

A Novel Picture of the Disparities in the World

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For GDP per capita 80 countries were lagging behind Sweden for more than 70 years, of them 36 countries more than 160 years. Å

The time distance approach can contribute a broader way of thinking and changed semantics into the present state-of-the-art of comparative analysis for the methodology to measure and assess the overall "position" and "progress" and within countries.

In the empirical part S-time-distances were estimated for 160 countries for GDP per capita in 2003 and for about 190 countries for female life expectancy and for infant mortality in 2005 against the long-term series for Sweden as a benchmark. Å

A novel added dimension of the disparity in the world is shown: one half of the countries (80 countries) were lagging Sweden by more than 70 years, of them 36 countries even for more than 160 years. For infant mortality the median value was 57 years and for female life expectancy 53 years. Å

The respective Gini coefficient for GDP per capita of 0.515 is the static counterpart of the S-time-distance measure. Both measures are complementing each other but the story-telling capability to policy makers and public concerned with the world situation is much greater for the S-time-distance results.

Comparisons between EU27, USA and China illustrate the theoretical points that the degree of disparity may be very different in static terms and in time distance. This conclusion was very strong in the analysis of the Human Development Index (HDI) which raises a set of questions rather than presenting answers: how to treat and interpret inter-temporal changes of composite indicators?

This article prepared for presentation at the 30th General Conference of the International Associations for Research in Income and Wealth is available also on <http://www.iariw.org/papers/2008/sicherl.pdf>. Å

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