
Cocta News

This time we report on a new publication in the INTER-COCTA project which presents an analysis of various aspects of the concept of growth. It was written by Professor Henry Teune, Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA 19104 USA. Please contact him for further information about the publication of the report.

Growth

Growth is a key concept in the social sciences. Although much of what has been studied as growth during the past two or three centuries deals with populations and economies, other areas of growth in the social and political world are addressed, such as differentiation.

A major conclusion is that there is little theory about why growth, even for that most remarkable exponential increase in the world's population that began around 1750. There are many accounts of particular types of growth, such as for particular industries. But there is practically nothing about system formation, how new types of human organizations emerged, except for some gropings about the rise of the modern state.

Growth is a logical concept referring to something getting bigger or bigger than something else. It takes place through processes of production or reproduction. Social systems grow by putting or relating two or more things. All growth requires moving things, putting them together, and connecting them.

Two types of growth are distinguished; qualitative or structural and quantitative. Qualitative growth involves the emergence of new systems or components, the demise of others; and changing relationships among them. Quantitative growth is the increase and decrease in the number of things and components and displacement or size.

Certainly since Malthus, growth has been tied to concepts of limits and niches that stimulates competition and conflict. Indeed, growth and limits gave rise in the 19th century to a dominant western theoretical paradigm of ecological change which still today influences thinking about social change. The ecological paradigm in turn depends on the concept of equilibrium.

From time to time the growth-limit debate has come to the political forefront and then has disappeared, most recently in the early 1970s. Much of this discussion, of course, focused on economic and population growth with the addition of pollution as a limit. A new wrinkle on the old idea came from the extension of limits of growth to social limits. Educational degrees, for example, diminish in value as more people acquire them. Both of those limits, however, did not address new technologies or qualitative social growth through the creation of new kinds of social positions or new forms of education.

Growth as a process, how growth takes place, and as a

dynamic of social change, are also distinguished. The dynamics of growth are largely taken from other dynamics of social change, such as conflict, exchange, dialectics, evolution (learning), and development (qualitative change, increasing the complexity or scale of a social system). A few general laws about growth in social systems are discussed, such as the necessity for social systems to increase their levels of information to grow, and some of the hypothesized relationships between quantitative growth and qualitative change.

Measuring growth has been problematic in the social sciences. In part this is due to lack of theoretical specification of the time during which different kinds of growth takes place; in part because of changed political ideas about what is important to measure and how. For example, did the stagnating rates of increase in labor productivity reflect true productivity growth or was it because services emerged as a salient economic activity in the industrialized countries? The main challenge in measuring growth concerns structural change. Aggregative growth poses fewer difficulties.

Growth, as all change evokes strong normative reactions. It is generally tied to the concept of pathologies such as urbanism or industrialization. Since the late 18th century, population growth has been evaluated negatively, sometimes in the strong terms of doom. But in western countries it also has been part of the concept of human progress. Today almost all forms of growth have been politicized and economic growth has become an integral part of the legitimacy of governments. Growth is discussed as it relates to stability, equality, and participation, three major values of the modern world.

Note is taken of the historic intellectual shift from associating economic and social growth to political centralization. During the past two decades the relationship between economic growth and decentralization has been generally accepted.

Prof. Dr. Jan-Erik Lane,
Chairman of COCTA, University of Umeå,
Department of Political Science,
S-90187 Umeå

Call for Papers: Journal of Theoretical Politics

A new quarterly Political Science Journal has been announced by SAGE Publications Ltd., 28 Banner Street, London EC1Y 8QE, England. It will be the official publication of COCTA and of PIPE (Policies, Institutions, Performance and Evaluation), research committee and study group of the International Political Science Association. COCTA is also associated with the International Social Science Council, and the International Sociological Association. Although linked to these organisations, the journal will retain editorial independence.

The first issue is announced for January 1989. The editors invite the submission of articles and review articles on any theoretical topic treated rigorously and analytically. Articles should be sent to Prof. E. Ostrom, Workshop in Political Theory and Political Analysis, Indiana University, 513 N. Park, Bloomington, IN, 47405, USA.