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Mobilizing critical research for preventing and eradicating poverty

CROP Secretariat

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PREFACE

By Thomas Pogge and Alberto Cimadamore

The International Social Science Council (ISSC) and the University of Bergen (UiB) signed a new agreement about CROP on September 3rd 2012. This has undoubtedly been the most important news for our Programme during this semester, since the contract establishes the legal and material basis for its long term sustainability and expansion.

The contract was signed a few days after the annual Scientific Committee (SC) meeting was held in Bergen, where members and sponsors (UiB and ISSC) revisited the process of CROP's incorporation into the academic life of the University. This process, which opens up many opportunities for CROP's institutional consolidation, also presents challenges that are being addressed through the establishment of new organizational routines and most importantly, the consolidation of a constructive cooperation with UiB Global www.uib.no/research/global.

The SC meeting was also a good opportunity to discuss the relation of the CROP agenda to some of the most relevant topics of our days, like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a noteworthy international effort to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Critical analysis and monitoring of national and international policy responses to poverty are among CROP's core objectives. For this reason, CROP organized in conjunction with the SC meeting a workshop aimed at providing a critical assessment of the MDGs by discussing, — among other things — whether the MDGs have really been a major driver of poverty reduction around the world. Results of the prolific discussions

are touched upon in this newsletter, and a more comprehensive synthesis will be published as a CROP Poverty Brief. The MDGs will continue to be an important component of CROP's agenda during 2013. A cooperation agreement with Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP) and Yale's Global Justice Program will facilitate a workshop on the MDGs and their successors (February 14–16) as well as a new research initiative — the Global Poverty Consensus Report — aiming to identify the most important areas of agreement among researchers and practitioners in regard to global poverty and its eradication.

Having successfully organized a series of events on child poverty and well-being in Argentina in connection with the 5th World Congress for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, we will continue to strengthen our cooperation with Equity for Children www.equityforchildren.org and Childwatch International www.childwatch.uio.no during 2013. Jointly with our partners CROP is also supporting a thematic Working Group in Latin America and organizing an international workshop on child well-being, both of which advance our strategy of decentralizing research activities.

The Secretariat and Scientific Committee have the pleasure of announcing that CROP will be celebrating the 20th Anniversary of its establishment at the University of Bergen this year. We think that the best way to celebrate this milestone is by working together for a world where all people can meet their basic needs with dignity and are everywhere respected as equals. We wish all our network members a successful and rewarding 2013 in their efforts towards working for such a just world.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE WORKSHOP AND PUBLIC EVENTS

On August 22, 2012 CROP held its annual Scientific Committee (SC) meeting.

CROP's two core sponsors were represented by Sigmund Grønmo, Rector of the University of Bergen, and Françoise Caillods on behalf of Heidi Hackmann, Executive Director of the ISSC. Also in attendance were CROP's Chair Thomas Pogge, Members Bob Deacon, Julio Boltvinik, Asuncion St. Clair, Karen O'Brien, and Isabel Ortiz (via teleconference), CROP's Scientific Director Alberto Cimadamore and CROP staff members. Another special invitee attending as an observer was Gro Lie, UiB Global's Academic Coordinator.

Central to the meeting's agenda were discussions of CROP's activities as well as CROP's identity as an academic programme but also as an international network of poverty researchers and institutions. Participants agreed that CROP's twofold nature (as an ISSC

programme integrated into UiB's academic life and as an international network) poses a great institutional and organizational challenge that must inform our planned activities alongside the scientific priorities identified in previous SC meetings and the consultations with Southern partners.

The discussion took as its point of departure the document "CROP Work Agenda for 2012 – 2014: Main Activities" presented to the consideration of the SC. Also discussed were CROP's budget and financial report as well as the important upcoming selection of the new Scientific Committee Members whose term is to begin 2013.

During his opening remarks, Rector Sigmund Grønmo highlighted UiB's commitment to being an international university as reflected in

its multi-cultural research and study environment and its heavy involvement in international cooperation and collaboration with scientific networks (including the ISSC) around the world. He stressed that global and development research is deeply rooted in all UiB faculties as well as in UiB's inter-disciplinary work. He further underscored that the international dimension CROP provides is an important component in UiB's international research activities.

Poverty is present in the South but also an increasing problem in the North, even more so on account of the financial crisis. Thus, to gain a global understanding of poverty and to contribute effectively to its eradication, a critical yet comparative approach of poverty research is crucial.

Sigmund Grønmo

During the meeting, ISSC representative Françoise Caillods reiterated that the ISSC looked forward to collaborating and playing an active role in CROP's activities while at the same time involving CROP in as many of its activities as possible. Some of the planned flagship activities linking the two organizations include the World Social Science Report 2013, for which the call for papers is already out, and the World Social Science Fellow programme (WSSF). ISSC, CROP and the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP) are partnering on an initial series of WSSF seminars whose objective is to train promising young scholars and to foster the development of new networks of outstanding researchers. The first seminar is planned for March 2013 in Quito, Ecuador on the topic of sustainable urbanization. www.worldsocialscience.org/?p=3092.

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2013 SELECTION OF NEW CROP SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

As the current SC membership term ends in December 2012, the outgoing SC members discussed and deliberated on the best process for selecting new members as well as ensuring institutional continuity. The current SC members agreed to spread the word as

well as make suggestions concerning new potential members for CROP's next Scientific Committee membership to be selected by an open call and mechanisms established in the contract between the ISSC and the UiB. CROP drafted a comprehensive call and

application form which were posted as "a call" on the CROP website and also circulated among CROP's and ISSC's partners. The call is now closed and the selection process is currently underway.

WORKSHOP

The MDGs and poverty reduction in the 21st century: a critical assessment

[August 23–24, Bergen, Norway]

Coinciding with its 2012 SC meeting, CROP organized the workshop “The MDGs and Poverty Reduction in the 21st Century: A Critical Assessment”. Held at UiB Global, this event evaluated in a constructive way the impact the MDGs have had and could have on reducing poverty around the world. The following interrelated questions guided the debate. (i) Has poverty really declined in a way consistent with international legal and political commitments and moral responsibilities? (ii) What direct role have the MDGs played in producing these changes? (iii) Which are the main lessons from the joint analysis of the workshop towards conceptualizing

a post-MDG agenda or a new development agenda? SC Members (Pogge, Deacon, Boltzvik, St. Clair and O’Brien) and special invitees (Sakiko Fukuda Parr and Gabriele Köhler) addressed the first two questions by elucidating how poverty was defined and measured according to the original international commitments and how poverty, so understood, had evolved since that time. The complexity of the task was evident, and the participants vigorously discussed the great controversy about the accuracy of the MDG poverty statistics and about the baseline used to measure progress against. Some participants stressed the close link of poverty to inequality at both the national and international levels: rising inequality dilutes the benefits of economic growth for the poor and it also diminishes the capacity of the poor to articulate and defend their interests in the political arena. A synthesis of this debate will be published in the next CROP Brief under the title “Poverty & the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A critical assessment and a look forward”.

ROUND TABLE

The MDGs and poverty reduction in the 21st century: a critical assessment

[August 22, Bergen, Norway]

On the evening of the first day of the workshop (August 22), CROP and the University of Bergen held a joint public round table seminar on “The MDGs and Poverty Reduction in the 21st Century: A Critical Assessment” at the Bergen Resource Centre (BRC) with main speakers Julio Boltzvik, Professor Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, El Colegio de México; Bob Deacon, Professor of International Social Policy at the University of Sheffield; Karen O’Brien, Professor in the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo, and Thomas Pogge, Professor of



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Philosophy and International Affairs at Yale University. This first round table was designed to share some of the conclusions of the debate highlighted in the day’s workshop and was manifestly appreciated by a wide audience of students and researchers from the Bergen academic area.

ROUND TABLE

The MDGs and the political economy of development: a critical assessment

[August 23, Bergen, Norway]

The second public event organized around the SC Meeting and Workshop was on “The MDGs and the Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment”. This event also took place at the Bergen Resource Centre, and the main speakers were two distinguished specialists in the area of the workshop theme: Sakiko Fukuda-Parr of The New School’s Graduate Programme in International Affairs, New York, and Gabriele Köhler, Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK. Although this debate was thematically connected to the first round table and the workshop, discussion was centered on a critical analysis of the MDGs narrative from its inception to the current time. During the presentation and debate it was pointed out that the



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methodology and implementation of the MDG framework tend to oversimplify the development narrative while simultaneously excluding much of the broader policy agenda such as the systematic issues of sustainability, empowerment of people, equality, human rights, social inclusion and fair rules in the global economy. The event drew scholars and students from different disciplines within the university who actively engaged in the critical debate initiated by the speakers.

POVERTY AND POLITICS IN MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES [November 21–23, Cape Town, South Africa]

With support from both the University of Bergen (UiB) and the Southern African/Nordic Centre (SANORD), CROP organized its second major workshop of the year on the topic “Poverty and Politics in Middle Income Countries” at and in collaboration with the Institute for Social Development of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in Cape Town, South Africa.



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The workshop was a unique opportunity to discuss the theme from the perspective of various academic disciplines and to generate critical and alternative knowledge on this increasingly important topic. Its main objective was to enhance critical understanding of poverty politics in middle-income countries (MICs) through discussions centered on papers written by scholars from Mexico, Tunisia, India, Nigeria, Thailand, Argentina, Denmark, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Norway and the UK. The call for papers addressed questions

raised within the topics of social development, public policies and politics, enquiring whether poverty reduction and prevention in MICs was distinctive and therefore, how this would affect research, understanding, and policy in this complex matter. Since traditional thought, strategy, and action on poverty had focused mainly on the circumstances and realities of the low-income countries (LICs), the principal question that naturally arose was how this new reality of massive poverty in the MICs should lead us to

rethink anti-poverty strategies and policies. A better understanding of the characteristics, causes and future impacts of the poverty increase in the MICs is needed. As a result of this workshop, CROP has sought to address this relatively under-explored topic through participant contributions to a book publication in the International Series of Poverty Studies by CROP and Zed Books (London), and with the formation of a Working Group on poverty politics (launched on the occasion of this workshop) thus initiating a new focus on, and production of academic research into, this increasingly relevant topic. Indeed, at the heart of this lies the role played by politics and public policy in shaping social development policies and their impact on well-being in MICs.

The workshop was preceded, on August 21, by a public seminar on “The Politics of Poverty and Research and Poverty Reduction”, organized by UWC and Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) with participation by CROP and some of its workshop participants. The seminar was formally opened by Dr. Chesepe Mphaisha, Director of UWC’s School of Government, and chaired by Julian May, Director of the Institute for Social Development. The invited panelists were Chifa Tekaya who until recently was the coordinator of UNESCO Programme on Poverty and Human Rights, Andries du Toit, Director of PLAAS, Einar Braathen, Senior Researcher at the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), and Camilo Pérez-Bustillo, Research Professor of the Graduate Programme in Human Rights and the Faculty of Law, Autonomous University of Mexico City (UACM).

WORKSHOP IN CHILE ON MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF POVERTY [November 23–24, Santiago, Chile]

Jointly with the Psychology Department of the Social Sciences School of the University of Chile (FACSO), the CLACSO-CROP Programme organized a workshop to examine how poverty has evolved

in Latin America over the past decades and how this evolution is conceptualized and measured within the region. According to statistics provided by states and international organizations (like the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*) poverty is a persisting phenomenon in the region despite progress reported during the last decades. Although poverty has

been declining in relative terms during the past three decades from 40.5% (1980) to 30.4% (2011) the number of people living in poverty has increased from 136 million in 1980 to 177 million in 2011 (62 million of whom live in extreme poverty). The event was held on November 22–23 in Santiago, Chile, and its results are expected to be published in the CLACSO-CROP Series of Poverty Studies.

* www.eclac.cl/publicaciones/xml/4/48454/SocialPanorama2012DocI.pdf

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

[December 10–12, Cairo, Egypt]

Organized by CROP, the Arab and African Research Centre (AARC), the American University in Cairo (AUC), the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS).



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An International Workshop on “The Political Economy of Poverty and Social Transformations of the Global South” took place in Cairo, December 10–12. This place and time were certainly relevant and stimulating for holding a vivid debate, as the local co-organizers pointed out when the workshop commenced: “You are joining us at one of the most exciting moments this country has ever been living through.” This was the opening statement and sentiment shared by the representatives of the AARC and the AUC when they welcomed participants from eleven countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia North America and Europe.

Participants presented their papers in five sessions, which examined the multiple links between Social Transformation, Human Rights, Development, Poverty, and Social Movements from different case studies. Although contextual differences were highlighted, social transformation — as defined in the call for papers — was found as the obvious structural response to the persistence of poverty in the South. There were case

similarities that demonstrated that poverty is a structural problem inseparable from power relations that have defined the making and re-making of political economies and society historically — and which have been magnified over the past century. A relational view of poverty emerged through the analysis of socio-economic systems which have produced goods in unprecedented quantities and a high standard of living for a small proportion of the world’s population, while keeping the vast majority in poverty. Poverty was contextualized under the existing patterns of accumulation and distribution of wealth and power, conveying a vivid sense of how difficult it is to eradicate poverty without altering the ideological, material and institutional basis of social systems in the South as well as the still North-dominated global patterns of production, circulation, and consumption.

In addition to the workshop there were two public events, which were filmed and will soon be available on the organizers’ websites. In the first public event, Thomas Pogge,

Chair of CROP’s SC, was the keynote speaker with a lecture on “Poverty, Human Rights, and Social Transformation in the 21st Century”. Pogge presented a comprehensive analysis of poverty during the past two decades that supported his critical view on how the issue is addressed by relevant international organizations. His approach, rooted in a human right perspective, focused on how important supranational institutional arrangements help marginalize the poor and stifle social transformations in the developing world. He showed statistics on the unprecedented concentration of wealth characterizing the latest globalization period and explained how easily severe poverty could now be eradicated — if an appropriate social transformation were achieved at the supranational level.

The second public event was a round table session on “Revolution and Social Transformation in Egypt,” which concluded the workshop by relating its theme to the social and political transformations currently unfolding in Egypt. Three distinguished female scholars — Karima Korayem (Professor, Al-Azhar University), Shahida El Baz (Director, AARC) and Hanan Sabea (Professor, AUC) — explicated the conditions that paved the path toward political change in their country and examined the possible implications of the current revolutionary process on social and economic patterns that condition poverty reduction and prevention.

Hanan Sabea (AUC) and Aaron Rosenberg (El Colegio de Mexico) were elected as editors in the Editorial Committee that will work on developing the workshop papers into a book, to be published in the International Series of Poverty Studies by CROP and Zed Book.

FUNDING FROM SPIRE FOR VISITING RESEARCHERS AT CROP

The University of Bergen announced that, through a competitive process, two grants have been awarded to support CROP Fellows who will implement their research proposals in Bergen during the first semester of 2013. The grants were funded by the Strategic Programme for International Research and Education (SPIRE), which aims to support the UiB's internationalisation strategy.

Camilo Perez-Bustillo, Research Professor of the Autonomous University of Mexico City (UACM) and Maria Petmesidou, Professor of the Democritus University of Thrace (Greece) will receive financial support to research at the CROP Secretariat during the spring semester 2013.

Professor Perez-Bustillo will stay in Bergen for three months to complete a manuscript on poverty and human rights from the perspectives of the Global South. He will also collaborate with the Secretariat in the elaboration of a plan to launch a Working Group on poverty and human rights and will give a series of lectures at the Bergen Resource Centre for International Development and UiB Global.

Professor Petmesidou will stay for a month working on the design of a research project on social policy in the Mediterranean area. She will also give a seminar on the same topic at CROP/UiB Global and elaborate a document to be published in CROP's Poverty Brief series.

NORHED SEED FUNDING FROM NORAD

CROP and the UiB's Departments of Foreign Languages, Digital Culture, Administration and Organization Theory will receive seed funding from NORAD to elaborate a study program aiming to improve learning infrastructures in higher education in Latin America and develop a PhD program in education that meets the needs of Bolivia, Nicaragua and Paraguay.

In collaboration with a Colombian university, the consortium will design the educational programme along with a series of additional activities including: (1) the establishment of a leveling Master's program (Bridging Master's Study) for students with one or two years of study on top of their Bachelor's degree (*Diplomados*), but without a Master's degree, (2) the creation of a Bank of Research Projects as a resource for master and doctoral students and (3) the enhancement of teaching, research and communication through a well-functioning digital learning platform through active use of social media.

The full application will be submitted to NORAD by March 15th, 2013. The first meeting of the consortium is scheduled for January 21st –24th, 2014, in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

CROP/UIB Global LATIN AMERICAN INTEGRATION: CURRENT TRENDS AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES [August 28, Bergen, Norway]

On August 28th, Gerónimo De Sierra, Vice-Rector of the Brazilian Federal University for Latin American Integration (UNILA) visited the CROP Secretariat and gave a lecture at the UiB Global premises on integration policies within the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), with special focus on Venezuela's full incorporation into the block. MERCOSUR has been widely considered the main integration initiative in contemporary Latin America, marking an important trend in the recent political development of the region. It has raised great expectations about the potential of economic integration to address social issues such as poverty and inequality affecting the countries of the region. The challenge now is to transform these expectations into policies capable of delivering real progress. Although gains have reportedly been made at the national level (mostly poverty and inequality reductions, notably in Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela), a regional institutional response has not yet been articulated at the level of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and by the blocks that are an integral part of this initiative: MERCOSUR and the Andean Community (CAN). Scholars and students working within the Latin American Group at the University of Bergen participated in the event and actively discussed the social and political aspects of Latin American Integration.

De Sierra's visit to the University of Bergen was a first step towards the formalization of a co-operation agreement between CROP and UNILA. (See below "UNILA-CROP agreement signed")

UNILA-CROP AGREEMENT SIGNED



On October 19, CROP and the Federal University of Latin American Integration (UNILA) signed a memorandum of understanding for collaborative activities for the next five years. This agreement signed in Foz de Iguazú by the Rector of UNILA and the Director of CROP is aimed to promote interdisciplinary research on poverty and development, to organize workshops, to publish the results of these activities and to plan and execute medium and long term joint programmes on these topics. A next step in this renewed co-operation with Latin America will be the organization of a workshop on a topic of common interest like "Poverty, Water and Development" that will bring scholars from Latin America together with colleagues of other regions of the world.

CALENDAR

CROP'S MAIN EVENTS FOR THE FIRST SEMESTER OF 2013

February 14–16

Workshop on Structural Roots of Global Poverty, **Yale University**, New Haven, CT, USA. “Theory Meets Practice”, jointly organized by ASAP and CROP.

February 21–22

Workshop on Religion, Poverty and Politics, **Bergen Resource Center**, Bergen, Norway. “Exploring ways in which poverty and Social Justice are addressed by different religious actors and communities”, jointly organized by CROP and Chr. Michelsen Institute.

For more details see www.crop.org/storypg.aspx?id=597&MenuNode=634008042158978281&zone=41

March 25–30

First World Social Science Fellow (WSSF) Seminar on “Future Cities and Human Wellbeing” (TBC). Quito, Ecuador. “Sustainability Urbanization Innovative approach to understanding urbanization in the 21st Century” organized by the International Social Science Council, (ISSC).

April 1 (TBC)

Roundtable on poverty and social policies in integration processes. **CROP-UASB**. Quito, Ecuador.

May 13–15

Workshop on Development and Sustainability Sciences. The Challenge of Transdisciplinary knowledge for Social Change, **Bergen Resource Center**, Bergen, Norway. “Bridging Health Promotion and Sustainability Science in the path towards the Green Economy,” to be jointly organized by CROP, UiB Global and the Research Centre for Health Promotion (HEMIL).

For more details see www.crop.org/storypg.aspx?id=602&MenuNode=634008042158978281&zone=41

June 10–11

CROP 20th Anniversary Conference, UiB Global, Bergen, Norway, organized by CROP:

- A Round Table on “Feminization of Poverty”.
- Lectures on the Past, Present & Future of CROP.
- A Workshop on “Present and Future of Poverty Research”.



CROP POVERTY BRIEFS

THE STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF MATERIAL AND SOCIAL DEPRIVATION ON THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM

Low socioeconomic status and poverty can have profound effects on the brain and body, and thus influence both mental and physical health. In one of CROP's Poverty Briefs published this semester, Sebastián J. Lipina and Michael I. Posner expose how biological and psycho-social risk factors associated with low socioeconomic status and poverty are related to inequalities in child cognitive and socio-emotional development, showing that such conditions pose a threat to educational attainment and adult productivity worldwide. Poverty can have profound effects on the brain and body as well as on a child's reaction to stress, which is also an important factor affecting school performance.

See www.crop.org/viewfile.aspx?id=420

THE SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR

The UN Social Protection Floor Initiative is one of the most important developments in global policy within the area of CROP's concern. In June 2012 the International Labour Organisation agreed to a new international instrument, Social Protection Floors (SPFs) Recommendation which all governments are urged to adopt. In a recently published CROP Brief, Bob Deacon reviews and assesses the main provisions of the Recommendation while explaining some of the complicated aspects of its global governance.

See www.crop.org/viewfile.aspx?id=415

