

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR CO-ORDINATING ECONOMIC STATISTICS¹

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The national accounts can serve three functions as an instrument for the co-ordination of economic statistics:

(i) They can serve for the establishment of standards for the definition and classification of economic statistics.

(ii) They can provide the base for technical co-ordination in the production of statistics and for the systematization of the contents of records.

(iii) They can be used for the indirect estimation of certain magnitudes which cannot be observed directly, or for quality control through alternative calculations.

The article describes the major outlines of a system of national accounting adapted to the co-ordination of economic statistics. This system constitutes an extension of the traditional system with transactions in financial assets and liabilities, input-output (inter-industry) relations, and balance sheets. The exposition makes use of an accounting design established for an arbitrary sector, the same accounts being used for all the sectors in contrast with the customary asymmetrical treatment. Table 1 gives the scheme (a) of current accounts, (b) of capital accounts, and (c) of balance sheet accounts.

The accounting design can be associated with various groupings of economic subjects into sectors. The article proposes that the fundamental system of national accounting destined for statistical co-ordination should utilize a division of the economy into institutional sectors according to centers of decision-making. Furthermore, a division into functional sectors is essential for certain accounts, in particular the production account, the inventory account, and the real capital account.

International standards must be used for the classification of sectors, goods, etc. Standardized classifications for services and transfers are also necessary.

The article indicates, finally, that such a system of national accounting used in connection with an integrated electronic data processing system would permit bringing to bear a general "file" system of economic statistics.

A. Introduction

1. During the last ten years the need for extending the national accounting system (NA) has been felt on both national and international levels. More comprehensive NA are needed as an instrument for supplying data for more

1. This paper is in the main based on the following two documents:

Lennart Fastbom: National Accounts as an Instrument for Co-ordination of the Economic Statistics. Internal paper, Central Bureau of Statistics, Sweden.

Ingvar Ohlsson: Outlines of a National Accounting System for Co-ordination Purposes. Swedish Statistical Review 1963:6.

detailed and refined analysis, and this has also furthered the use of national accounts as an instrument for co-ordinating economic statistics. It has been more and more evident that—besides other important uses—a general national accounting system could serve as a framework, which—through the definitions and classifications embodied in the system—would ensure a consistent design of economic statistics and promote international comparability.

2. The actual shape of a national accounting system must of course depend on the purpose for which it is drawn up. If national accounts are to serve as a framework for co-ordination of economic statistics, the chief claim upon the system must be a high level of generality. For the purpose of *presentation* a more limited system will be needed, a system where the characteristics are dependent on the supply of statistical data and on the actual demands for information to be used in economic analysis, international comparisons, etc. The system for presentation ought to be consistent with the co-ordinating system, but it is not claimed that one should be able to “fill up” the latter system completely with figures.

In *principle*, at least three systems on different aggregation levels could be considered:

- (a) A fundamental and general “theoretical system”;
- (b) A general “co-ordinating system” suitable for practical purposes of co-ordination;
- (c) A “presentation system”.

My ambition here will be to outline a flexible standard of national accounts for co-ordinating purposes, based on an extension of the traditional system with transactions in financial assets and liabilities, input-output (inter-industry) relationship and balance of assets building up national wealth. I will, thus, start with the system under (a) and in § 32 go over to a system of type (b). The terminology that will be used in this paper is given in the appendix.

B. *Co-ordinating functions*

3. When we consider the national accounts as an instrument for co-ordinating economic statistics, three separate functions can be distinguished; co-ordination of the content of statistics, technical co-ordination and quality control.

4. (i) First, national accounts may be used as a means of assistance in constructing *standards* for definition and classification of the economic statistics. Such standards are necessary for a consistent design of the statistics. This concerns the delineation of sectors as well as the definitions and classifications of such data on objects and transactions that are produced in the different fields of statistics. As a national accounting system in principle covers the whole economy it can be used to insure that a certain problem will be solved in the same way (as far as desired) in different sectors. It also shows clearly what mutual connections must prevail among different definitions and classifications. One common example is: disposable income equals consumption and saving.

5. In a similar way, the national accounts can be used to give a basis of

definition in constructing index numbers, e.g. of industrial production or wholesale prices. Instead of general index numbers with a more or less arbitrary selection and weighing of goods we can get more clearly defined input or output indices that will be easier to compare and combine with other economic statistics and to use as deflators for various value series.

6. (ii) Secondly, national accounts may be used as a basis for technical co-ordination of the production of statistics and for the systematization of the contents of records.

7. Nowadays all collected data can be stored in the records of an electronic data processing system. They must then be suitably labelled according to characteristics of different kinds, in order to be available for special tabulations. A general system of national accounts can be used as a basis for such labelling of the economic data. Thus, every item in the records may have a code, i.e., for sector, account, credit or debit, kind of transaction, period or date. This coding may be more or less detailed in different statistical branches, if only the system is consistent, and the desired conformity can be reached at a higher level of aggregation.

A system of codification of this kind creates possibilities for a merger of the material for different statistical branches. From the general system of records special national accounts or parts of such accounts may then be separated, tabulated and published.

8. (iii) Thirdly, national accounts may be used for estimating indirectly the value of certain items not directly observed, or for quality control by means of alternative calculations.

In an articulated national accounting system, an item on the credit side of a sector has its counterpart in the debit side of another sector and vice versa. This implies that a transaction can be registered in either of the two sectors involved. If the system is non-articulated we do not have the same simple relationship between item and counter-item. That identity is replaced by identities between aggregates: the sum of certain credit items equals the sum of certain debit items.

9. The existence of these identities gives us an opportunity to make more effective use of the statistical information by deriving certain items from other entries. If, on the other hand, direct information is available—e.g. on both an item and its counter-item or on all items in a balance of resources—the identities form a basis for quality control of the statistics. In reality, however, there is only occasionally full equality between the observed data or sums of data that should be identical according to the national accounts. The size of the discrepancies, however, gives an idea of the quality of the statistics and a hint of the proper place for initiating control measures.

C. General outline of a standard system

10. This section will give an outline of a standard set of national accounts suitable for co-ordinating economic statistics. It is constructed according to the following general principles:

For an arbitrary sector we have a simple accounting design comprising all types of transactions and capital balances. Thus, the same types of accounts are used throughout all sectors, in contrast to the usual asymmetric treatment. From this accounting design we can extract the usual aggregates (or balances), e.g., contribution to the national (domestic) product, disposable income and saving.

11. Connected with the accounting design is a potential sector division. The economic statistics are produced on the basis of data for different subjects. The subjects can be united into sectors according to different criteria. If the subjects are classified according to these criteria it will be possible to get different sector combinations of the transactions that are constructed within the framework of the accounting design. By storing statistical information in an electronic data processing system a flexible system of “building bricks” can be obtained. As a matter of fact, we get a catalogue of statistical data to be combined into sectors as required.

12. The system should furthermore contain standard classifications of goods and services, transfers, transactions in financial assets and liabilities, etc.

It then remains to determine the degree of *articulation* of different items (or transactions) within the accounting design of a sector.

D. *The accounting design*

13. The accounting system is presented in Table 1 (a-c). A double entry system is given for each sector. This accounting is applicable for each arbitrary sector, including, e.g., government and households.

Accounts A1–A4 correspond to the traditional national accounts exclusive of the capital account; they contain the real flow transactions. All monetary transactions are registered in accounts A5 and A6, which represent the financial circulation, transactions in financial assets and liabilities being referred to account A6. The B-accounts give changes in the value of capital, and the C-accounts give the ingoing and outgoing values of all types of assets and liabilities.

14. The *production account* (A1) includes items adapted to input-output analysis; it gives production and use of goods and services in this production. The items concern production (use, respectively) and not deliveries of goods; deliveries are accounted for on an account of inventories (B2). With regard to goods the counter-items are found in the B2-account. In the case of services the counter-items for realized transactions are to be found in the income-outlay account (A5), since services are not possible to store.

15. The residual of the production account, i.e. the gross sector product (or, in other words, the contribution of the sector to the gross national product) is carried over to the *factor service account* (A2). Here are also registered the transactions that arise because the factors of production—especially labour—often belong institutionally to another sector than their production.

16. Indirect taxes and subsidies may also be entered on this account for the following reason. Transactions between sectors registered on the production account (A1) and the account of inventories (B2) are valued at market prices,

TABLE 1 A. CURRENT ACCOUNTS

A 1. Production Account

A 1.1 Consumption of goods (B 2.6)	A 1.4 Production of goods (B 2.2)
A 1.2 Consumption of services (A 5.5)	A 1.5 Production of services (A 5.1)
A 1.3 <i>Gross sector product</i> (A 2.5)	A 1.6 Production of internal services (A 4.1)

A 2. Factor Service Account

A 2.1 Factor services from other sectors (A 5.6)	A 2.5 Gross sector product (A 1.3)
A 2.2 Indirect taxes (A 5.7)	A 2.6 Factor services to other sectors (A 5.2)
A 2.3 Capital consumption (B 3.4)	A 2.7 Subsidies (A 5.3)
A 2.4 <i>Factor service for the sector, net</i> (A 3.4)	

A 3. Income Redistribution Account

A 3.1 Realized transfers from the sector (A 5.7)	A 3.4 Factor service for the sector, net (A 2.4)
A 3.2 Imputed transfers from the sector (B 2.8)	A 3.5 Realized transfers to the sector (A 5.3)
A 3.3 <i>Disposable income</i> (A 4.5)	A 3.6 Imputed transfers to the sector (A 4.1 and B 2.4)

A 4. Income Use Account

A 4.1 Imputed consumption of services (A 1.6 and A 3.6)	A 4.5 Disposable income (A 3.3)
A 4.2 Imputed consumption of goods (B 2.8)	
A 4.3 Realized consumption (A 5.8)	
A 4.4 <i>Saving</i> (B 1.5)	

A 5. Monetary Income and Outlay Account

A 5.1 Sales of services (A 1.5)	A 5.5 Purchases of services (A 1.2)
A 5.2 Sales of factor services (A 2.6)	A 5.6 Purchases of factor services (A 2.1)
A 5.3 Realized transfers and subsidies to the sector (A 2.7 and A 3.5)	A 5.7 Realized transfers and indirect taxes from the sector (A 2.2 and A 3.1)
A 5.4 Sales of goods (B 2.7)	A 5.8 Realized consumption (A 4.3)
	A 5.9 Purchases of goods for input (B 2.3)
	A 5.10 Gross investment (B 3.2)
	A 5.11 <i>Financial saving</i> (A 6.1)

A 6. Financial Capital Transaction Account

A 6.1 Financial saving (A 5.11)	A 6.5 New lending (B 4.2)
A 6.2 New borrowing (B 5.4)	A 6.6 Amortization of loans (B 5.1)
A 6.3 Repayment of loans from the sector (B 4.5)	A 6.7 <i>Increase of cash assets</i> (B 4.4)
A 6.4 <i>Decrease of cash assets</i> (B 4.6)	

A 7. Revaluation Account

A 7.1 Revaluation of financial liabilities (B 5.5)	A 7.3 Revaluation of inventories (B 2.5)
A 7.2 <i>Revaluation gains</i> (B 1.4)	A 7.4 Revaluation of fixed capital (B 3.3)
	A 7.5 Revaluation of financial assets (B 4.3)
	A 7.6 <i>Revaluation loss</i> (B 1.1)

TABLE 1 B. CAPITAL ACCOUNTS

B 1. Own Capital Account

B 1.1 Revaluation loss (A 7.6)	B 1.3 Ingoing balance (C 1.2)
B 1.2 <i>Outgoing balance</i> (C 2.5)	B 1.4 Revaluation gain (A 7.2)
	B 1.5 Saving (A 4.4)

B 2. Inventory Account

B 2.1 Ingoing balance (C 1.3)	B 2.6 Consumption of goods (A 1.1)
B 2.2 Production of goods (A 1.4)	B 2.7 Realized sales of goods (A 5.4)
B 2.3 Purchases of goods for input (A 5.9)	B 2.8 Imputed sales of goods (A 3.2, A 4.2 and B 3.2)
B 2.4 Imputed purchases of goods (A 3.6)	B 2.9 <i>Outgoing balance</i> (C 2.1)
B 2.5 Revaluation (A 7.3)	

B 3. Fixed Capital Account

B 3.1 Ingoing balance (C 1.4)	B 3.4 Capital consumption (A 2.3)
B 3.2 Gross investment (A 5.10 and B 2.8)	B 3.5 <i>Outgoing balance</i> (C 2.2)
B 3.3 Revaluation (A 7.4)	

B 4. Financial Assets Account

B 4.1 Ingoing balance (C 1.5)	B 4.5 Repayment of loans from the sector (A 6.3)
B 4.2 New lending (A 6.5)	B 4.6 Decrease of cash assets (A 6.4)
B 4.3 Revaluation (A 7.5)	B 4.7 <i>Outgoing balance</i> (C 2.3)
B 4.4 Increase of cash assets (A 6.7)	

B 5. Financial Liabilities Account

B 5.1 Amortization of loans (A 6.6)	B 5.3 Ingoing balance (C 1.1)
B 5.2 <i>Outgoing balance</i> (C 2.4)	B 5.4 New borrowing (A 6.2)
	B 5.5 Revaluation (A 7.1)

TABLE 1 C. BALANCE ACCOUNTS

C 1. Ingoing Balance

C 1.1 Financial liabilities (B 5.3)	C 1.3 Value of inventories (B 2.1)
C 1.2 Own capital, " <i>Wealth</i> " (B 1.3)	C 1.4 Fixed capital (B 3.1)
	C 1.5 Financial assets (B 4.1)

C 2. Outgoing Balance

C 2.1 Value of inventories (B 2.9)	C 2.4 Financial liabilities (B 5.2)
C 2.2 Fixed capital (B 3.5)	C 2.5 Own capital, " <i>Wealth</i> " (B 1.2)
C 2.3 Financial assets (B 4.7)	

which differ from factor costs, partly owing to the government's interference with the formation of prices by indirect taxation and subsidies, and partly owing to monopolistic elements in the economy, which cause profits to exceed the costs of factor services. In the valuation of gross national product at factor cost, also used in the national accounts, we have, however, to confine ourselves to correcting for the effect of the above-mentioned interference by the government.

The balance of the factor service account (A 2.4) shows the incomes generated in production by the factors belonging to the sector, capital consumption (A 2.3) deducted. For governmental sectors this is not true when indirect taxes or subsidies exist.

17. The residual of the factor service account is carried over to the

income redistribution account (A3) as an original income (A 3.4). This account shows the creation of the disposable income of the sector. The difference between disposable income and the original incomes—factor service, net (A 3.4)—consists of the balance of transfers, both realized and imputed. By using imputed transfers it is possible to have different systems of valuation in the national accounts and to locate factor service, production, consumption and investment in the desired sector. If, for instance, costs for school luncheons (to pupils) paid by government is to be registered as private consumption in the household sector (“location in households”), an imputed income redistribution must be made from government to households.

18. The use of disposable income for consumption and saving is registered in the *income use account* (A4).

19. The *monetary income and outlay account* (A5) gives all monetary transactions, building up financial saving as a residual. It shows independent monetary transactions and monetary transactions combined with real transactions (purchases and sales of goods, services, and factor service). Aggregation over all sectors in a national economy will give the current balance of payments. The terms of payment (cash, credit) of the above-mentioned transactions are reflected in the *financial capital transaction account* (A6), where combined monetary transactions are entered. This account is designed to show the change in financial position by recording changes in assets and liabilities.

20. The account for the sector's *own capital* (B1) gives total saving (=changes in sector wealth status) and net gains or losses from changes in the valuation of assets and liabilities. The sum total for all sectors of the transactions of this account constitutes the change in *national wealth* during the period in question, and the sum total of outgoing balances gives the national wealth at the end of the period.

21. The *account of inventories* (B2) is partly an auxiliary account, so that the production account can be used for input-output analysis. It also registers changes in a real capital asset, viz. inventories. The problem of the registration of “goods in process” is still not explicitly solved by this system.

22. The *fixed capital account* (B3) is intended to register the changes in fixed real capital caused by investment, capital consumption and revaluations.

23. The *financial assets account* (B4) shows new lending to and repayment of loans by other sectors. The ingoing balance of the account consists of the sector's claims on other sectors at the beginning of the period; the outgoing balance consists of the claims at the end of the period.

In an analogous way the *financial liabilities account* (B5) illustrates the liabilities of the sector.

24. The *revaluation account* (A7) represents the corrections that are necessary if the capital accounts are to balance in spite of price changes during the accounting period. The residual is the total gain or loss of each sector from price changes.

25. The *balance accounts* C1 and C2 sum up the balances of assets and liabilities. C1 gives sector wealth status at the beginning of the registration period and C2 at the end of the period.

26. Within this accounting design details can be given by various break-downs of sectors and transactions, by variations in the length of the period for registration, by *ex ante* and *ex post* registration, and by separating value, volume and price components for transactions and balances.

E. A statistical illustration

27. The different branches of the production of economic statistics could be related to this accounting design. As an example let us take Swedish statistics on manufacturing industry. The need for co-ordination of all the statistics mentioned below seem evident. The NA can serve as an instrument for this co-ordination. The basic definitions for the given branches of statistics ought to be taken from the NA.

28. The yearly industrial statistics on production are concerned for the most part with the production account (A1). The most important item is the production of goods (A 1.4). For this item there are also monthly calculations of volume indices and certain quarterly statistics. Regarding the consumption of goods in manufacturing industry (A 1.1), there is certain information in the yearly industrial production statistics, though it is not at all complete. The consumption of hired labour services is registered in the yearly statistics and also in the employment statistics for the industry, both yearly and quarterly. It enters into the sector's contribution to the national product (A 1.3) and is registered separately in the factor service account (A 2.1).

29. We also have short term statistics for particular goods, which can be related to the inventory account (B2), giving production, consumption, deliveries and inventory changes.

30. The Swedish statistics of income, expenditure and profits of business manufacturing enterprises mostly concern the factor service account (A2), the income redistribution account (A3), and the monetary income and outlay account (A5). Work is going on to extend these with credit market transactions concerning the financial capital account (A6), the financial assets account (B4), and the financial liabilities account (B5).

31. In the fixed capital account (B3) the most important item from an economic analysis point of view is gross investment (B 3.2). Investment statistics for the industry are prepared quarterly. The balance of fixed capital is illustrated in certain aspects in the yearly industrial statistics and in censuses of production, distribution and services.

32. We intend to use an accounting system of this sort for co-ordination purposes in Sweden. Certain other aspects may be given on the use of this system for practical purposes of co-ordination.

F. The sector division

33. The accounting design can be associated with different sector combinations of the subjects. Institutionally, the subjects to be sectorized consist of

decision units. Often parts of subjects (e.g., establishments) are constructed according to certain functional criteria, to be used as units for registration. A treatment according to the whole accounting design given above will be analytically meaningful only for an institutional sector division based on decision units. Financial transactions, e.g., concerning interest and loans, can only be localized to decision units. The *basic* national accounting system for co-ordinating purposes thus should be institutionally sectorized.

34. In an institutional sector division the subjects may be classified according, e.g., to the following characteristics:

- (a) activity (branch, division etc.);
- (b) legal type (joint stock company etc.);
- (c) political type (private, public etc.);
- (d) size;
- (e) geographical position.

35. Beside the basic institutional division there is also needed a sector combination of functionally constructed parts of subjects for certain accounts. This is true for the most fundamental, "real" accounts, i.e., the production account, the account of inventories and the fixed capital account. The sectors should be divided according to activity, mostly based on production, and the aim should be to get technically homogeneous sectors. International standards ought to be used (ISIC). Divisions according to size and geographical position are desirable also for the functional combinations.

36. In certain fields it is important to register the transaction partner, e.g., regarding financial transactions. This is often done by a building-up of matrices within the framework of a national accounting system. Such matrices have been made for production (input-output) and credit market transactions. They might also be made for interest payments and other transfers.

G. *Classification of objects and transactions*

37. The objects and transactions are sector-determined by the classified subjects or parts of subjects taking part in the transaction. For every transaction there is also a classification according to the accounts as given above. Further determination of the transactions is, however, usually needed. The transactions containing goods may be object-identified according to an international nomenclature, e.g., the Brussels nomenclature or the Nordic commodity nomenclature. A suitable nomenclature for identification of services is still wanting.

Standard classifications of goods and services, as identified in the base nomenclatures, are needed for different analytical purposes. These needs may chiefly be centered on production, investment or consumption aspects. A standard classification of real objects which is based on technical aspects of production can at the same time be used for the precise definition of sectors in a standard functional sector division, i.e. be used as functional criteria for the sector-determination of subjects. For transactions grouped under different accounting items (production, consumption etc.) further suitable determination of these may be joined to such types of object classification as can be developed in

connection with, e.g., the ISIC and the grouping of consumers' consumption expenditure drawn up in Con. Eur. Stats/W G.12/12.

38. Regarding monetary transactions international work has started on a standard classification of financial objects. This work must be completed before the national accounts can be used as a satisfactory instrument for co-ordination. Finally, there is a need for standard classifications of different transfers.

H. *A general "file" system of statistics*

39. With the aid of a co-ordinating system of national accounts and an integrated electronic data processing system it would be possible to build up a general file system for the production of economic statistics. This could be an element in a new system of statistics production, a *system of statistical data archives*. In such a system the production of statistics can, to a large extent, be split up into two stages. The first stage consists of "data input" to "data archives". The second stage consists of "data output" out of the data archives for statistical purposes. It gives new aspects of planning and of co-ordination of statistics.

Data input into the statistics production is made by indirect and direct collection. The indirect collection is made by means of other agencies and organizations in connection with administrative routines. The development of EDP in society leads to new possibilities to use such material in the production of statistics. Direct collection is made by the producer of the statistics.

Data output from the data archives can be made for the collection and the distribution of official statistical publications, for information service including international reporting, and for statistical data service on a cost basis.

In the *data archives* shall be kept available those various pieces of information on the statistical units which have been found economical to collect with regard to the present and possible future needs. There will probably be i.a. a register band for distribution of questionnaires to samples of data reporters, updated bands in various fields of subjects for selected units, and historical bands. The possibility to develop the system of statistical data archives is, however, closely related with the co-ordination of the material. For this purpose the archives must have a basic system defined e.g. by the standards of national accounts and individual accounts with related definitions and classifications. A basic system like this must be established even if several possible cells in the net of information not for the time being or never will be attributed any statistical information.

The data archives—with data put in and out—are based on various *statistical units*. In the case of economic data this requires a basic register record of economic subjects (and parts of subjects), e.g., a central enterprise register, which is brought up to date continuously. Each enterprise and/or establishment in the register will have a fixed number of identity and be classified according to branch and other criteria. This will serve to identify the units at the input and output of data. The data will thus be sector-determined throughout, via

the coding in the central register. All variables also ought to be classified according to account, in terms of standards for goods, transactions etc., and by transaction partners (when possible and needed). Other economic subjects can be treated in an analogous way.

The advantages of the data archives are numerous. They result from the possibilities of *merging* different basic materials by the EDP technique. This makes it possible i.a. to reduce the burden of the data reporters, to establish a more effective quality control of the statistics, and to give the users more detailed or specific information.

National accounting terminology

1. *Object* refers to goods (in a wide sense) and also to bonds, shares etc. Goods are called *real objects*, the other categories *financial objects*. In many connections the real objects also may comprise services. The objects have the following attributes:

- (a) They have volume (only the real objects);
- (b) They have value;
- (c) They are owned and used by economic subjects;

2. *Subjects* are entities producing, transferring or consuming objects. Subjects are for instance individuals (e.g. grouped into household), enterprises, authorities with certain qualities relevant for economic analysis.

3. In a *transaction* an object is in some way transferred from one subject to another, it changes place, changes function or it is consumed, or else some kind of service is performed. The subjects participating in a transaction are *partners in the transaction*.

4. The transactions are divided into *realized* and *imputed* (or constructed) *transactions*. Imputed transactions are imagined (but from the point of view of the subjects not effected) transactions between two subjects.

5. Both the realized and the imputed transactions can be divided into *independent* (transfers of objects from one subject to another without compensation) and *combined* (transfers against some kind of payment). They can also be classified as *real* or *financial (monetary)*. The contents of real transactions are real objects; of financial transactions financial objects.

6. A *sector* is a group of subjects with some qualities in common. The sector division can be functional or institutional. In the former case subjects often have to be constructed.

7. According to the technical shape of the national accounting system I distinguish between *articulated* and non-articulated systems and also between *consolidated* and non-consolidated systems.

In a *fully articulated* system all transactions of each sector with each of the other sectors are shown separately. In a non-articulated system such transactions as differ from each other only by the fact that the partners in the transactions are to be found in separate sectors, are not distinguished and can therefore only be shown aggregated. Between these extremes there can be systems with varying degrees of articulation.

Consolidation implies that the same items do not occur explicitly on both the credit and the debit side of the same account. If all accounts are treated in this way, the whole system is consolidated.

Les comptes nationaux peuvent avoir trois fonctions en tant qu'instrument de coordination des statistiques économiques :

- (i) Ils peuvent servir à l'établissement de normes pour les définitions et les nomenclatures des statistiques économiques.*
- (ii) Ils peuvent former la base de la coordination technique dans la préparation des statistiques et dans leur archivage.*
- (iii) Ils peuvent permettre l'estimation indirecte de certaines grandeurs qu'on ne peut pas observer directement ou un contrôle de qualité au moyen de calculs alternatifs.*

L'article décrit les grandes lignes d'un système de comptabilité nationale adapté à la coordination des statistiques économiques. Ce système constitue une extension du système traditionnel avec des opérations sur créances et dettes, des relations input-output (interindustrielles) et des bilans patrimoniaux. Il est constitué par un schéma comptable établi pour un secteur arbitraire, les mêmes comptes étant utilisés pour tous les secteurs contrairement au traitement asymétrique habituel. Le tableau 1 donne le schéma a) des comptes courants, b) des comptes de capital, c) des comptes de bilan.

Le schéma comptable peut être associé à divers groupements des sujets économiques en secteurs. L'article propose que le système fondamental de comptabilité nationale destiné à la coordination utilise une division de l'économie en secteurs institutionnels regroupant des centres de décision. De plus, une division en secteurs fonctionnels est essentiel pour certains comptes, en particulier le compte de production, le compte de stocks, et le compte de capital réel.

Les normes internationales doivent être utilisées pour les nomenclatures de secteur, de marchandises, etc... Des nomenclatures normalisées pour les services et les transferts sont également nécessaires.

L'article indique enfin qu'un tel système de comptabilité nationale utilisé en liaison avec un ordinateur électronique permettrait la mise au point d'un « fichier » général des statistiques économiques.