

# 'industrial' and 'post – industrial' societies essay sample

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In sociology, industrial society refers to a society driven by the use of technology to enable mass production, supporting a large population with a high capacity for division of labour. Such a structure developed in the west in the period of time following the Industrial Revolution, and replaced the agrarian societies of the Pre-modern, Pre-industrial age. Industrial societies are generally mass societies, and may be succeeded by an Information society. They are often contrasted to with the traditional societies. Industrial society is characterized by the use of external energy sources, such as fossil fuels, to increase the rate and scale of production. The production of food is shifted to large commercial farms where the products of industry, such as combine harvesters and fossil fuel based fertilizers, are used to decrease required human labor while increasing production.

No longer needed for the production of food, excess labor is moved into these factories where mechanization is utilized to further increase efficiency. As populations grow, and mechanization is further refined, often to the level of automation, many workers shift to expanding service industries. Industrial society makes urbanization desirable, in part so that workers can be closer to centers of production, and the service industry can provide labor to workers and those that benefit financially from them, in exchange for a piece of production profits with which they can buy goods. This leads to the rise of very large cities and surrounding suburban areas with a high rate of economic activity.

These urban centers require the input of external energy sources in order to overcome the diminishing returns of agricultural consolidation, due partially to the lack of nearby arable land, associated transportation and storage

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costs, and are otherwise unsustainable. This makes the reliable availability of the needed energy resources high priority in industrial government policies. Some theoreticians—namely Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Manuel Castells — argue that we are located in the middle of a transformation or transition from industrial societies to post-modern societies. The triggering technology for the change from an agricultural to an industrial organization was steam power, allowing mass production and reducing the agricultural work necessary. Thus many industrial cities are built around rivers. Identified as catalyst or trigger for the transition to post-modern or informational society is global information technology.

If a nation becomes “ post-industrial” it passes through, or dodges, a phase of society predominated by a manufacturing-based economy and moves on to a structure of society based on the provision of information, innovation, finance, and services. A virtual cult of ‘ creatives’ have sprung up embodying and often describing and defending the post-industrial ethos. They argue that businesses that create intangibles have taken a more prominent role in the wake of manufacturing’s decline and that in some countries, the production of creative intangibles produces more exports than manufacturing alone. Actor and artistic director of the Old Vic Theatre, Kevin Spacey, has argued the economic case for the arts in terms of providing jobs and being of greater importance in exports than manufacturing (as well as an educational role) in a guest column he wrote for The Times. As the term has been used, a few common themes (not limited to those below) have begun to emerge.

The economy undergoes a transition from the production of goods to the provision of services. Knowledge becomes a valued form of capital (e. g., the knowledge produced through the Human Genome Project). Producing ideas is the main way to grow the economy. Through processes of globalization and automation, the value and importance to the economy of blue-collar, unionized work, including manual labor (e. g., assembly-line work) decline, and those of professional workers (e. g. scientists, creative-industry professionals, and IT professionals) grow in value and prevalence. Behavioral and information sciences and technologies are developed and implemented. (e. g. behavioral economics, information architecture, cybernetics, Game theory and Information theory.