

Sovereign Man

Notes from the Field

Date: December 14, 2010
Reporting From: Nelson, New Zealand

Professor Hans Rosling is a sword-swallower. Crazy, I know. But as freakish and mesmerizing as that talent may be, the data that he has been compiling about developing countries is even more mesmerizing, and I promise it will surprise even the most worldly and well traveled among us.

Rosling has an uncanny ability to take enormous heaps of data, crunch the numbers, and present them in such a fluid way that it would make the most disinterested viewer sit up and take notice, and his focus on developing countries shatters a lot of misconceptions.

In the video below, Rosling charts a moving 200-year history of the wealth and life expectancy of 200 countries. In just 4-minutes, he shows that the gap between developing countries and developed countries is actually rather small, and that places like Shanghai, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore have already caught up with the west.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbkSRLYSojo>

Two of the things that I thought of immediately when watching this video were-

- 1) The catastrophic long-term effects of government-organized folly (war, central planning, currency debasement, etc.) are very clear when watching the progression of his data set;
- 2) It's incredible how fast developing nations can catch up with the west; technology, productivity, and a high savings rate are key drivers, and those are the critical ingredients to look for when assessing the long-term growth capacity of any economy.

I highly recommend the above video, it's only 4-minutes. If you have time for a more in-depth presentation about the growth rates of developing nations (particularly India and China), check out Rosling's lecture at a 2009 Ted conference, it's about 15-minutes.

http://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_asia_s_rise_how_and_when.html

And finally, if you want to play with the data yourself, you can do so at Rosling's [website](#).

Anyone considering a move or exploratory trip overseas, might want to consider starting his or her research in some of the developing nations that rank highly in Rosling's data set. Chile ranks the highest in Latin America, Malaysia in developing East Asia, and Sri Lanka in developing South Asia... 3 of my top picks.

Until tomorrow,



Simon Black
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