Ester Boserup's Population Theory

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Period 6
Ester Boserup

• Danish economist born in 1910
• Worked at the United Nations and studied both agricultural and economic development
• Developed her theory in 1965 in Denmark
• Wrote several notable books, including “The Conditions of Agricultural Growth” and “Population Growth: Anthropological Implications”
How does this relate to geography?

• Closely related to Malthus’s theory
• Claims that lands tend to be used with heavy reliance on slash and burn farming
• This will only occur when population density is low enough to allow it
• Only when the population rises, there will be a decline in fallowing land using fire and fields will cultivate
• Technological advances will be made to continue food supply
Real World Example- Green Revolution in the 1960’s

• The Green Revolution seemed like the answer to the lack of food in the developing world
• Poor countries have high birth rates and growing populations
• Modified crops were invented as well as continued expansion of farming areas, and using seeds with improved genetics
• Demonstrates Boserup’s theory that advances will be made to increase food supply
Strengths of Boserup’s Theory

• “Necessity is the mother of invention”- people only made advances when they realized they needed to
• Describes how increased food supply came after the huge population growth
• Increased food supply came with increased technological advances
• Optimist about the future of agricultural and population development
• Shows how the rate of food supply may vary but never reach its carrying capacity because every time it gets near, a new advancement causes supplies to increase
Weaknesses of Boserup’s Theory

• Doesn’t take into account immigration or migration
• Emigration occurs in areas of over population and lack of globalization
• Because overpopulation is occurring, it shows that food supply is low, or not distributed evenly.
• Assumes the amount of land available can’t be changed and also doesn’t take into account trade or conquest
• Doesn’t work in many situations because increased agricultural intensification doesn’t necessarily require more work
• Only really works where labor is necessary and insufficient
Sources

- http://abcgeography.wikispaces.com/Ester+Boserup