QUALITY OF LIFE IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA: AN EXPLORATORY GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT. An attempt is made to describe territorial social indicators for Kwara State, Nigeria, and to suggest how they might be used to map inequalities.

Although it is generally accepted by the various world nations that the state of the nation is a matter of great concern and needs to be monitored, a dichotomy has often been maintained between economic and social well-being. Whereas both aspects of well-being represent the total health of the nation, far greater attention has been given to economic performance and technological rivalries while social problems such as drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, malnutrition, environmental degradation, social alienation, infant mortality, racial and ethnic discrimination and many others, which themselves are largely the price of progress, have often been relegated to the background.

The general lack of concern for social issues has not only been great amongst policy makers but has been much greater amongst academics, especially geographers. Whereas geographers’ concern for the spatial distribution of economic well-being started as far back as the early sixties (Thompson et al., 1962; Lloyd and Dicken, 1972, Ch. 10), that for social well-being otherwise known variously as ‘quality of life’, ‘level of living’, or ‘social indicators’ started only about a decade ago with the coming of the so-called ‘social indicators movement’ (Peet, 1970, 1971; Rose, 1971; Harries, 1974; Shannon and Dever, 1974; Harvey, 1972; Smith, 1973; Knox, 1975).

Geographical studies on spatial variations in quality of life are not only recent and few. They also concentrate largely on the developed countries of the world, particularly the United States and Britain. Since the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare first declared interest in monitoring social change in a seminar document entitled ‘Toward a social report’, contributions by geographers have been encouraging (Smith, 1973, 1977; Dickinson et al., 1972 Harvey, 1973; Smith and Gray, 1972; Wilson,

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1973; Oyebanji, 1978; Harries, 1974). In Britain, geographers’ interest (Moser, 1970; Shonfield and Shaw, 1972; Kamrany and Christakis, 1970; Coates and Rawston, 1971, Knox, 1974, 1975) followed the British Government publication of ‘Social trends’ in 1970. France followed in the footsteps of the United States and Britain when in 1975, it too published the annual ‘Données Sociales (INSEE, 1975). No comparable integrated studies have been done in developing countries by any government while scholarly works on territorial social indicators for developing countries are few and largely oriental (Andrews, 1973; Cant, 1975; Gostkowski, 1974; Wilson, 1973). Africa in particular has virtually been neglected in this area of concern. It was not until about October 1978, for example, that Nigeria began to study the use of socio-economic indicators in National Development through a NISER/UNESCO National Workshop.

The utility of social indicator development is so critical to national development that every nation should aspire to live with one. For example, it enables the society and individuals to know whether things are getting better or worse in different geographical areas. It also helps policy makers to know the effect of particular decisions on social well-being in general. Finally, it leads to far greater understanding of the structure of a given society and consequently to such means as are needed for maintaining a sensible territorial social policy (Smith, 1973, p. 8). Further works in the area of territorial social well-being in developing areas are therefore of paramount interest to their total development.

I. RESEARCH PURPOSES AND STUDY AREA

It is the purpose of the present study to develop territorial social indicators for a developing country, Nigeria. Apart from some examination and analysis of single components such as health, housing, education and environmental quality (Inyang, 1981; Sada, 1977; Oyebanji, 1980; Onibokun, 1975; Onokerhoraye, 1977), most geographical studies on welfare in Nigeria at the national, regional or local level, have hitherto centered on the economic aspects (Mabogunje, 1974; Onyemelukwe, 1978; Oyebanji, 1976a, 1976b; Adegbola, 1978). Moreover, a quick look at Nigeria’s development plans, from colonial to post colonial times, shows much higher percentage expenditure on mining, trade and industry, transport and communications and, to some extent, education while pure social sectors such as health, town