

SOCIAL INDICATORS -- THE SOCIAL BASIS OF
THE QUALITY OF THE LIFE IN THE METROPOLIS

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We have located the analysis of the quality of life in the metropolis in a broader context. In our view it is essentially an enquiry into the dynamics of the social, economic and political process that play a major role in establishing the scale, shape and meaning of space. A discussion which considers the quality of life in the abstracts and aggregate level separates it from its citizens and leaves urban systems without human experiences and people without cities. Because society is structured around conflicting positions with definite alternative values and interests, so the production of space and cities will be, too. Urban structures express these juxtapositions in spatial forms and living environment.

On the basis of understanding of historical changes manifested in the capitalist mode of production and the industrial and informational modes of development, one can delineate the socio-spatial processes that have led to the restructuring of territory and assignment of the social meaning to the city. These comprise: the concentration of resources and the means of production, units of managements and decision making, knowledge based activities, finances, labour power and means of consumption in the form of gigantic and complex unit known as the metropolis: the specialisation of spatial location according to the interests of capital and to the efficiency of industrial production, transportation and distribution; the commodification of the city itself designed to stimulate individual consumption, mobility of population and resources shifting to where they are required for profit maximising leading to large scale migration from rural areas and marginalisation of vast masses. The socio-spatial dialectic is further conditioned in the specificity of third world urbanisation with increasing economic integration into the world capitalist system in the circumstances of unequal development. This generates the metropolis which forms a part of the world economy but its population does not share equal access to the world's resources. For this reason urban inequality is becoming more pronounced. Moreover precapitalist social and spatial forms persist but get subordinated to the dominant capitalist mode to serve its need. It is against this background of metropolitan development the human experience and life conditions are articulated.

The emergent metropolis in the third world is being increasingly structured around the goals and needs of capitalists mode of production industrial growth and informational development. This is facilitated industrial growth and informational development. This is facilitated by an access to cheap labour which is required not only to power industries but also to provide complimentary services, ancillary manufacturing and other needs essential for the functioning of the socio economic system of the city. The internal dynamics of the dominant social process leads to structural differentiation of the economic and knowledge based activities covering a wide range of technology, of use of capital, communication networks, labour and managerial or organisational skills and social and cultural resources, Under these conditions, high premiums are obtained by capital and by managerial, technical, professional and labour skills. A large proportion of urban population, particularly the popular sectors lacking in capital and specialised skills and social resources

are absorbed in the periphery of the system engendered by industrial and informational modes of development and by the expansion of capitalists mode of production. This forms the basis of urban income and social inequalities. These differentiations underpin the social stratification in the city, and determine to a large extent, the way in which the different social groups and classes interact and respond to the social economic and political forces. The city gets territorially differentiated in the two social worlds; one of the dominant strata comprising social categories emerging from the dynamics of combined outcomes of process of accumulation and demands of industrial and informational development and the other of popular classes. These two worlds interact in a division of labour but exist together though differentiated and distanced from each other. This process is closely interrelated to the social and spatial complexity and the quality of life in the metropolitan city.

The city must provide the basic facilities that the workers and their families need for survival and development housing, health centres, schools, transport and public services. These are necessary conditions for the reproduction of labour power. The nature of facilities needed are such that they must often be provided collectively and through the agency of the state. There is also the pressure of providing social and physical infrastructure that contributes directly to productivity and profitability of the productive enterprises. The state is thus faced with contradictory pressures of ensuring the productivity and the profitability of the enterprises by providing the needed infrastructure and the meeting the demands of the large masses of urban residents for housing, schools, health centres and other social and public services. In this situation, the metropolitan city increasingly becomes the centre for competition for the use of urban space and resources for housing, for a school, or hospital for shopping and office, for industries, for a corner on the sidewalk to sell merchandise and for utilities and services. Under these conditions the popular classes are forced to compete with the dominant strata for services and facilities that are needed for well-being.

Two parallel histories of urban development closely interconnected but ecologically and socially different, have emerged as a result of these dynamic social process. One is the formal city represented by explicit concerns and demands of production and management, financial network and commerce, telecommunications and the social groups involved in the articulation of these social forces. The basic spatial configuration and the norms of development and living environment are set in accordance with the needs and life styles of these groups. A large proportion of the scarce resources are utilised for improving their quality of life. This has led to work place and living place differentiation, styles of leisure, individualised interaction and spatial arrangement where space is appropriated to meet specific purposes. This has created the whole ecology of skyscrapers, luxury housing, sumptuous offices and commercial complexes and shopping centres, open spaces and parks and exclusive residential neighbourhoods. The norms and standards for public services and community facilities along with their delivery systems have also been geared to suit the quality of life of the privileged groups. The second is that of the popular classes. It is the daily experience of millions of people who must find viable solutions to ensure

their survival and take advantage of the myriad opportunities for raising their quality of life. It manifests in shanty towns and squatting and in illegal preemption of land who can not get it through institutional mechanisms within the limits of their meagre resources. They make their own distinctive habitats organised independently of public authorities. These habitats are also unique in as much as their formation and subsequent development are attendant upon a degree of popular participation and mobilisation of collective efforts at the grassroots. On the basis of their locations in the urban structure, the popular classes articulate the priorities for their own living environment. Popular participation is strategic resource and instrument of power. It becomes a crucial element in defining the quality of life not simply as an item of individual consumption but a collective good and a shared experience. As a result, the city becomes open to the responses of the popular sectors searching for new spatial forms and patterns of life. Within the constraints of their life and choices available within their resources, they are evolving new settlement values. The essence of the emergence of new settlement values is that it is giving birth to a concept of a city as use value.

The crux of the matter is that the metropolitan city maps out quality of life which reflects social relations of power and domination. It is therefore necessary to arrive at an understanding of the way in which people relate to the process of urban development and in particular to see how the urban poor evaluate their own worlds and shape their environment in the narrow interstices available to the. The dominant groups and social classes having the institutional power impose an urban according to their interests and values. However, a challenge to this stems from the inhabitants who serve the needs of the political economy of the metropolis by providing cheap labour and services. the basis of their usefulness is their defenceless situation which requires the maintenance of dependency in their relationship to labour market, to state institutions, and to the city's mainstream life. Concomitantly, for these groups to survive, they more than ever need to reconstruct a social universe a local turf and a community. Such a community is built in the process of organising alternative modes of spatiality and quality of life which is based on non-commodified production of new urban meaning.

The extensive work on social indicators reflects disillusionment with the conventional economic measures of human well-being and the quality of life. However most of the work in this area also follow a similar approach as evidenced in the measures of economic indicators. It does not recognize the level of life conditions of different social groups and their actual environmental and social experience. The primary purpose of social indicators is to improve an understanding of the interrelationship between deferent components and processes in the metropolis in so far they affect the well-being of human inhabitants. The emphasis in this paper has been to draw attention to the plurality of prevailing social interests in the shaping of the quality of life in the metropolis as a socially constructed space. It is vital to recognize that within the total environment. different groups experience markedly distinctive environmental and social conditions of life and consequently different degrees of well-being or quality of life. It is necessary to stress here

that whatever checklist of social indicators of quality of life is drawn (which is fairly standardised and needs no repetition here), it must be considered in terms of its implications for obtaining the residents a city organised around its use value, as against the notion of urban living and services as a commodity, the logic of exchange value. The content of this use value will vary considerably from city to city, or between social groups within a given city. It must emphasise improved collective consumption in contradiction to the notion of city for profit in which the desirability of space and urban services are distributed according to levels of incomes. This aspect has to do with respect to the distribution of authority among people with respect to local community affairs, (including design, construction, management of built environment and the provision and delivery of services), their sense of involvement, sense of belonging, sense of identity, sense of interest and degree of variety of experience and opportunities in their daily lives.