

Encyclopedia of **HUMAN GEOGRAPHY**

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Third, the focus on the national scale neglected class relations both within and between countries. Finally, although dependency theory used historical examples, it focused on what did not happen—development—and generalized to the point of obscuring important differences among countries.

Another line of criticism targets both the dependency and modernization conceptualizations of underdevelopment, arguing that these two theorizations share the assumption that economic development is a desirable objective. That is, they simply differ on whether it is attainable within the global capitalist system. From an anti- or postdevelopment perspective, this economically centered view is challenged. These critics suggest that the very terms of the debate have marginalized other cultures, ideas, and values by discursively reducing the diversity of much of the world by labeling its condition as one of underdevelopment and, in so doing, preparing the way for potentially destructive or homogenizing development projects.

Questions of underdevelopment as a manifestation of processes of uneven development have been central to geographic research. Geographers are especially concerned with the ways in which capital moves geographically to exploit the conditions of underdevelopment such as low wages without incurring the cost of development, thereby using mobility as a spatial fix. Geographers have pointed out that theories of underdevelopment are inherently geographic, emphasizing space over class to highlight interregional relations and surplus transfer. They have also argued that underdevelopment theory has a normative component concerned with issues of social, spatial, and (increasingly) environmental justice. Moreover, as the wealth and income gap widens at all spatial scales, geographers now are critically engaged with analyzing uneven globalization, not only its causes but also its impacts such as marginalization, polarization, and underdevelopment.

—Gail Hollander

See also Dependency Theory; Development Theory; Economic Geography; Globalization; Marxism; Geography and; Uneven Development; World Systems Theory

Suggested Reading

- Baran, P. (1957). *The political economy of growth*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
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UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

Uneven development refers to the unequal distribution of people, resources, and wealth that is a fundamental characteristic of human geography. Uneven development is evident at the global, regional, national, and urban scales. Concern with uneven development stems from the fact that vast differences in human well-being exist at each of these scales.

Human geographers seek to describe and explain the processes by which uneven development is created. Furthermore, many human geographers are concerned with addressing the social injustices that are part and parcel of uneven development.

Early attempts to explain differential patterns of human geography relied on environmentally based explanations. Here the argument is that uneven development reflects the widely varying resource endowments of different locations. Thus, the rapid development of European industrialization was said to be the result of the availability of resources such as coal.

When taken to their extremes, such explanations were unabashedly determinist. Among their most egregious claims, environmental determinists contended that climatic variations were responsible for the allegedly pronounced spatial variation in human intelligence and behavior. According to Ellsworth Huntington, the climatic variability typical of mid-latitude climates produced vigorous and entrepreneurial people, whereas the unchanging tropical climate caused the lassitude and lack of ambition claimed to be characteristic of humans who lived in tropical locations.

Environmental determinism was not supported by empirical evidence and was soundly rejected by human geographers early in the 20th century. In its stead came theories such as possibilism. Possibilists argued that spatial patterns of uneven development were caused by differences in the ways in which humans used the resource endowments available to them. Spatial variation in human activity was not determined by natural resources; rather, levels of development depended on choices made in how to use

available resources. However, possibilists also argued that some regions were better endowed with natural resources than were others.

Uneven development has also been studied through the lens of regional geography. Regional geographers contended that uneven development was the product of distinctive regional ensembles of culture and nature. Space was viewed as a set of containers, with each one holding a distinctive combination of natural resources and human culture. With this in mind, regional geographers set themselves with the task of identifying and explaining the evident (to them) patterns of regional differentiation. Uneven development was simply taken for granted as the natural outcome of the many unique combinations of culture and resource endowment.

The emphasis on regional geography largely disappeared during the quantitative revolution of the 1960s. Statistically oriented human geographers rejected the notion of unique regions. Instead, quantitative economic geographers argued that spatial variation in factors of production such as labor and transportation cost explained why some places specialized in the production of manufactured goods while other locations produced agricultural products. Therefore, uneven development is reflective of spatial variation in cost of production. Location choices are made according to economically rational criteria; whatever can be produced for the least cost (and thereby the most profit) is what will be produced in a particular location. According to this model, locational specialization occurs as each place concentrates on what it can produce most efficiently (i.e., at the least cost). Because it is most efficient for each place to specialize, patterns of trade develop and enable each location to secure what it needs while focusing on what it can produce most efficiently. It is argued that as economically efficient specialization increases over time, regional convergence will occur, thereby reducing—if not eliminating—uneven development. Uneven development is viewed as a temporary situation that will, in time, disappear.

During the 1970s, human geographers began to focus more on spatial variation in human well-being. Recognizing that uneven development meant that levels of human well-being varied considerably across the globe, some human geographers began asking whether a more just distribution of resources could be accomplished. Interest in issues of spatial justice was stimulated by the 1973 publication of David Harvey's *Social Justice and the City*. Explicitly rejecting his earlier reliance on spatial analysis, Harvey argued that

uneven development (in this case at the urban scale) was an inherent part of the capitalist space economy. Harvey's concern with social justice, and his recognition that uneven development was produced by the capitalist economy, was a landmark event in human geography. Most noteworthy was the explicit recognition that there is a direct and intimate relationship between places that are well-off and places where the inhabitants suffer from the burdens of poverty, racism, and economic exploitation. The concern for social justice implications of uneven development spread (unevenly) throughout human geography, and many began to document patterns of spatial inequality. Particularly noteworthy was David Smith's book, *Where the Grass Is Greener*, which examined uneven development at a variety of spatial scales.

Interest in uneven development was further bolstered with the 1984 publication of Neil Smith's *Uneven Development*. Taking an explicitly Marxian approach, Smith argued that uneven development was a product of the contradictions inherent in capitalism. Thus, some places are sites of rapid and damaging disinvestment, whereas others receive flows of new capital that enable their rapid development.

Uneven development continues to be the spatial expression of social injustice. Global, national, and local conflicts are fueled by the growing spatial inequality between wealthy and poor areas as well as between wealthy and poor people. Perhaps when a more even development of human well-being is achieved, the world will become a more peaceful place.

—Jeff Crump

See also Dependency Theory; Social Justice; Underdevelopment

Suggested Reading

- Harvey, D. (1973). *Social justice and the city*. London: Edward Arnold.
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URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Urban and regional planning, in its essence, is concerned with deliberate efforts by societies to influence