

Chapter 1

Poverty Research Rethought

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This book started out as a traditional state-of-the-art review of poverty research in different regions of the world. By all accounts it can still be classified as such. But along the way, slowly and unintentionally, it has also become a document of the shortcomings of poverty research, and a demonstration of the lack of philosophy behind poverty measures and their accompanying concepts and theories. National poverty studies pose their own questions. The comparative aspect brings out other questions, such as why researchers in developing countries are using nonsensical poverty measures formulated in developed countries for another time and another context, and why so many of us are locked into a poverty paradigm that seems to take us nowhere, either as researchers or as policy makers.

The framework of the book

The Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP) has as its major aim the facilitation of comparative studies of poverty in developed and developing countries, and the creation of an international arena where different disciplines can meet and discuss poverty research. This book has sprung out of an urgent need to know where poverty research stands in different regions of the world, to link discourses that have not been set in the same context before, and to broaden the intellectual discussion of poverty. The book provides a baseline for ongoing and future research, which will save researchers precious time and energy when engaging in poverty research in a new region. The book can also be seen as a cornucopia of ideas and reflections on poverty, poverty research, and poverty strategies.

This is the first time an international overview of poverty research, including both developed and developing countries, has been published. Poverty research has been more or less confined within national borders, because poverty has been

considered to be a national problem that should find its remedies within a national context.

Poverty is at the same time culture-bound and universal. The purpose of the book is to bring out both aspects. It is hoped that this will spur the sorting process whereby the culture-bound causes and manifestations of poverty can be identified and marked as different from those causes and manifestations of poverty that seem to be universal, in the sense that they are part of a basic poverty-producing process, independent of the culture where poverty is found. Such a sorting process is a necessary step towards a better theoretical understanding of the poverty phenomenon. Bringing together the uses of poverty concepts and poverty thinking from different cultures will help further this long overdue sorting process, which must take place on the micro, meso, and macro level.

The book is also written to give support to all those poverty researchers who are weighed down by the conflicts surrounding their area of research, by the constant uneasiness of working in a field where neither the concepts and the methodologies, nor the theories are precise enough to be useful working tools, by the concern for an overwhelming poverty, and by the lack of an up-to-date infrastructure for doing research. It is not an unreasonable hypothesis that poverty researchers feel more frustrated and lonely than do researchers in most other fields. It takes courage to live with the complexity of a poverty definition and the lack of an adequate theoretical framework. Almost all the contributions to this book bear witness to the struggle to overcome the present poverty of poverty research. It takes courage to break down stereotypes of poverty when communicating research results to policy-makers who already have their embodied images of poverty. It takes courage to insist on an academic approach to poverty understanding when the call for action is closing in. The book is an attempt to show poverty researchers that they are not on their own with all these problems.

As a means of increasing the descriptive power and getting some order into the diversity of the many regional presentations, the authors were asked to follow a set of common guidelines for their contributions. The topics to be discussed were (a) the poverty concepts used in the different regions, including both the mainstream concepts and the more atypical or local variants, (b) hypotheses relating to causes and effects of poverty, whether stated explicitly or used implicitly, (c) theoretical frameworks for the studies reported, or, on a less ambitious level, identification of theoretical fragments used in poverty studies, (d) data sources available for poverty studies in the region, (e) major

results drawn out from the studies, and (f) the author's own evaluation of the present state of affairs on poverty research in the region.

As it turned out, not all the authors followed these guidelines—partly because the nature of the social sciences produces a much less disciplined brood of scientists than in other sciences; partly because poverty research in many parts of the world cannot be fully presented within a strict set of guidelines. The weak theoretical foundation of poverty research makes it difficult for most of the researchers to identify and use a coherent framework in poverty studies. The lessened demand of theory “fragments” or dominant hypotheses was not enough to yield a more ample harvest. The richness and diversity of poverty research set into a larger context come into bloom in the authors' own descriptions of the state of the art in their region.

The selection of regions covered in the review is somewhat arbitrary. On the one hand, it was important to cover major areas and a diversity of cultures. On the other hand, it was clear that not all countries could be included, and in some of the larger countries not all approaches to poverty research could be covered. The final selection of papers was made with a view to regional representation and criteria of quality.

In a volume this size, with many contributions that have to follow different paths in their presentations, a need arises for a guiding hand through the maze. Three different scholars were each asked to write a chapter based on their reading of the regional presentations, not summarizing but drawing out some more general observations. The authors come from South Africa, Bangladesh, and Slovenia, and their professional background can best be labelled social scientist, economist, and sociologist (although, when people engage in poverty research for a while, the disciplinary background tends to fade when concepts and methodologies from other fields are put to use). From each their corner of the world, they have read across national boundaries and disciplinary enclaves, bringing the many details into a new kind of order and, as it turns out, presenting us with quite different readings, emphases, and omissions. The three are the test cases of what can be learned from a book of this nature.

Doing comparative research

Doing comparative studies in the social sciences involves a whole set of methodological and theoretical problems of their own, which run as an undercurrent in all comparisons, irrespective of the field of research (Øyen 1990). Doing comparative studies on

poverty adds some extra problems. Therefore, the regional reviews in this book are not meant to represent any rigorous attempt at comparison. But, by linking the reviews together, a new instrument is created that will foster thinking in comparative terms.

During the past twenty years or so, several attempts have been made to compare the extent and intensity of poverty on a global level. This has mainly been done (a) by international organizations using a few selected indicators to measure poverty on the national level, so as to rank countries according to their level of poverty, and (b) by social scientists using economic micro data, correcting for cultural differences. The former has been widely published in the media, while the latter has been hidden in professional journals. Some poverty studies covering a wider range of variables have been comparative in scope, but the comparisons have included only a limited number of countries, and comparisons between developed and developing countries have been avoided. Although new data banks are emerging that will help speed up international comparisons in the future, so far the lack of infrastructure will leave most developing countries out of such comparisons.

Common to all these approaches is the search for a measuring stick whereby poverty in one place or time can be compared with that of another place or time. The major criticism of these instruments concerns the limited kind of poverty being measured and the methodological problems encountered (Ruggles 1990; Streeten 1995).

Underlying the idea of doing comparative studies that include both developed and developing countries is a set of assumptions about the nature of poverty that are not always made clear (Øyen 1992):

- Can we, for example, assume that poverty is inherent in all societies, irrespective of their different social, economic, and political structures? If this is the case, the discussion has to distinguish between causes of poverty as inherent and manifestations of poverty as inherent.
- Causes of poverty can best be described as a set of (often invisible) causal elements woven into a dynamic process that produces the observable manifestations of poverty. Can certain causal elements be identified in all countries and cultures, in spite of the differences in manifestations of poverty?
- Since poverty always operates within a social context (even under natural catastrophes), it can be asked whether it is the

causal elements or the manifestations that are most influenced by the social context. Or, put in a different way, and taking the assumption about the universality of poverty into consideration, are the causes likely to be less culture-bound than the manifestations?

- Can the observable differences in manifestations of poverty be assumed to be merely a matter of degree of the extent and intensity of poverty, rather than entirely different poverty phenomena? If this is so, the contours of a model of poverty developing in consecutive stages is implied; a model, it should be added, that is often implied in development policies. If, on the other hand, poverty manifestations are expressions of different poverty phenomena, on what dimensions do the manifestations differ? And what are the likely implications for the proxies of poverty used in comparative measurements of poverty?
- The same causal processes of poverty can lead to different manifestations of poverty, and different causes of poverty can lead to the same manifestations of poverty. How can these two observations be linked theoretically and produce comparative insights?

With such questions in mind, and the knowledge of a weak theoretical foundation for poverty research, it can be argued that the time is not yet ripe for rigorous comparisons in poverty research.

In a somewhat different context it has been argued that comparative studies are at an intermediate stage where much can be learned simply by laying out the facts of similarities and differences (Smeeding et al. 1990). Another direction might be to shift the focus from comparisons of variables to comparisons of the processes producing poverty, i.e. intensifying research on causal processes more than on manifestations. That would be in line with Galtung when he argues that the way forward in creating comparative social science involves “a certain artisanal intellectual competence, with such elementary skills as care with definitions, ability to construct fruitful typologies, understanding of what inference means, knowing how to anchor the theory on the empirical end; yet tempering all this with theoretical pluralism, epistemological eclecticism, a spirit of tolerance” (1990:101).

The order is tall, but it matches the urgency to increase the scientific knowledge base and the need for a more global understanding of a wide range of poverty phenomena.

Philosophy of poverty research

It used to be a dogma of research that production of knowledge had its own value, independently of the use to which such knowledge was put. The nuclear bomb rocked this dogma, and the dogma is being further challenged by recent penetrations into the secrets of the genetic world. But in poverty research the dogma has not been questioned. It has been more or less taken for granted that the more we know about poverty, the easier it will be to alleviate it. Although this is certainly true, it must also be acknowledged that poverty research is nestled within a field of deep conflict, and that policies for the poor are not necessarily intended to eradicate poverty. This situation calls for a set of questions on the philosophy of poverty research, which may not be as relevant for other kinds of social research. It starts with the very simple question: Why are we doing poverty research?

The major part of research on poverty, for example, is concentrated on measuring the extent of poverty, as clearly documented in this volume. The tradition is long and well established, and it shows itself in a range of different measures, mainly based on the income and/or cost of living of the individual and the household. The research literature abounds with criticism of the different measures and their shortcomings, and much effort is invested in overcoming the faults of the different measurements in order to increase their validity and reliability. It is well documented throughout this volume that the choice of one poverty measurement instead of another leads to quite different results. Efforts are also invested in finding alternative measurements and to accommodate the fact that much poverty is located in the informal economy and on the periphery of major societal institutions. Built into these efforts is the so far unresolved issue of how to define poverty in an adequate manner.

On the one hand, it is in the nature of research to pursue the intricacies of measuring and to develop and refine measuring tools. On the other hand, underlying the research on measurements must be some kind of belief that it matters to know exactly how many people are poor, and how poor they are.

But how does it matter? For whom is it important to know how many people are poor? Does the knowledge of an exact number have an impact on poverty alleviation? Does this knowledge have more of an impact on poverty alleviation than other kinds of poverty research? Is the information on the number of poor people always used for the benefit of the poor? Who is asking for

numbers rather than a broader picture of poverty? Why is it functional to present poverty as a set of numbers collected over time? And who are the actual users of those head-count numbers that researchers have struggled to come up with? Such questions are seldom asked. It is more or less taken for granted that the more precisely the numbers can be stated, the better equipped interested parties will be to combat poverty.

The numbers give a picture of poverty in a country or a region, and, however inadequate a picture they present, they are a better estimate than popular pictures of the extent of poverty. But who are the receivers of such a picture, and for what purposes is the picture used?

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, has developed a worldwide and very simple Human Development Index, which ranks the different countries on their performance in providing for their people. The index is published widely and is consciously used as an embarrassment in order to press for an improvement in human conditions, both nationally and internationally (UNDP 1995). Social movements, benevolent societies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), pressure groups, political parties, and engaged individuals are among those who actively use the numbers as a means of putting pressure on authorities to obtain better living conditions for the poor; while international organizations and donor countries have been subjected to the tyranny of numbers by national governments hoping to increase foreign aid through the visible presentation of high poverty rates in their countries.

Of course, information can always be used two ways. Unacceptable numbers of poor people can be portrayed both as a demonstration of unworthy poverty conditions and as a demonstration of a spreading moral ill.

The most ready users, however, are the policy makers and bureaucrats who need to reduce the complex issue of poverty to a few manageable variables. According to the rules of the game, the poor deserving help have to be identified so as to ensure some kind of "fair" allocation of resources. For this purpose those in charge need a distribution of the entire population on the relevant variable(s) in order to set a cut-off point between deserving and non-deserving people. Part of poverty research has gone into identifying such cut-off points, thereby also legitimizing a given distinction between deserving and non-deserving poor. Where the cut-off points are defined through a basket-of-goods method, such research can also be used to legitimize the extent of those transfers in cash or kind that are released at the cut-off point.

When the cut-off points become institutionalized and accepted by political authorities as official poverty lines, the duality of poverty alleviation becomes visible. On the one side, certain groups of the most deprived people are being helped. On the other side, the same people are seldom being helped enough to overcome poverty; while those people who are just above the poverty line sink back into increased relative poverty because they do not benefit from the transfers made to those below the poverty line. Thereby, data on the depth of poverty actually invite a cementation of poverty.

How much difference do a few million poor persons more or less make in the global picture of poverty? At the UN Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, for example, would the national leaders have been more forceful, and committed their governments more strongly to concrete actions towards poverty alleviation, had they known there were x million more poor people in the world than hitherto known? Not likely. Is the monitoring of poverty figures and comparisons with other countries useful knowledge for poverty alleviation in countries where the majority of the people are poor? Can the figures release resources where there are none? Or are figures on poverty in poor countries mainly useful for external purposes?

Although it is important to ask for whom and for what purposes the figures are produced, this is by no means an encouragement to abandon research on measurements. Data on the development of poverty over time, for example, are an important instrument both for monitoring poverty and for exploring distributional effects and co-variation with other phenomena related to the poverty-producing process. Up-to-date data are necessary to ensure that the poor and the intensity of poverty are kept visible to the public eye, but it may still be wise to put somewhat less energy into sheer measurement research, and instead turn to issues that yield more in poverty understanding.

It may also be wise to let questions of a philosophical nature occupy a larger space in all kinds of poverty research, in order to open up for a better understanding of the academic content of poverty research. Intense conflicts surround the field of poverty studies, and poverty research has not yet found its form, either methodologically or theoretically. Studies weave their way between demands for basic research and demands for applied research, with the former calling for strict adherence to scientific standards for research, and the latter calling for short-cuts and speedy delivery of results. At the same time, researchers weave their way among a whole set of ethical issues that run as an

undercurrent between the relatively affluent researchers and the poor people being studied. Ethical issues also arise between the researchers and the many parties interested in the outcome of the research and its political implications for the distribution and redistribution of material and non-material resources in a society (Øyen 1995).

The need for a new paradigm

In poverty research the poor are in focus. That may be one of the few contexts in which they are at the centre of attention. The poor are being studied as individuals, as families and households, as part of poor communities, neighbourhoods, and regions, as a product of larger poverty-creating structures, as victims and criminal actors, as minority cultures and producers of their own culture, as creators of survival strategies and bearers of an informal economy, as an economic burden on the larger society, and as a necessary element in the macro economy, to mention just some of the angles into poverty research. The picture is diversified, and the contents of this volume offer both generalized knowledge of the poverty phenomenon as well as culture-specific knowledge.

However, an interesting observation is that, in the bulk of the research literature, the poor and poverty are treated as a phenomenon that can be understood in isolation from society at large. True enough, major economic and social structures are pushed forward in explanations of poverty. But they tend to become anonymous, because the causal relationships are too diffuse to pin down the exact causes of the extent, intensity, and sustainability of specific kinds of poverty in specific kinds of context or location. But this is not the point here.

The point is that, in most poverty studies, the poor are studied in an isolated context. The fact that they are also living in symbiosis with the rest of the society is more or less ignored. The poor are mainly treated as an excluded group, living in a painful relationship with society at large. It seems as if the attitude of the majority society has rubbed off on the researchers' choice of poverty understanding.

If we are to advance further in poverty understanding, as researchers and policy makers, there is an urgent need to develop a more realistic paradigm where the focus is shifted to the non-poor part of the population. The non-poor and their role in creating and sustaining poverty are as interesting an object for research on poverty as are the poor. The non-poor, for example, have images of the poor and poverty that influence their

behaviour and decision-making. We know very little about those images, except as portrayed in popular stereotypes. The non-poor have created a legal framework around poverty that must have profound, and mainly unknown, consequences for the poor (Mameli 1995). The non-poor have created political, educational, and social institutions to further mainstream interests that do not cater for the needs of the poor. The non-poor have spent resources to build up a physical infrastructure to help transport, industry, trade, and tourism, most of which is of no use to the poor.

It is no exaggeration to maintain the existence of two different worlds, that of the poor and that of the non-poor (with a grey zone of less poor people between the two). The discussion on the "culture of poverty" may be an adequate way to describe the reactions of the poor to the world they live in, just as we can describe the "culture of the elite" as the elite's reactions to its surroundings. But it is inadequate to describe the interrelationship between the two worlds, and how these two worlds are tied together in a way that may be more beneficial to the non-poor than to the poor.

The most cited of these relationships is the dominant discussion of the poor as an economic burden on the non-poor. A relationship much less observed is the need for a certain amount of poverty in a society, in order to secure the smooth functioning of the economy of the non-poor population. Gans (1973) was the first social scientist to point out how functional poverty can be to the non-poor society. According to him, poverty forces people to engage in certain activities because no other options are available. This in turn frees the non-poor from engaging in those kinds of activities. The poor, for example, perform the dirty and menial jobs that the non-poor shy away from. These are jobs that also provide low incomes. The poor are more likely to buy second-hand goods and food of low quality, thereby prolonging the products' economic usefulness. The poor are more likely to make use of second- or third-rate doctors, teachers, and lawyers, whom the non-poor shy away from, thereby prolonging their professional usefulness. The use of poor people as a mobile, unorganized, and low-income workforce, working as migrant and temporary workers, is among the more well-known and acknowledged positive functions of poverty for the non-poor society. The pressure towards downwards wage demands formed by the availability of cheap labour, is likewise a well-known advantage for the wealthier part of society.

Gans (1973) also saw the poor as functional for the non-poor in the political relationship between the two worlds. The political

powerlessness of the poor makes them an easier target for absorbing economic and social change such as the reconstruction of city centres and industrialization. The poor also serve as symbolic constituencies and whipping boys for different political groups, without actually participating in politics or being asked about their preferences. On the more symbolic level, the sorting of the population into poor and non-poor stresses the norms of the non-poor population and helps guarantee their superior status.

The threats the poor pose towards the non-poor have obviously been in focus, whereas the threats of the non-poor to the poor have been less focused. But studies from many countries show that the urban poor, for example, experience an added vulnerability beyond their actual poverty, because they are exposed to a set of risks stemming from the majority society. Health risks arise from the spatial juxtaposition of industrial pollution, high traffic density, lack of sanitary installations, and a generally fragile infrastructure in the areas where the poor live and work (Wratten 1995: 26). Poor people often experience the state in negative ways: as an oppressive bureaucracy that attempts to regulate their activities without understanding their needs, as corrupt policemen, or as planners who make plans without an understanding of how the poor live and survive (*ibid.*). As a result, poor people prefer to avoid contact with official representatives of the majority society, thereby marginalizing themselves further. Although such situations may not always be the "responsibility" of one party, they are still a demonstration of the non-poor world having an impact on the world of the poor and on the intensity of poverty.

Whereas Gans has implied that a certain amount of poverty is functional for the non-poor society, the relationship between the two worlds can also be analysed within two different and inter-related frameworks, those of ignorance and of conflict (bearing in mind that, although the dichotomy between the two worlds is useful for analytical purposes, the reality of the actual world is more complex).

Within the analytical framework of ignorance the non-poor world knows little about the world of the poor, and there is little contact between the two. Physically the two worlds are kept apart through differential land use and ghettoization. Socially the two worlds are kept apart through differential participation in the labour market, the economy, and social and cultural institutions. Mentally the two worlds are kept apart through stereotyping and false images built by tradition and the media.

The strong emphasis on individual failures as causes of poverty is part of an image building that frees the non-poor from guilt and responsibility. Such an image also helps to keep the distance between the two worlds. The new concept of social exclusion, coined in Western Europe, stresses the need for new images of causal explanations. But social exclusion refers to a much wider range of disadvantaged groups than the poor, including problems stemming from family instability, the decline of class solidarity based on unions, youth problems, unsuccessful immigration, and weak social networks. This proliferation of the concept is due to a situation where politics and interest groups have taken over the concept and use it for their own internal purposes (Silver 1995). The introduction of the concept of social exclusion means at the same time that the concept of poverty becomes watered down, and that the complexity of social exclusion in the wider sense, defies a meaningful discussion of causal factors. It remains to be seen whether the new concept fares better than the old concept of relative deprivation, and whether it is powerful enough to change the images of the non-poor.

De Swaan (1988) links the continuation of poverty to the lack of a "social consciousness" among the non-poor. A social consciousness exists when the non-poor develop an awareness of the interdependence of all social groups, realize that they bear some of the responsibility for the fate of the poor, and believe that means are available to overcome poverty (*ibid.*: 253). He argues that developing a social consciousness among the non-poor is a necessary prerequisite in poverty alleviation.

The separation of the two worlds makes for few confrontations, meeting places, and corrections of false images. Decision makers continue to make decisions on the basis of incorrect information, and the role of the state continues expanding in favour of the non-poor world. The real world of the poor stays invisible, because the non-poor world has no need for more precise information. Decisions concerning poverty are based on such incomplete and misleading data as the non-poor would never accept in their own world, either in business or in politics. The present state of incomplete data and narrow definitions in poverty research may also be seen in this context.

Within the analytical framework of conflict, the non-poor may not have much more accurate knowledge about the world of the poor. As a matter of fact, the lesser the capital of precise knowledge about the counterpart, the higher the potential for conflict.

A starting point within the framework of conflict is a definition of poverty as an individual lack of resources. Resources are defined in a wide sense and include economic, social, political, and psychological resources. Access to clean water, as well as basic education, the opportunity to vote, a guarantee of a basic income, and freedom from hunger and epidemics are all considered as resources. Without these resources, an individual is considered to be poor. If alleviation, or even eradication, of poverty is to be efficient within this definition, a comprehensive transfer of resources to the poor is a necessary means.

A likely hypothesis is that the greater the resources incorporated in a transfer, the higher the potential for conflict between the two worlds. The conflicts are not confined to the economic sphere, but reach into the symbolic and social sphere as well.

Poverty is part of a socially and symbolically created hierarchy in which the poor have been allocated the role of underdog. The longer poverty has existed, the more established the hierarchy has become. *All* transfers of resources to poor people challenge the balance of such a hierarchy. A successful poverty alleviation programme increases the social position of the poor in the hierarchy, thereby changing the relative position of others. Even limited transfers can contribute to shifts in the present balance.

Because the elite in the non-poor world is the most likely to be heard when voicing an opinion, it is easy to believe that the influential part of the population has the most to lose when the hierarchy is challenged. But the "elite" in the world of the poor, i.e. those who are almost poor and just above the other poor people, also react strongly. If the poverty alleviation programmes are successful, the poorest group moves upwards in the hierarchy, thereby threatening the somewhat better position of the almost poor and depriving them of an underdog. Many of the conflicts in the world of the poor are centred around the change in balance brought about through even meagre poverty alleviation programmes.

In general, internal transfers, i.e. transfers from non-poor to poor within the same nation or region, are likely to have the largest conflict potential, in particular in countries where poverty is widespread and there is a need for several kinds of resources to be included in the transfers. But external transfers, too, i.e. transfers from other countries and from international organizations, have a large conflict potential. Although the non-poor do not have to contribute financially, the utility of the poor for the non-poor world, as described by Gans, will diminish.

The analytical framework of conflict can be extended by

including other issues. It is, for example, likely that the conflict potential brought about by transfers will increase with the juxtaposition of other conflicts, thereby also changing the priority given to the resources considered most important in the poverty definition. Where ethnic and political conflicts are woven into the world of poverty, the conflict potential is likely to increase until a transfer of political resources has also taken place. Where pressure on land use is the issue, the conflict potential may be the same in mega-cities where land is scarce as in open agricultural plains where land is plentiful, but inaccessible to the poor, but the concrete conflicts are likely to take different forms.

The long shadows of poverty

If poverty research is to advance further, there has to be room for both the global search for an understanding of poverty and the fact that poverty is existential for those who have to live in poverty. Poor people must meet their poverty face to face twenty-four hours a day, every day, all the year around. The way they dress, the way they talk, the way they prepare food, the way they fill their children with hope or hopelessness – all reflect the iron laws of poverty. For the majority there will never be an escape, whatever they may tell their children. But still, the variety of survival strategies is amazing.

Contributions from the literary sphere surpass the social sciences in their detailed descriptions of the lives of the poor. The social sciences surpass the literary sphere in their analysis of the iron laws of poverty. The future challenge for poverty research lies in linking the universal with the particular, and in tying the micro perspective to the macro perspective. For this purpose the contributions of many different disciplines are needed, with their diversity of paradigms and methodological approaches. So far we have only scratched the surface in explaining the causes and manifestations of poverty. Testable hypotheses brought out in different cultural contexts are a necessary step forward towards new theory formation. New ways of cooperation between the disciplines are another necessary step forward.

Much of poverty research has been parochial, insofar as it has been anchored in culture-specific perceptions of values and human life. Western thought has dominated and almost monopolized poverty thinking. Comparative studies are one way of rectifying the situation and bringing in conceptual thinking that may lead to new theory formation.

Poverty is going to be with us for a long time to come. In spite of a wide range of poverty alleviation programmes, poverty casts long shadows over most societies. Even when programmes are proved inadequate, they still continue, mainly for lack of alternatives based on sound data and theoretical understanding. Poverty must be one of those few areas where the medicine is prescribed before the malady is known.

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