

Criteria for the Living Standard in Development Countries

If the ruler of an oil-rich sheikdom of the Persian Gulf receives high royalties and profit percentages from a foreign oil concern, statistics on the per-capita-income in this small country—small, when going by the population figure—jump.

But the slum-huts housing the fishermen, the primitive camps of the camel shepherds, the clay "houses" of the oasis peasants still tell as little about a high standard of living as do the corrugated sheet-iron barracks of the workers in the oil fields.

If the per-capita-income is measured within political frontiers of a state instead of within economically linked regions, there is at once a source of mis-apprehensions (though, of course, not of errors because the mathematics are correct). If the spread of incomes can not be shown statistically, the picture may be so distorted as are the reflections in a concave mirror.

There, surely are statistical methods for the true balancing-out of the spread-factors,

but there are no reliable data for the factual spread: no bazar-merchant, high ranking civil servant or policeman will readily disclose his real income, and any evaluation in terms of money of the "rations" of the lowest classes is extremely difficult.

The Quality-Quantity Problems

It may be immensely difficult to express values established in the local currency in terms of a realistic rate of exchange related to the actual purchasing power of a local currency and thus allowing for international comparisons—but, this is nonetheless possible.

The real difficulty is in the nature of the "comparison problem" between quality and quantity, sociological and economic evidence.

We know these difficulties from attempts to calculate the economic values of "cultural demand" or "training investments", the "prestige value" or "status", from our own experience. Particularly the advertising industry faces

time and again the problem that economic figure-standards and "imponderables" are not comparable. This has indeed been the cause of a number of bankruptcies as a result of unforeseen trends in the public's taste.

In evaluating the standard of living it is perhaps not necessary at all to side-step into a third and only allegedly common level of the money value. Perhaps there are objective standards.

Search for an Objective Standard

The search for them is going on all the time, anyway. One has constructed "consumer baskets", one has compared calories' quantities, one has also tried to include minimum requirements for clothes or houses.

There are obvious objections against these endeavours: Allegedly, one quarter of a litre of wine belongs to the daily minimum for "the" Frenchman, whereas he will willingly abstain from consuming the Russian oatmeal. The minimum demand for spices is probably higher in Africa or Asia than it is in the case of the prosperous people in Europe. An Eskimo certainly needs more clothes than an inhabitant of a Paci-

fic island, and the housing problem is quite different in Southern Europe than in Central Europe, Canada or Cuba.

On the strength of these objections the attempts to arrive at an objective standard should, however, not be abandoned. But they call for modesty on behalf of all concerned, because neither the economist, the sociologist, doctor of medicine or the technical expert, can alone solve the problem without all-round liaison and cooperation. It will not be possible quickly to arrive at actual figures, rather will it be necessary initially to agree on quantitative standards.

Climatically Comparable Areas

It is no longer the case that groups belonging to different levels of culture or prosperity live exclusively within certain latitudes. There are people of all cultural groups in all climatic zones: there are Negroes in Alaska as well as North-Europeans in the equatorial belt. There even are closed-in areas with a recognized high standard of requirements in zones previously reserved for other groups of the society—such examples are Hawaii or North-Eastern Australia.

One should in the beginning not set universal patterns but, instead, compare only climatically comparable areas with each other. It is, for instance, possible that air-conditioned installations in the hot zone contribute towards indolence or comfort; it is equally possible that air-conditioning has favourable psychological influences on health, appetite, working performance and mental capabilities.

Once these aspects have been clearly varified—but not before—it will be possible to try and establish their economic value. It is also necessary to find out whether air-conditioning has been installed in only one room of each dwelling house, public building (such as Government offices), hospital, school and large shopping centres or whether there is air-conditioning throughout the floor space. Perhaps the value of an air-conditioning system is after all only limited when compared with the traditional building style in climatically hot countries?

Between the extreme of a modern house with electric air-conditioning and the hot and sticky mud-hut there are, however, many gradations; other factors—such as the

building density, water supply, sanitary facilities, the cleanliness or the neighbouring vegetation—are often more important for comfort and psychological effect than all technical building details together. It is equally possible to think in terms of a value-scale taking into account such things as protection against the heat of the sun, wind, rain, inquisity, theft, dangerous animals or insects, as well as other aspects: supply with fresh air, lighting, cleaning, durability, earthquake-proof. For instance, on the Indian-Pakistani sub-continent it is quite possible to evaluate the fencing of open verandas, which is as expensive as it adds to comfort and health.

Tangible characteristics of this kind can be established also in the field of clothing, food, learning and training or health preservation. It is for instance controversial whether whisky really contributes towards a high living standard in development countries. It has also not been established whether tinned pork represents a necessity in hot climates. It is, however, not open to doubt that not merely calories are required for the preservation of the full working capacity, but

proteins and animal fats. Whether a woman wears a sari, a loin cloth or a cotton dress can be left out of the considerations—not so, however, the necessities of minimum protection from weather and insects, as well as from others' view, in colourful and tasteful tissues not irritating for the skin and which are available in sufficient variety and quantities

Standards Arising from the Practice

In other words: in finding standards from day-to-day practical experience and observations we must abstain from basing our evaluations on questionable original statistics and, should, instead, endeavour to develop — from inter-disciplinary spade-work — concrete standards arising from the practice... standards which are of importance for the economic-social evaluation and commercial market prospects.

Romantic or interest-conditioned gossip that this group or the other is said not to want this or the other improvement may well be left out. It may of course be that some families did not like to go over from potatoes and inferior fats to a more differentiated diet. It has all the same been established that this change-over was good for them. Many people on our earth may not have a desire for electric current or healthier drinking water because their power of imagination has up to now been limited. Nevertheless, the transformation from the light-less night to the lamp or the waterpool via the well to the water-tap should, and can, be evaluated.

Science has a chance to prove, on the example of the working-out of standard measures, whether in the age of development aid it will and can face the mastering of tasks of this nature.

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CONSTANCY

His companion bent over the dying man, to catch the last faintly whispered words. The utterance came with pitiful feebleness, yet with sufficient clearness:

"I am dying—yes. Go to Fannie. Tell her—I died—with her name—on my lips, that I—loved her—her alone always... And Jennie—tell Jennie—the same thing."