

Population Theories

Malthus, Neo-Malthusian, Marx,
Catton, Simon/Boserup

Thomas Malthus (1766 – 1834)

- English Economist
 - 1766-1834
 - Considered to be father of Demographics
 - Made observations of England's working class during industrial revolution

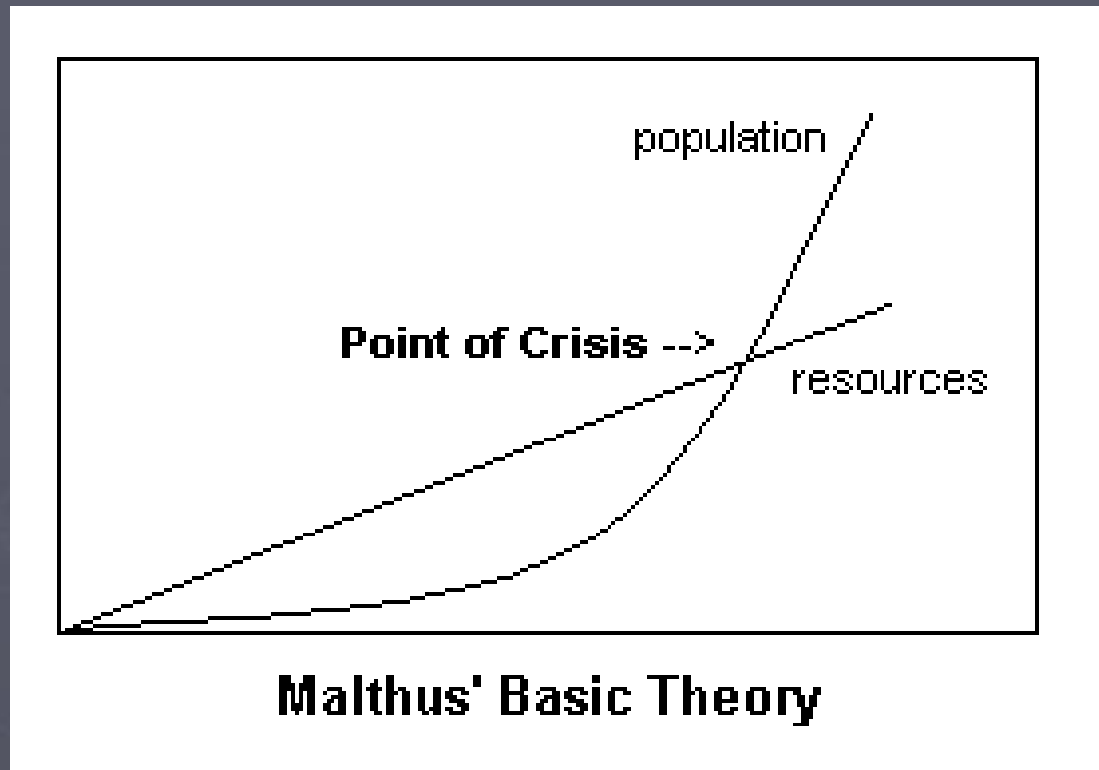


Essay on the Principle of Population

- Malthus argues that world population is growing geometrically while food production is only increasing arithmetically
 - Population would soon exceed food stores



Population vs. Resources

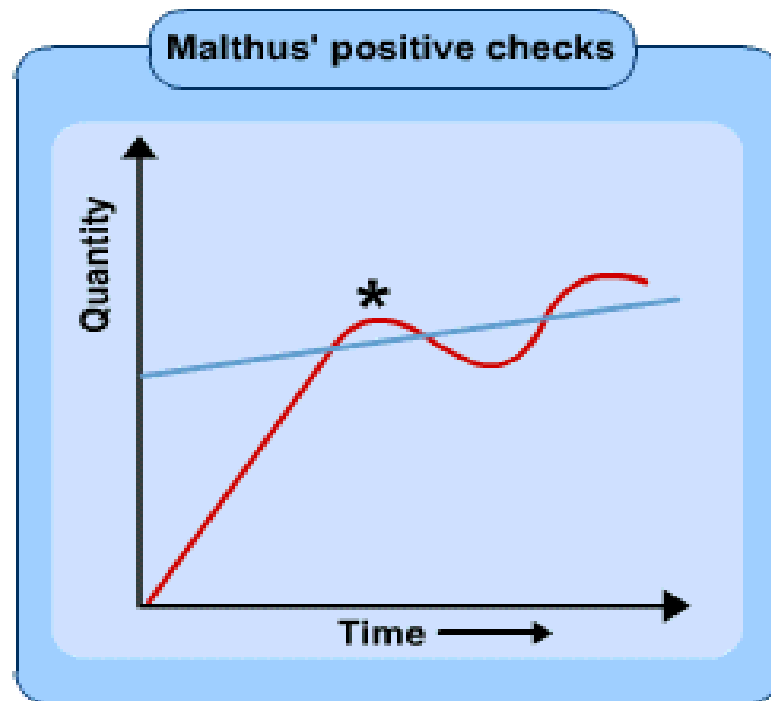


- For stages 1-3 resources exceed population, then as population exceed resources this leads to “misery”

Population Checks

- Population could not continue un-checked and malthus classified two different types of checks
 - Positive Checks: Factors increasing mortality (War, Famine, Disease, etc...)
 - Preventative/Negative Checks: Factors decreasing fertility (Moral restraint, contraception, abortion, etc...)
- Argues moral restraint is best way to avoid “misery”

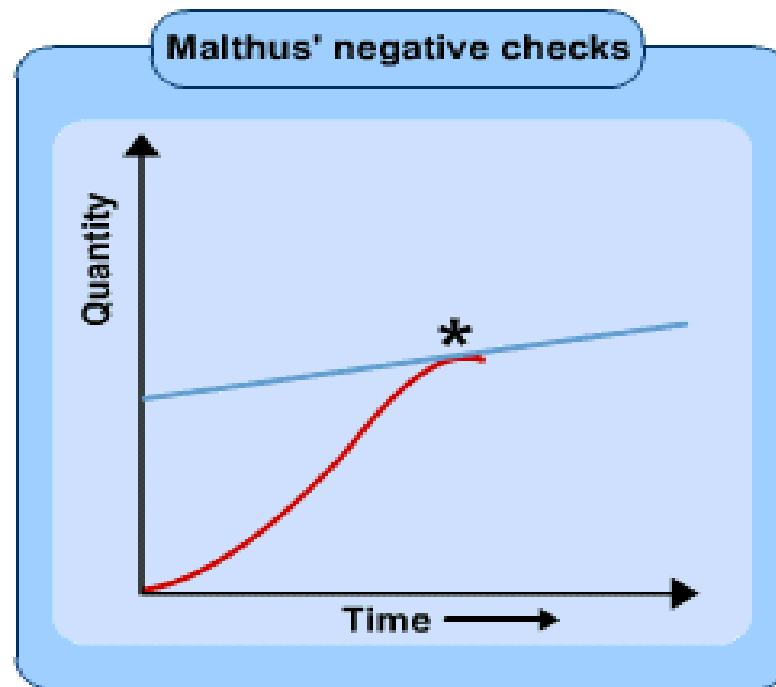
Positive Checks



*** Population exceeds food supply and is kept in check by war, famine, or disease. It then drops below the food supply. As the population recovers, so the cycle continues.**

* Red line is population, blue line is food production

Negative Checks



* Here, as population starts to approach the limits of the food supply, so growth slows. Malthus says this slowing is caused by delayed marriage.

* Red line is population, blue line is food production

Neo-Malthusians

- Contemporary Geographers say that two characteristics of recent population growth make Malthus' theory more realistic today.
 1. Transfer of medical technology (but not wealth) from MDCs to LDCs has allowed for fastest population growth in poorest areas
 - Creating even larger gaps between resources and population

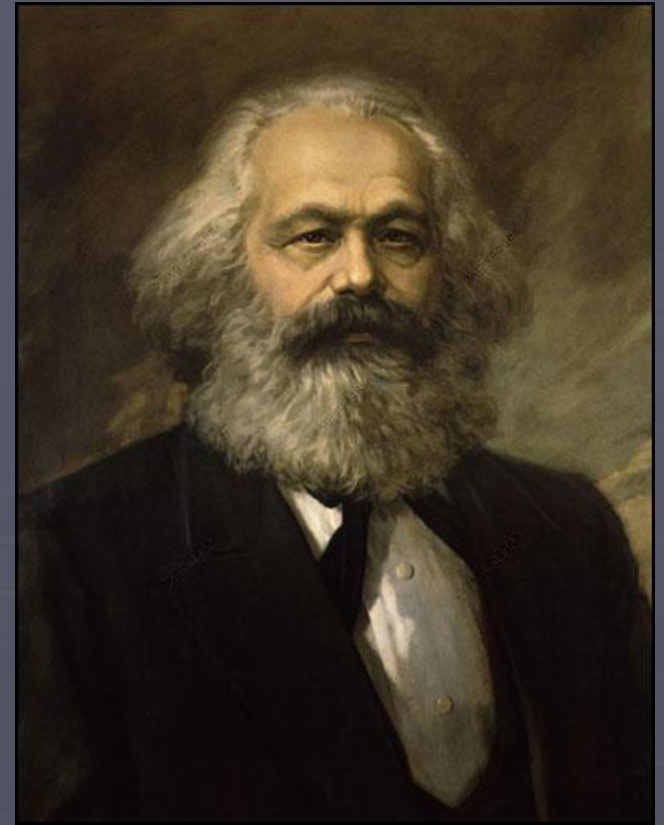
Neo-Malthusians

2. Neo-Malthusians Robert Kaplan and Thomas Fraser expanded Malthus' ideas to more than just food, but to also include energy resources
- Argue wars and civil violence will increase as food, clean air, fuel, and suitable farmland become more scarce



Karl Marx (1818 – 1883)

- Rejects Malthus' ideas of natural order of population increase
- Instead argues that capitalism drives population growth as a way to increase pool of cheap labor



William Catton (1926 -)

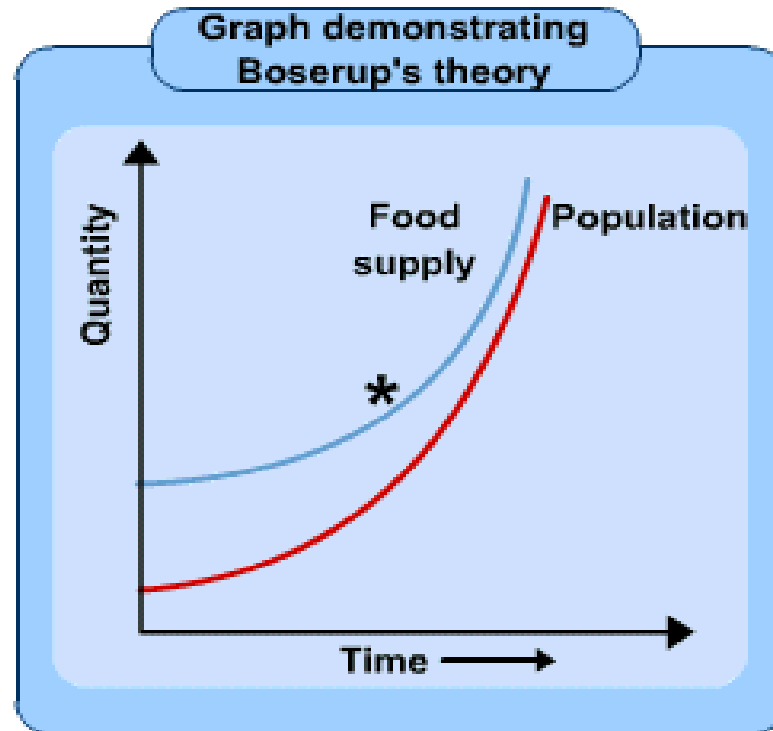
- *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis for Revolution*
- Links population with “carrying capacity of ecosystems”
- “the cornucopian myth”
 - Inaccurate belief the earth is limitless
 - As humans over-exert the earth’s resources they will eventually pay the price
 - Environmental damage
 - New Technologies adopted without knowing implications



20th Century Thought

- Esther Boserup
 - Optimistic view of population growth
 - As population approached crisis the world would respond with assistance spawning economic growth and new technologies
- Julian Simon
 - Population growth spurs economic development
 - More people means more ideas

Boserup's Theory



* Boserup argues that as the population approaches the limits of the food supply, that food supply increases as new technology improves yields.