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## BOOK REVIEWS

ATKINSON, ANTHONY B. *Measuring Poverty around the World*. Ed. by John Micklewright and Andrea Brandolini. Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ) 2019. xxvii, 429 pp. \$29.95; £25.00.

The late Sir Anthony Barnes Atkinson, a renowned scholar, Chairman of the World Bank's Commission on Global Poverty, Centennial Professor at the London School of Economics, and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford, never completed *Measuring Poverty Around the World*. It was through the labours of his long-time colleagues John Micklewright and Andrea Brandolini, and the concise contributions by François Bourguignon and Nicholas Stern, that the book was eventually published, in 2019, two years after Atkinson's death. Regardless of the unfinished character of the book, it makes important points, provides valuable contributions, and is ultimately indispensable for scholars of poverty around the world and for the interested general reader.

This book is one outcome of Atkinson's work as Chairman of the World Bank's Commission on Global Poverty, and he wrote it after completing the Commission's report. Atkinson authored this report single-handedly, using input from a large group of renowned scholars – members of the Commission – as well as from special interest groups around the world. The material he collected was too extensive to be accommodated by the Commission's (rather strict) mandate, and he seems to have found it necessary to write this volume without the restraints imposed by the report.

Most importantly, in this engaging and clear text, Atkinson brings together the main approaches to the subject, drawing on his personal research over several decades, his outstanding command of the literature, and by reading no fewer than one hundred country-level poverty reports. Using that material, he asks several fundamental questions about why different statistics tell different stories, how they can be usefully combined, and what aspects of how poverty affects individuals, communities, and countries are not reflected in the various approaches.

Moreover, the book's fundamental assumption is that statistics matter. Atkinson firmly believed that, although there are gaps in our understanding of global poverty, we know enough to act and to hold politicians accountable. This message is present in several parts of this book. For Atkinson, it is clear that since global leaders have committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include targets for eradicating poverty based on the USD 1.9 a day approach, as well as “[e]nd poverty in all its forms everywhere” (SDG1), politicians must be held accountable.

In that regard, and surprisingly for a man widely known for his gentle character, this book offers us perhaps the bluntest statement to be found in Atkinson's writings; that is: “[t]he failure of rich countries in recent years to give priority to reducing poverty is seen as a disgrace by those for whom it is a major source of concern” (p. 215), and we certainly know that it was a major concern for Atkinson.

Overall, the book is structured from global to local, and there is a stark distinction between the literature on global poverty and the approach taken by Atkinson. Understandably, the general literature sees things largely from a global perspective, offering a bird's-eye view

of the statistics and underlying developments, with some exceptions made for a more detailed discussion of certain regions or the most populous countries, such as India and China. In contrast, Atkinson wants to connect the global with the local and vice versa (“inverting the telescope” in his words), as “[o]ne of the principal aims of this book is to build vertical bridges between the global estimates produced by international agencies and national studies of poverty” (p. 162).

The book can be divided into three sections. The first comprises Chapters 1–5. These introduce the reader to the importance of poverty statistics and their implications for economics, discuss the conceptual jargon of the literature and give an overview of the prevailing methods, point out the vital role of data, and analyse global poverty estimates, also through the lens of the SDGs. In the second section, comprising Chapters 6–9, Atkinson offers a discussion of particular aspects of global regions: Asia and the Pacific; Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean; and, lastly, the rich countries. Finally, the third section features the book’s conclusions, afterwords by Bourguignon and Stern on aspects that (according to the notes Atkinson made drafting the book) Atkinson had hoped to discuss, and the sixty country-level reports drawn up by the author – although regrettably not all of them are complete.

One of the key issues in the global poverty literature deals with the definition of the appropriate poverty line with which to gauge poverty at the global level (Chapter 2). Atkinson appears sympathetic to the view of Banerjee (2011) that there needs to be at least two poverty lines: an ethical poverty line “to describe the standard we should aspire to” as well as “an administrative poverty line, which tells us how to best target our limited resources”. Yet, Atkinson takes a further step, stating that his “hope is that the book will widen the ways in which poverty is viewed, allowing for greater diversity of approaches”. For Atkinson, there is no perfect method, and he suggests that scholars need to work with a variety of methods to get to the broader and deeper picture.

Atkinson goes beyond the key – yet obvious – importance of using an appropriate method, and gives priority to developing a proper general framework for statistics on poverty. For Atkinson, “[t]he key take-away message for the reader is that estimates of poverty, at all levels, and on all different approaches, are imperfect, but they are fit for purpose”. He is clear that “one of my objectives is to highlight the need to break out of the conventional framework so as to avoid becoming prisoners of a particular view of the world”. In that regard, the importance of checklists in understanding poverty statistics (discussed in detail in Chapters Three and Four) permeates the entire book. For Atkinson, it is important to know “what are the key questions you should ask when faced with statistics about poverty”. For example, the specific population groups missing from the statistics are extensively discussed, as Atkinson was concerned about who is being measured, and whether statistics have anything to say about intra-household inequality.

In drilling down from global to local (Chapter Five), Atkinson defines four key questions to be investigated. How do the statistics that make up the global poverty figures correspond to the figures at the national level? What is the relationship between multiple deprivation indices of non-monetary poverty and national monetary poverty statistics? What do national studies tell us of the profile of the poor? What is the relationship between poverty and income inequality at the national level? Atkinson’s main concern with regard to the last question relates to countries making disappointing progress in reducing poverty and, in particular, whether or not “the gains from growth have gone to those in the middle or to those at the top” (p. 164).

Unfortunately, little of this is developed to the extent Atkinson intended: Chapters 6–9 were to have interesting sections (we know, because the editors left the titles of those sections in place to show the author’s intentions), such as “growth, inequality and poverty reduction”,

“trickle-down and the distribution of consumption”, and “tackling poverty and climate change”, along with several subsections focusing on specific countries, regions, and subregions, including South East Asia, all regions of Africa, India, France, and Germany.

Perhaps the most important sections missing from the book are those related to the interplay of growth, inequality, and poverty, and to climate change. The editors clearly recognized that, and called upon two widely recognized scholars, François Bourguignon and Nicholas Stern, to contribute short essays on those topics. It is a pity, though, that we will never read what Atkinson himself had to say about those issues. It is certain, however, that he would urge us to “face the question of how far climate change mitigation and poverty alleviation are complementary and how far they are part of the same conflict” (p. 167). Stern reassuringly informs us that, for the most part, action taken against these two issues is complementary.

Undoubtedly, for scholars of poverty around the world, Atkinson paves the way to a research agenda by proposing an “all-around approach” involving the evaluation of all possible sources of uncertainty, from concept to specific measures and the relevant data. Atkinson warns us that considering these matters and the tensions between improved statistical instruments and the preservation of comparability across time are not “nuisances to be left to the specialists”, as “[t]hey affect results [...] and the soundness of policy conclusions” (p. 145). We will know in time whether this research agenda has gained momentum. The World Bank, for one, did not take it up.

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MARX, KARL [und] FRIEDRICH ENGELS. Exzerpte und Notizen. Februar 1864 bis Oktober 1868, November 1869, März, April, Juni 1870, Dezember 1872, Bearbeitet von Teinosuke Otani, Kohei Sato und Tim Graßmann, Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels Gesamtausgabe (MEGA), Vierte Abteilung, Exzerpte – Notizen – Marginalien, Band 18, De Gruyter Akademie Forschung, Berlin/Boston 2019. xvi, 1294 pp. € 189.95.

MARX, KARL und FRIEDRICH ENGELS. Artikel. Oktober 1857 bis Dezember 1858, Bearbeitet von Claudia Reichel und Hanno Strauß, Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels Gesamtausgabe (MEGA), Erste Abteilung, Werke – Artikel – Entwürfe, Band 16, De Gruyter Akademie Forschung, Berlin/Boston 2018. vi, 1180 pp. € 189.95.

Volume IV / 18 of the ongoing Marx–Engels–Gesamtausgabe (MEGA) sees several large notebooks by Marx published for the first time. These include, most notably, four of his