POVERTY RESEARCH IN HUNGARY

The transformation of Central European society in the 1990s raises a number of exciting issues for the social sciences. The reasons for this are that in a new situation earlier hypotheses can now be examined under “laboratory” circumstances. It was previously difficult to test the validity of economic and social explanations for the similarities and differences between Western and Socialist countries. The issue of poverty was particularly difficult. There have been many signs that the issue of poverty has come to the surface now that social differences have greatly increased over the last decade. Research on the production of poverty can be grouped by the different data-bases that are now being used for international comparative study.

Zsuzsa Ferge and István Kemény started the study of poverty in the area during the late 1960s. In the socialist era this topic was considered delicate in political terms. Raising the issue of poverty implied considerable risks and its research faced considerable difficulties. It was not even possible to use the word “poverty” in debates on the topic and the term was replaced by the euphemism “multiple disadvantageous situation”. To circumvent these limitations Kemény and his colleagues examined the problem of poverty in combination with ethnicity (primarily the Gypsy problem in Hungary). In addition to the use of questionnaires, qualitative methods were also used. While Ferge and her research group placed the political and socio-political analyses of poverty in focus. Following the democratic transformations of the 1990s both of these researchers further developed their earlier hypotheses.

In their studies they wanted to know whether or not poverty had increased with the transition to democracy, and aimed to identify the institutional reasons responsible for change. They also wanted to identify the means by which poverty could be reduced in these new conditions. Kemény stressed the way in which poverty was connected to culture and ethnicity, while Ferge laid emphasis on the operation of socio-political institutions and their reproduction of poverty.

Since 1963 the Central Statistical Office has been carrying out income surveys in Hungary on a regular five-year basis. This provides the most reliable data-base on poverty in Hungary. Regular calculation of subsistence level started in 1984. When analysing these figures in 1987, Rudolf Andorka came to the conclusion that the sociological composition of poverty in the country had been considerably transformed. These results were also mirrored by the work of Júlia Szalai who wrote “while the typical poor people of the sixties were relatively old villagers, who lived alone or with their spouses on pensions or other social benefits, the typical poor people of the eighties were members of urban families, relatively young, who were bringing up several children”.

The Hungarian Household Panel Survey was started in 1992 and repeated each year by the Social Research Institute of Hungary (TÁRKI). It offers both a cross-sectional and longitudinal examination of poverty as well as an international comparative...
POVERTY REDUCING STRATEGIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

CROP and Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO), Centro de Investigaciones Psicológicas y Sociales (CIPS) and Centro de Investigaciones de la Economía Internacional (CIEI) organised the workshop “Poverty Reducing strategies in the Caribbean – with particular emphasis on external actors and their impact on poverty formation in the area” in Havana, Cuba, November 4-6.

The workshop is a follow-up of the CLACSO/CROP workshops on “Demography of Poverty in Latin America” (Buenos Aires 2000) and “Indigenous Populations and Poverty: Multi-disciplinary Approaches” (Guatemala 2001), and is part of the joint CLACSO/CROP project on “Strengthening Poverty Research and Academic Support to Poverty Reduction Programs in Less Developed Countries and Regions of Latin America and the Caribbean (2001-2004).”

The workshop was planned by a programme committee consisting of Rhoda Reddock (University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago), Laura Tavares (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), Brazil), José Lázaro Hernández (CIPS), Lázaro Peña (CIEI) and Atilio Boron (CLACSO).

The main sponsors of the event was the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC)/UNESCO.

The workshop was opened by Lina Domínguez, Vice-Minister of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA), José Lázaro Hernández, Director of CIPS, and Lázaro Peña, Director of CIEI. Scientific Director of CROP, Prof. Else Oyen, presented the opening lecture on The need for a new discourse on poverty producing forces.

The following special presentations were given:
- Consideraciones sobre la pobreza en República Dominicana, by Mario Bonetti, President of the Science Academy of the Dominican Republic
- ¿Eliminación de la pobreza o políticas de desarrollo?, by Mayra Espina, CIPS, Cuba
- La reproducción y la ampliación de la pobreza en América Latina, by Laura Tavares, UERJ, Brazil

Thirteen papers were presented in all:
- Natureza ou pobreza El dilema de los programas de conservación en Latinoamérica, by Pablo Alarcón-Cháirez, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and Julia Azanza, Centro de Investigaciones Marinas, Cuba
- Las más pobres de las pobres: Mujeres con jefatura de familia en Puerto Rico, by Nilsa M. Burgos Ortiz, Universidad de Puerto Rico
- NGOs and poverty reduction in Venezuela and post-communist Yugoslavia: Comparative perspectives, by Constantine Danopoulos, Ronald and Kathleen Sylvie, San Jose State University, USA
- Microfinance and the third world development: A supply-side analysis, by Khandakar Qudrat-I Elahi, Canada
- Explorando nuevas estrategias para reducir la pobreza en el actual contexto internacional. Experiencias de Cuba, by Angela Ferriol, Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, Cuba.
- Defining and targeting the poor in Jamaica, by Aldrie Henry-Lee, University of the West Indies, Jamaica
- Marginalidad y marginales como sujetos u objetos de la lucha contra la pobreza, by Elio Fidel López, Centro de Estudios sobre América, Cuba
- Pobreza, actores externos y actores locales: Contraste de experiencias municipales en Guatemala y el Caribe, by Edgar Mendoza, FLACSO, Guatemala
- Microfinance and the third sector in poverty alleviation strategies in French West Indies, by Justin Nouind, Cameroon
- Re-engineering poverty reduction in Jamaica: What has been the role of partnerships?, by Philip Osei, University of the West Indies, Jamaica
- Mujeres de área urbana y rural en zonas de alta margianción socioeconómica. ¿Mismas necesidades desalud?, by Héctor Javier Sánchez-Pérez, El Colegio de la Frontera Sur, Mexico
- La pobreza vista en tres escalas, by Aurelio Alonso Tejada, CIPS, Cuba
- Situación de la pobreza en el Caribe: Actualidad y perspectivas. Cuba en el contexto Caribeño, by María del Carmen Zabal Argüelles, FLACSO/Universidad de La Habana, Cuba
Presentation of Best Practices in Poverty Reduction - An Analytical Framework

The notion of "best practices" is one of those concepts that has been born in the political and administrative world of anti-poverty strategies. From there it has been transported into a world of research that stands unprepared to handle it because few analytical tools are available. The researchers are faced with a choice either to ignore it or to try to give it a content that will make it more useful.

Those responsible for anti-poverty interventions want to learn from successful experiments elsewhere that can be transplanted into their own national or cultural setting. This is a sensible approach, and with increasing globalisation it is a learning approach, which will gain impetus in the years to come. However, it is also a risky approach because the cultural variation as well as the variation in the target groups is likely to disturb a direct transfer of one successful programme into a similarly successful programme in a different culture.

This book is an invitation to explore the use of best practices for more efficient poverty reduction. It is also a tool to help develop a more systematic approach to the understanding of whether a certain practice deserves to be put to further use as a best practice. In other words, an attempt to develop a methodology around the understanding and transfer of a best practice. Best practices are presented in different ways in the literature. Most often they are reported as “success stories”, without specifying the criteria by which they are judged successful. Sometimes we are introduced to best practices as “learning experiences”, something that is worthy of being used in another setting. At times best practices are presented as a technical challenge where all good practices can be assembled in a database and offered to interested parties. While a database can give impetus to new ideas, it can also be deceiving if it ignores the social forces surrounding a practice.

One part of the book demonstrates how best practices are deeply embedded in the social setting in which they have been born and how their success depends on the political and moral climate of a certain culture. The challenge is to identify those specific circumstances that will make a best practice sustainable and transferable to another setting.

Other parts of the book offer concrete advice on how to proceed to discover and evaluate best practices and how to avoid some of the most obvious pitfalls when a practice is hailed best and transferred into another setting. Two chapters show how to identify a best practice among maybe as many as hundreds of ongoing practices. Another chapter suggests ways to analyse practices and their impacts and discusses the value of best practices in poverty reduction as compared to other poverty reducing strategies. The final chapter offers the results of a search through different (continues on page 4)
ZED BOOKS - 25 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING
Zed Books, London, a publisher especially renowned for its commitment to publish books about crucial Third World issues and extensive distribution of its publications, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. In its 25 years Zed has published some 1,000 titles on important themes such as poverty, global issues, development and environment, gender, politics and political economy, human rights, war and conflict, cultural studies. Since 1998 Zed has published four of the CROP books on poverty issues, and through the use of its distribution system made it possible for poverty research results to be disseminated widely in countries where few institutions or individuals would normally have the means to purchase such publications. Three of these books may be ordered through the flyer inserted in this newsletter.

It is with deep respect for its ideals and achievements that CROP extends its congratulations to Zed Books on the occasion of its anniversary.

TRAINING COURSE FOR SIDA
CROP has won a tender for a pilot training course on poverty reduction for staff of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The course package consists of research based lectures, thematic discussions, a course manual, and the establishment of a network for lecturers and course participants for further contact and collaboration. The course will contribute to further development of Sida’s strategies for poverty reduction in the South. The lectures and discussions will cover research methods, introduction to various poverty research concepts, analyses of strategies to reduce poverty, and ethical considerations of participation in poverty reducing activities. Prominent researchers from the CROP network will take part as lecturers. The course will be held in Bergen, Norway, in January.

OPEN POSITIONS IN NEW UNDP POVERTY CENTRE
UNDP is seeking highly qualified candidates for the position of Director and Policy Advisors for the newly opened International Centre for Poverty Reduction, based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Rio Centre has a mandate to serve UNDP offices and partners around the world by facilitating policy analysis, capacity development, technical cooperation, and networking on social and macroeconomic policy issues, poverty measurement, employment and social protection. Researchers and experts from developing countries are strongly encouraged to apply. For more information, go to http://www.undp.org/jobs on Internet.

NEW BOOKS ON POVERTY
Urban livelihoods: A people centered approach to reducing poverty, edited by Carole Rakodi with Tony Lloyd-Jones, has been published by Earthscan publications.

World Poverty: New policies to defeat an old enemy, edited by Peter Townsend and David Gordon, have been published by Policy Press.

LIST OF CROP EVENTS 2002-2003
December 2002
9-11: CROP organises a special session on Poverty Producing Processes at the ISSC 50th Anniversary, Vienna, Austria.

March 2003
19-21: The Role of the State in the Struggle Against Poverty. A joint CROP, CLACSO and Fundação Joaquim Nabuco (FJN) workshop, in Recife, Brazil.

June 2003
14-15: Poverty and Social Deprivation in the Mediterranean Area. A joint CROP and Department of Social Administration of Democritus University of Thrace workshop in Komotini, Greece. By invitation only.

November 2003
Law and Poverty V. A joint CROP and the Social Science Academy of Nigeria workshop in Abuja, Nigeria. See page 3 in this newsletter for details.

CROP IN BRIEF
CROP is a world-wide network of researchers and experts on poverty. The aim of CROP is to establish an arena for interdisciplinary and comparative research on poverty in developed and developing countries. CROP organises regional workshops, symposia and international conferences, promotes joint research projects and publications, links poverty researchers and disseminates information about poverty research, on a non-profit basis. CROP has developed a database on poverty researchers, and documentation of ongoing research.

If you wish to have your name listed in CROPnet, you are welcome to write to the Secretariat and request a copy of the CROP Database Survey form. For further information please contact the CROP Secretariat.

Please note: We cannot answer the increased demand for copies of single papers presented at CROP conferences and workshops. However, if you have the patience, most of the papers become available through the publications that follow the conferences and will be duly announced. We still supply the authors addresses, phone & fax numbers.

WEBPAGE FOR CROP
Those who have an Internet connection and a WWW browser programme installed on the computer, can find the CROP webpage at www.crop.org The pages hold general information about CROP, news about past and ongoing activities, as well as the latest CROP newsletter.

SEASONS GREETINGS
We wish all our contributors, supporters and friends a peaceful and happy New Year 2003

(continued from page 3) databases of best practices. The book forms the first attempt to pull the concept of best practices out of its politicised and applied atmosphere and treat it as a scientific tool that will add to the toolbox needed for an improved comprehension of the many failures in poverty reduction.

The book is published by Zed Books in the “CROP International Studies in Poverty Research” series. See the enclosed leaflet for information on how to order it.