of the cities ability to absorb them economically. This is a phenomenon known as over urbanization – defined as the inability of the urban community to economically cater for its migrants.**

# Socio-Cultural Factors

## Social factors

- **Socially**, mobility was very slow in the rural areas because it was based on ascription.
- This means that the youth are compelled to wait and wait until they are old enough to rise up to some level of social prestige, that is, to inherit or ascribe to some traditional office such as that of the **abusua panyin**, or the **chief**.

# Social Push Factors - Social Mobility

- Social mobility, defined as **movement within the social structure vertically upwards or horizontally**- Vertical mobility means movement from a low position to a higher one in the same or different organizations which carries a higher remuneration and social prestige.
- Horizontal mobility means movement from one job to another one in the same or different organization but for which the individual receives the same salary and social prestige.

# Social Push Factors – The Frustration of Waiting

- **Social mobility can either be achieved or ascribed.**
- Ascription requires having to wait until one qualified for a position by reason of age through or inheritance. But the contemporary educated and uneducated youth are in a hurry and are thus discouraged by the prospects of having to wait for years in their villages to attain some recognition.
- **Frustrated, they leave their rural home towns to look for opportunities of achieving social mobility in the urban areas.**

# Cultural Push Factors

## Cultural factors

- The rural areas in most developing societies, according to Assimeng (1981) have been made to look as though they have been deliberately ignored - with reference to the provision of basic infrastructural facilities.
- The rural areas are deprived of such facilities as good schools, good hospitals, good sources of drinking water, good roads and good places of cultural retreat - such as cinema houses, parks and gardens, club houses such as one finds in the cities.
- **This makes living in the rural areas rather boring.**

# Cultural Push Factors Contd. 2

- The rural areas are not only physically hazardous but also dull, dark and drab to live in. Most of you who are either currently resident in the rural community or have migrated from a rural community can readily identify with the hazards and the boredom.
- The darkness has to do with the absence of electrical power connectivity to the town or village or the availability of power in the streets of the own or village but not in most homes which cannot afford the bills.
- **The sheer boredom of living in these drab areas constitutes a frustration which compels the rural dwellers to seek excitement where the action is – namely, the city.**

# Question

Which is more significant as a push factor of migration to the urban area – the social or the cultural factor? Discuss with illustrative examples.





# Topic Three

## The Centripetal (Pull) Factors

### Introduction

- The pull factors are those features whose existence in the urban areas constitutes a strong attraction for migrants to yearn to be there. They consist in what Kenneth Little (1965) has called the **Lure of The City**.
- These pull factors are probably a more important element in the growth of the cities. These factors are similarly **economic, social and cultural**

# Economic Pull Factors

## **Economic Pull Factors**

The Dual Economic Theory formulated originally by Lewis (1954) and further extended by Lee (1966) identifies a dichotomy (that is a gap or division) between the subsistence rural (traditional) economies and the industrial urban economies, recognizing that the modern industrial wage paid incomes are comparatively higher than rural incomes and act as a motivation to move from the traditional rural to the modern urban areas.

**These theories explain migration as an investment decision.**

# Economic Pull Factors – Secure Incomes in the Urban Areas

- The argument basically is that **economically** urban wages are distinctly higher than rural earnings because apart from governmental intervention in the pricing of rural commodities, **there are institutional arrangements such as Trade Unions (in the urban areas) and minimum wage laws which protect urban incomes.** Let us consider a hypothetical example.
- If we assume, hypothetically, that a bag of cocoa is sold at GHC10.00 (Ten Ghana cedis)), a young farmer who makes six bags of cocoa during the harvest season will make a total of GHC60.00 for that season lasting over six months to the next.

# Economic Pull Factors –Higher and Secure Incomes Contd.

- If we assume, hypothetically also, that his counterpart who has migrated to the city and is employed in the factory which processes the cocoa is paid GHC30.00 (thirty Ghana cedis) per month, he will be earning within the same six month period, a total of GHC180.00 (One hundred and eighty) Ghana cedis which is comparatively a much higher income than the farmer earns.
- **An additional advantage for the urban workers is that his income is protected by trade union and government minimum wage policies.**

# Economic Pull Factors – Job Opportunities

- Besides, **employment opportunities and modern manufacturing facilities are located in the urban areas.**
- As industrial productivity is higher than agricultural productivity even without trade union or government intervention, urban incomes seem to be higher than rural earnings and this serves as an attraction for rural residents to endeavor to be in the urban areas.

# Social Pull Factors - Achievable Mobility

## Social Pull Factors

Related to the **social factor** is the fact that the city is less dominated by the traditional ascription criteria for acquiring positions. In other words, in the city there is an abundance of opportunities for utilization, by those who are determined and are achievement-motivated or hard working.

These opportunities for social mobility are quite attractive to the imaginative rural youth, who come to the city willing to take any job, ranging from those in the public or private sector to setting up their own auto-mechanic, plumbing, handicrafts workshops, or shoe-shine, iced water selling, truck-pushing, petty trading enterprises or hustle on a daily basis for the so-called *kpa-kpa-kpá* jobs .

**It is in this sense that opportunities for social mobility are achievable and appear unlimited to the migrant.**

# Social Pull Factors -Privacy of life -Impersonality

- Further, there is impersonality and privacy of life in the urban area, as a result of its intense commercialization, bureaucratization, population size, density and heterogeneity (Wirth 1938).
- This gives the migrant a sense of anonymity, and satisfies his search for **privacy**. Compare this to the lack of privacy in the rural village because of the compact nature of dwellings and the frequent social interactions in the villages. By reason of this, everyone in the village is known to nearly everyone else.

# Social Pull Factors - Anonymity

- Thus, in the rural areas, both the good and bad people are very easily identifiable, and this leaves very little room for privacy.
- The urban area, by reason of its spatial concentration or agglomeration of populations affords the migrant the opportunity to disappear into the crowds anonymous.





# Cultural Pull Factors

## Cultural Pull Factors

- There are as well, important cultural factors which pull the migrant. **As the crucible of civilization, the city is the center of intense and refined cultural activities where, the cultural goals – the things worth striving for – in the words of Merton (1958) are actively pursued.**
- Thus the city is dominated not only by good schools, hospitals, good sources of drinking waters, good roads and good places of cultural retreat - such as discos, night clubs, theatres and a variety of entertainment facilities - but has a centralization of government ministries, international airports and rail terminals.
- All of these form a powerful magnet to attract people from the rural countryside.

# Cultural Pull Factors -Adventurism

- Other factors which can be identified as cultural include **adventurism** that is, the intense desire by rural youth to acquire social prestige and status by traveling to the city -the crucible of civilization - to acquire a „d’eeŶ-to label’.
- You may recall from your first year discussions, the story told of a young man called Nyamekye, whose mission to acquire the „d’eeŶ-to lad’eŶ in Accra turned sour.

# Cultural Pull Factors – Desire to Acquire the Been-to Label

- Nyamekye was attracted by the smart turn out of his friend Joeboy who had just returned to the village from Accra, wearing blue jeans, a tee shirt, a pair of tennis shoes and a base ball cap to match, and was carrying in his pocket a small walkman radio with the earphones plugged into his ears.
- Man, he looked very Awerida! Joeboy became the attention of the eyes of the village ladies who began to compete for his attention. This is the power of the been-to label.
- Nyamekye envied his been-to friend so much (because he (the friend) had become the latest guy in town visibly admired by the village girls) that he made up his mind he will also travel to Accra.

# Cultural Pull Factors – In Pursuit of the Been-to Label

- Without as much as a thought regarding which part of Accra he was going, or with whom to stay, Nyamekye caught a bus going to the city.
- Arriving late in the afternoon, he discovered to his dismay that he had nowhere to go, and decided to spend the night in a sawmill near the transport station where he had disembarked.
- In the night he was mistaken for a thief by the watchman at the mill, arrested and sent to the police.



# Adventurism Contd. 3

- The adventure of Nyamekye was ill-conceived and thus ended disastrously.
- But surely, many other adventurous Nyamekyes made it successfully to Accra or Kumasi and other large towns in Ghana and got themselves into the shoe-shine and other itinerant street business, for a season, after which they return briefly to their villages to enjoy the social honor that goes with the *d'eeŷ-to lad'e!*

# Summary of the Session

In this Session you learn that :

- The economic reasons why people leave the rural areas, have to do with (a) the low rural incomes, because of the governmental compulsory marketing schemes and controlled prices, (b) discriminatory land tenure system that favor landlords and (c ) absence of employment opportunities;
- The frustrations of having to wait endlessly to ascribe to a position of social honor discourages the youth and pushes them to migrate;
- Rural life is boring because of the absence of basic social facilities like good schools, hospitals, good water, good roads and entertainment facilities.

# Summary Contd.

- Economically, the comparative higher and „protected wages in the urban areas act as an attraction for the low earning rural dwellers to come to the city;
- The possibility of achieving a higher social status through oŶs own dint of hard work or through the „dŶeŶ-to-ladŶŶ (instead of waiting endlessly to ascribe to a traditional position) and the privacy of life in the cities is a „social attraction for migrants to come to the city;
- The designs for the good life, that is the cultural goals which make the city not only the crucible of civilization but also an exciting place to live is a „cultural attraction.

# Question

According to Kenneth Little, the „pull“ factors of migration attract more people to the urban areas than the „push“ factors. Can the same be said about migrations here in Ghana? With illustrative examples, discuss this with reference to yourself or to friends.



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