



Adverse incorporation and social inclusion

Introduction

In many respects, the rhetorical battle to acknowledge that certain groups are consistently and persistently excluded from the development process has been won, but the war to bring a greater sense of conceptual and empirical rigour to these debates is far from over (Woolcock 2005: 112).

Despite some advances, the notions of 'adverse incorporation' and 'social exclusion' (AISE) remain somewhat marginal to the mainstream of poverty analysis, and framing poverty debates in these ways remains a contested activity. In Alice O'Connor's (2006) terms, such work falls more under the heading of 'knowledge about poverty' rather than 'poverty knowledge'.¹ For example, although the presence of panel datasets and vulnerability assessments within poor countries are growing, as is the extent to which they inform the poverty diagnostics used to underpin development policy-making (such as poverty reduction strategy papers), this is only rarely the case for concepts associated with AISE. The increasingly strong and multi-dimensional datasets that exist are rarely translated into indices of social exclusion, and

even the more progressive international agencies have abandoned initial attempts to index poverty problems in terms of social exclusion (UNDP, 1998). Within the more theoretical domains of development studies, concerns remain that the concept is an inherently 'western' one, unsuited to the realities of countries where mass poverty is the norm rather than the exception.

Nonetheless, an increasingly large space – both discursive and institutional – is emerging in international development within which such ideas can and have taken root. A key shift involves the apparently growing acceptance that persistent poverty needs to be thought about in relational terms, rather than as a straightforward absence of assets (Green, 2006; Harriss, 2007). Chronic poverty research has to some extent helped to enable this shift, by giving space to such discussions of relational poverty (Addison and Hulme, forthcoming) and also because the insistence that much poverty persists over prolonged periods strongly suggests that structural and relational forces are at play. Starting with this particular contribution, this summary outlines some of the key insights that can emerge when the optic of AISE research is used to explore chronic poverty, before briefly suggesting what this might mean for thinking and acting around chronic poverty.

What is Chronic Poverty?

The distinguishing feature of chronic poverty is extended duration in absolute poverty. Therefore, chronically poor people always, or usually, live below a poverty line, which is normally defined in terms of a money indicator (e.g. consumption, income, etc.), but could also be defined in terms of wider or subjective aspects of deprivation. This is different from the transitorily poor, who move in and out of poverty, or only occasionally fall below the poverty line.

What do we see when we approach chronic poverty through the lens of AISE?

It can be argued that there are at least four (more or less) distinctive types of contribution that can be gained from looking at chronic poverty from an AISE perspective. These include a focus on the underlying causes of chronic poverty, a deep sense of its multi-dimensional, political and globalised character.

Causality

Adopting an AISE perspective involves using the notion of chronic poverty as a methodological probe through which to explore deeper and more structural accounts of how poverty is created and maintained (Green and Hulme, 2005). This goes beyond mainstream efforts to locate the 'causes and correlates' of poverty through the preferred methods of household survey data and participatory poverty assessments. Here, the



tendency from an AISE perspective is to identify persistent poverty as being created largely by forces that are external to those people and places that experience it, and (more explicitly) by the ways in which such people and places are tied into particular types of relations with dominant social forms. Chronic poverty thus becomes understandable not as a failure of the poor themselves but of the terms of their engagement with various institutions, mechanisms and processes that enmesh them in poverty. People who are poor are not just those who have been left out and need to be integrated (into markets) but those disadvantaged by relations of production, property and power (Hickey and Du Toit, 2007:7). For Mosse (2007: 5), 'A relational view, then, understands poverty as the effect of social relations, understood not narrowly in terms of connectivity or networks, but in terms of inequalities of power'.

This leads to a rather different account of chronic poverty that tend to be generated within mainstream debates. As Box 1 elaborates, an AISE perspective on the 'informal economy' in South Africa strongly challenges the dominant notion of a dual economy and draws attention not only to the close connections between the formal and informal but also to the unequal power relations that those on the margins are incorporated into as a result of this connectivity. This discursive challenge has serious implications for the types of policies that need to be pursued in order to offer productive and protective support to those in the 'informal' sector.

An AISE perspective on chronic poverty in Northern Uganda would also tend to differ from dominant accounts, including those occasionally offered within the CPRC. Here, the dominant view is of a region 'left behind' by the otherwise progressive and successful majority of the country, and there is a pervasive sense within policy discussions that the 'culture' of Northerners is somehow to blame for their poverty. This 'residualist' understanding of how poverty operates fits in with a particular historical reading of the North that accords an explanatory role to factors internal to the North, often associated with Northerners themselves. This includes a tendency by non-Northerners to ascribe certain innate characteristics to them, particularly concerning an apparent proclivity for violence and alcoholism. This has direct consequences for the policy responses that emerge, and have created a tendency to design interventions for the North that are 'culturally-appropriate', 'community-based' and which involve impoverished northerners transforming themselves into the engines of their own recovery in ways that are largely peripheral to mainstream institutions of politics and policy, including the PEAP.²

From an AISE perspective, however, it would be argued that it makes more sense to understand poverty in Northern Uganda in relational rather than residual terms, with a particular focus on the adverse incorporation of the region and its people into broader economic and political formations (Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey, 2008). The deeper roots of impoverishment need to be seen in historical terms, with particular reference to the ways in which the region has been incorporated into the dominant modes/regimes of political rule and economic accumulation that have prevailed at various periods of Uganda's pre-, colonial and postcolonial history. Key processes here include those of state formation (Leopold, 2005) and capitalism (Southall, 1998), both of which are key to understanding processes of adverse incorporation and social

exclusion more broadly. So, as one noted anthropologist of the West Nile region notes, to label this increased tendency to drink amongst Northern males as 'alcoholism' (Hulme and Lawson, 2006, CPRC Uganda), 'would be absurd', given that 'The capitalist mode of production has destroyed their traditional way of life and its appropriate values, and provided little in its place' (Southall, 1998: 259). This previously prosperous group were chopped in half by colonial wars, traditional hunting activities were outlawed and the region has remained spatially isolated. So,

The infrastructural barriers to export from the district, on top of the loss of the traditional male roles of hunting, fighting and deliberating (has left a void) which is often filled by drinking. The traditional, nutritious beer is still brewed and drunk, but excessive leisure creates non-traditional demand for commoditised liquor, which provides women with one of their few extra income advantages (Southall, 1988: 259).

Meanwhile, Leopold (2005) is heavily critical of the 'repetitive association of the people of West Nile with violence' along with the 'consequent implication that they are the source of their own marginality and misfortune'. Leopold notes that any violence that was practiced internally between West Nilers prior to the historical and contemporary processes of conquest, enslavement and state formation that have shaped the region over recent centuries was different in character and scale to anything that emerged afterwards, particularly in terms of technological differentiation, the absence of assumed racial characteristics and rules regarding non-combatants. It was different in all of these ways from the 'violence practiced upon the people of West Nile by successive state formations – the Turco-Egyptian Sudan, the Belgian empire, the British protectorate, postcolonial Uganda' (Leopold, 2005: 146). As such,

...violence has been at the heart of their (West Nilers) historical experience: notably the violence of states which have marginalised and manipulated them into roles of slaves and soldiers, the effect of which was to produce agents of state violence whose 'nature' could be ideologically disowned by the 'superior' civilisation (Leopold, 2005: 130).

From this it is clear that chronic poverty does not exist outside of underlying processes of development but is constituted by them, with wealth and poverty as opposite sides of the same coin. This is not to try and establish some sort of conspiracy story. Not all chronic poverty is caused by AISE and not all processes of AISE are deliberately established (although some are). Rather, they form part of a broader process of social ordering that takes place in relation to the constitutive forces within society (Green, 2006), within which people have stakes and are accorded status at different levels (see Mosse, 2007).

Multi-dimensionality

The CPRC has already nailed its colours to the mast of multi-dimensionality, insisting that chronic poverty cannot simply be defined within the space of income (Hulme and

Box 1: How a relational view of AISE challenges the consensus in South Africa

Since 2003, South African policy discourse about persistent poverty has been dominated by the notion that poor people stay poor because they are trapped in a 'second economy', disconnected from the mainstream 'first world economy'. This notion is challenged by research conducted in 2002 and 2005–2006 in Mount Frere in the rural Eastern Cape, and in Cape Town's African suburbs. This research suggests that a process of simultaneous monetisation, de-agrarianisation *and* de-industrialisation has created a heavy reliance on a formal sector in which employment is becoming increasingly elusive and fragile. Findings suggested high levels of economic integration, corporate penetration and monetisation even in the remote rural Eastern Cape. Rather than being structurally disconnected from the 'formal economy', formal and informal, 'mainstream' and marginal activities are often thoroughly interdependent, supplementing or subsidising one another in complex ways. The dynamics of these diverge significantly from those imagined both in 'second economy' discourse and in 'SMME' policy. Instead of imagining a separate economic realm, 'structurally disconnected' from the 'first economy,' it is more helpful to grasp that the South African economy is both unitary and heterogeneous, and that people's prospects are determined by the specific ways in which their activities are caught up in the complex networks and circuits of social and economic power. Rather than 'bringing people into' the mainstream economy policymakers would do better to strengthen existing measures to reduce vulnerability, and to consider ways of counteracting disadvantageous power relations within which they are caught, and supporting the livelihood strategies that are found at the margins of the formal economy. *From du Toit and Neves (2007).*

Shepherd, 2003). However, if an AISE perspective is adopted then it is arguable that,

...this propensity towards multi-dimensionality goes (methodologically) deeper than elsewhere within poverty analysis, and goes beyond the usual 'income plus human development' approach to straddle the more significant divides in social reality and social analysis, namely that between 'culture' and 'political economy' (Kabeer, 2000). In particular, it can draw our attention to what Nancy Fraser terms 'bivalent categories', whereby problems of cultural recognition (or rejection) become entwined with resource-deprivation to produce particularly intractable forms of poverty (Hickey and du Toit, 2007: 2-3).

For Mosse's reading of chronic poverty, there appears to be a particular ordering or hierarchy between these multiple-dimensions – from the economic, through the social and the political – although it is their interlinking that is most striking, such that:

The logic of capitalist transformation and the (social) operation of categories are the background engines of structural poverty. But in countless places, the foreground

Box 2: How primitive accumulation creates chronic poverty

In India, particularly large concentrations of persistently poor people are found in tribal, forested (or deforested) regions (Shepherd and Mehta, 2006) and there is a broad historical consensus that in significant measure chronic poverty in these adivasi districts of India has its historical basis in colonial forest regimes and the erosion of livelihoods that followed forest demarcation for commercial extraction under state monopoly (e.g. Skaria, 1999; Hardiman, 1987a, 1994; Baviskar, 1995). *From Mosse (2007: 11).*

Box 3: Adverse incorporation into labour markets

"Incorporation into labour markets is adverse to different degrees. In adivasi western India (and elsewhere) those who are most exploited and have least power to protect their interests are families for whom migration is a defensive survival strategy; people who in the lean season trade their labour in distant urban sites for cash to meet the urgent need for food, and who are most fully tied into relations of dependence and exploitation; men women and children who migrate furthest, for longest, under the worst conditions of deprivation with least reward. At work sites migrants experience long hours, hard work, harsh conditions, injuries (with inadequate medical help or compensation), and social isolation and humiliation (see Mosse *et al.*, 2005). These migrant labourers are recruited in their own villages by gang leaders/brokers (mukkadams, often former Bhil labourers) who negotiate with contractors/employers, arrange cash advances and long-term work. Being tied to mukkadams is a price paid for the relatively greater security of work, for protection (including shelter at work sites) and patronage offered by ties to mukkadams. But if this is a 'Faustian bargain' (Wood, 2003), often it neither involves choice nor promises economic security, but rather perpetuates or worsens insecurity (cf. Du Toit, 2005:14). Even when paid in full, migrant wages fall well below the legal minimum (especially for piece-rate jobs), but more importantly work is irregular, and payment often late or withheld, especially towards 'the end of the season when the balance of power has firmly shifted from employee (coaxed with advances) to the employer, and when migrants are under pressure to return home for the cultivation season' (Mosse, *et al.*, 2002: 75). *From Mosse (2007: 16-17).*

reveals rapacious exploitation and corruption, unscrupulous traders, usurious moneylenders, 'bootleggers, contractors and bureaucrats' (Dreze, 2001) (Mosse, 2007: 21).

To take the case of Bhil migrants in India, then, whereby globalised processes of economic restructuring in the agricultural sector have led to high levels of internal migration,

...It is not migration, but the social relationships of exploitation involved that are the cause of chronic poverty. And it is the fact that the institutions of government, NGOs

and others are poorly equipped (or politically unwilling) to deal with the mobile poor that makes labour migrants a particularly invisible and exploitable section of society (Mosse, et al 2005). (Mosse, 2007: 17).

AISE research, then, engages both with the underlying processes of development that help form the constitutive institutions and categories that order social relationships, and on the ways in which certain forms of agency are both produced and help reproduce these in the everyday social life. Some of this takes us back to the future in terms of making the fuller engagement with capitalism advocate for in 'older' forms of political economy. Here, and following Harriss-White's (2005) analysis of eight different ways in which capitalism creates poverty, Mosse illustrates how this occurs within India via forms of primitive accumulation (Box 2) and adverse incorporation into labour markets (Box 3).

As Green (2006) argues, society needs to make sense of and install some sort of social order around such economic processes. Or, in Charles Tilly's terms, such violent processes of exploitation need to be given social stability. This occurs through a series of inequality-generating mechanisms which emerge to make sense of certain patterns of economic accumulation. Here, different social categories are formed that can be mapped onto the necessary tasks and roles involved in the production and reproduction of wealth, including those at the bottom of the social order. As explained in Box 4, this is a particular problem for certain social categories, including some women and lower-caste groups in India.

The politics of persistent poverty

Within the multi-dimensional approach emphasised within AISE research, there is a particularly strong focus on the political dimension. Indeed, Bhalla and Lapeyere (1997) argue that this is the distinctive contribution of social exclusion (also Tilly, 2006). The point here is not necessarily to move towards an indexing of poverty that uses explicitly political variables, but to insist that '...power relations in society are always shaped by wider political systems (Mosse, 2007: 25). Here, the existence of social exclusion is inherently a failure of citizenship (Silver, 1994, 2007), the analysis of social exclusion (and adverse incorporation)

Box 4: the socialisation of chronic poverty

Tilly suggests a set of 'inequality-generating mechanisms'. The pivotal one is exploitation, the exclusion of some by others of the full value added by their effort (e.g., in the construction sites of Gujarat where tribal migrant labourers whose work is essential, are paid barely enough to survive). A second mechanism that Tilly calls opportunity hoarding, involves 'confining the use of a value-producing resource to members of an in-group' (Tilly, 2000). He then suggests that transactions between greater and lesser beneficiaries generate boundaries and produce unequal categories. One of his examples is the way '19th century English textile mills distinguished sharply between men's work and women's work, women's work almost universally receiving lesser reward for similar effort'. The same process on construction sites distinguishes Saurashtrian bricklayers from Bhil casual labourers; or non-advansi drivers from advansi headloaders; and in aggregate segments the casual labour market, skewing (urban) dalit occupation profiles towards menial jobs as sanitary workers or 'scavengers', and ensuring that even after 25 years work on construction sites, in stone quarries lime kilns and brick fields a Bhil labourer has no chance to get skilled or better-paid work. Importantly, Tilly argues, unequal categories work to create different opportunities in the absence of deliberate efforts to subordinate excluded parties. Beliefs about the inferiority of the disadvantaged group — such as the pervasive negative stereotyping of advansis migrants as backward, ignorant, or dalits as ritually impure — are secondary developments.

From Mosse (2007: 19).

can be particularly helpful in uncovering the links between people's exclusion from political communities and their poverty (see Box 5).

However, the complex ways in which inclusion and exclusion are intertwined within the everyday practice of citizenship problematise any simplistic promotion of citizenship as any straightforward antidote to social exclusion (Hickey and du Toit, 2007; Masaki, 2007). In his study of landless squatters in Nepal, Masaki shows how their claim-making as citizens forced them to engage with 'the disciplinary power contained

Box 5: The exclusionary politics of chronic poverty

The interests of poor people are often excluded from the political agenda, and from the mandates or institutions of public policy. Indeed the interests of the very poor are rarely the focus of direct conflicts. Power is the reason why their diffuse discontents do not get expressed as explicit demand. Power deflects demands from becoming threatening political issues, ensuring they remain inchoate (Lukes, 2005:40; Gaventa, 1980). In these terms, poverty persists because the concerns of poor people are invisible and their needs unpoliticised. Studies in the 1980s concluded that the surest protection against famine was the politicisation of hunger and the trigger of a free press (e.g., Crow, 2000:63)...

...The power that people have (as individuals and groups) depends upon the capacity of others (for example, labour union leaders and party workers) to impose social classifications upon them and then to speak on their behalf. It is the process of classification that 'turns the group from a collection of individuals to a political force' (Gledhill, 1994:139). In this view, political parties or organisations do not reflect any naturally occurring classes, castes, ethnicities, and the like, but rather manufacture these categories through the process of determining who gets political representation...

...Further, the political system is a professionalised field in which political capital is held in the hands of a few (Gledhill, 1994:139). Put another way, poor and unorganised people do not have a chance for political representation unless their interests can become a weapon in the struggles of the professional political field (Bourdieu, 1991:188, in *ibid*). The politicisation of poverty is necessary for the empowerment of poor people.

From Mosse (2007: 24-5).



Box 6: Beyond the Faustian bargain: the chronic lack of agency amongst the poorest

Because Bhil migrants are recruited through long-distance and discontinuous chains of intermediaries, they lack even the limited protection of agrarian patron-client relations, lack knowledge, networks or contacts in the city environment. Sleeping in the open or bivouacking under makeshift structures, migrants are vulnerable and subject to harassment, theft, and forcible eviction. The abuse of adivasi migrants is closely related to their lack of identity or dwellings in urban places. Here they stand out as marginal, transitional people. They are subject to injustice, prejudice, stigmatised and criminalised, falsely accused of theft or looting, and detained and beaten by police. Contractors, employers, the police and urban authorities have, and exert, every imaginable power over them. If cheated or abused, adivasi migrants have no power of redress cutting their losses and decamping at night is their only option (Mosse *et al.*, 2005: 3027).
Quoted in Mosse (2007: 21).

within the notion of citizenship itself'. This 'imposed particular norms of civility on the sukumbasis' as well as serving 'as leverage for them to gain due recognition as citizens'. As such, becoming citizens to some extent 'compelled them to conform to the dominant social norms which had placed them at a disadvantage'.

Although many accounts of the politics of poverty tend to suggest that the absence of citizenship rights and status amongst the poorest leaves them inevitably in the claws of (e.g. Wood, 2003), this is not always the case. The very poorest are also the ones least able to fulfil the reciprocal requirements of clientelistic relations, and may be destitute of such ties in any case (Cleaver, 2005). For example, Bhil migrants in India lack even the social standing given to the lowliest of clients (see Box 6).

This is not to rule out any form of agency being enacted by and/or on behalf of the chronically poor. Masaki's critique of 'inclusive citizenship' revealed a double-edged sword rather than a game stacked entirely against the poorest. Mitlin and Bebbington (2006) have shown how social movements can shift policy agendas and the discursive representations of chronic poverty in ways that open spaces for progress. And while they doubt that social movements engage directly with the issue of poverty *per se*, Mosse argues that there are exceptions to this rule, such that in contexts of mass poverty, and in order 'to retain a mass base, movements have to be oriented to poverty reduction in various ways.' (Mosse, 2007: 35).

More generally, as the rules that govern inclusion within political communities alter, so poor people themselves adapt their strategies of seeking inclusion. In the context of what Kumar (2003) describes as a shift away from a politics of justice towards a politics of recognition – that is to say, the process whereby the political economy of representation has moved from a class-based politics of the workplace to the identity-based politics of the lifeplace – then the poor have also shifted their classificatory allegiances. So, in ongoing research into the plight of chronically poor minority groups Argentina, vom Hau and Wilde (2008) are exploring the

ways in which such groups started to abandon old notions of peasantry in favour of a different form of self-identification around being 'indigenous' in order to gain access to key resources such as land.

Chronic poverty is globally constituted

The final 'added-value' of adopting an AISE perspective when examining chronic poverty is that it tends to emphasise the vertical dimensions of persistent poverty through space as well as a horizontal dimensions through time. Here, Ponte (2008) argues that global value chain analysis can bring an important vertical dimension to the analysis of chronic poverty through an AISE lens, which he illustrates through four case studies on wine, cut flowers, sustainable coffee and fish. This study teaches 'us that (the) integration of people or areas into global value chains and trading relationships will exacerbate chronic poverty if the 'normal functioning' of these chains is left unchecked' (Ponte, 2008). Importantly:

'This is especially the case for value chains that are driven by retailers and branded manufacturers. Where value chains are less clearly driven from Northern-based actors, integration in even 'normal' strands of value chains can have substantial and positive impacts on poverty, and where appropriate, chronic poverty. In other words, the conditions of inclusion in and/or exclusion from value chains and trade more generally are more important than inclusion and exclusion *per se*' (Ponte, 2008).

What does this mean in terms of thinking and acting around chronic poverty?

Implications for poverty analysis

By defining chronic poverty as primarily a relational phenomenon, AISE research emphasises the need to go beyond the methodological individualism that characterises much of current poverty analysis, including to some extent the CPRC (daCorta, 2008). Research that seeks to ask 'what are the causal conditions that give rise to a given social or historical outcome' requires an approach that is theoretical, and that draws on comparative sociological history (Little, 2005: 4 in Hickey and du Toit, 2007: 22; also see vom Hau and Wilde, 2008). More directly, there are strong arguments for integrating a social exclusion perspective within PRSP diagnostics.

From a philosophical and epistemological perspective, undertaking AISE research involves crossing boundaries between residual and relational approaches, between Weberian approaches to social closure and Marxian understandings of exploitation. 'Adverse incorporation' and 'social exclusion' are not alternative or competing frameworks: the excluded are simultaneously dominated and excluded (Silver, 1994). Sometimes one concept is more appropriate than the other, sometimes both will be required. Moving forward here may require the use of some 'older' political economy concepts (daCorta, 2008), but without a return to the reductionism that saw 'class' replace all other

means of defining popular agency.

Implications for the politics reducing chronic poverty

...the challenge for the future lies in the field of politics as much as in the domain of policy (Kabeer, 2004: 41).

Calls for poor people to empower themselves and support for some of them to organise, while necessary, are not sufficient. Such practices are not equal to the ways in which poverty is embedded within the institutions and processes of the capitalist mode of production (Harriss-White, 2005: 12).

The current policy agenda places a great deal of emphasis on agency-based approaches to poverty reduction. This is particularly visible in moves towards participatory forms of governance and the preference for 'community-driven' forms of development, whereby social service delivery is to be undertaken in decentralised forms and anti-poverty programmes are to be delivered via local associational forms. This preference is strongly present in the field of social protection that the CPRC emphasises, as in the community-based targeting mechanisms for cash transfer programmes and the demand-driven model that underpins programmes such as NUSAF in Uganda.

In an important sense, this bid to 'empower' the poor is particularly apt when seeking to challenge chronic poverty. As Mosse (2007: 4) argues, it is:

Precisely because engagement in social and institutional life on adverse terms is a cause of poverty (Clever, 2005; Bourdieu, 1977), autonomy and independence from binding relations of dependence is a common aspiration among poor people, and a key measure of poverty reduction (cf. Jodha, 1988; Beck, 1994) (Mosse, 2007: 4).

However, the structural poverty experienced by the poorest, and the inherent restrictions on agency that this involves (Clever, 2005), strongly suggests that such participatory approaches may further deepen their exclusion and cannot alone provide an effective means of protection (Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey, 2008). To an extent, this is tantamount to leaving the responsibility for reducing chronic poverty to the poorest themselves (Green, 2008). For example,

Government in Tanzania, in devolving responsibility to the lowest tier of government absolves itself devolves the governance of poverty to community organisation. In representing poverty and exclusion as the characteristics of specific social categories it promotes a discourse of individual responsibility and 'sustainable livelihoods' within a reformed governance order while not addressing the factors which contribute in practice to poverty outcomes (Green, 2008).

This is not to rule out all forms of agency-based approaches, but rather to challenge the apolitical and voluntaristic tendencies within current approaches. Clearly, some social

movements (Bebbington and Mitlin, 2006) and also union-based activity can start to challenge the power relations that maintain poverty over prolonged periods. One example here is the Migrant Labour Support Programme that DFID financed aimed to pilot welfare services for disenfranchised and chronically poor migrant workers in India, while increasing rights awareness and a gradual process of unionisation (Mosse, 2005). More broadly, it is clear that '...coalitions and alliances involving the powerful are necessary to bring the interests of vulnerable groups onto the political agenda which is a precondition for pro-poor changes' (Mosse, 2007: 44).

Moreover, the state is clearly critical to the project of tackling the forms of chronic poverty caused by underlying patterns of AISE. History suggests that no other agent is capable of regulating capital and moderating the society's 'inequality-generating' mechanisms (Harriss-White, 2005). The state must be able to both regulate and discipline capital and redistribute to the poorest via social assistance and more radical measures. However, more research is required to establish the particular types of 'developmental statism' that will be most important for the poorest, particularly regarding protection from the often violent processes of modernisation and structural change that accompany underlying processes of development.

To the extent that, social assistance is central to the reduction of chronic poverty then it is important to consider the forms of politics that are more or less likely to favour the rolling-out of significant interventions for the poorest (Hickey, *et al.*, 2006). Above all, this involves thinking through how to support the development of broader social contracts for the poorest (also Hickey, 2008). This move in turn requires that the concerns, needs and rights of the chronically poor become politicised and part of the political agenda (Mosse, 2007).

Thinking forward

Tackling the relational basis of chronic poverty, as constituted through such processes of adverse incorporation and social exclusion, constitutes a formidable political challenge. However, establishing the body of evidence and theory required to generate insights into the specific links between politics and poverty is barely a work in progress, and some questions have only just begun to be posed. For example, little is known about the specific ways in which the politics of poverty analysis and poverty reduction actually shapes the political subjectivity of the poor themselves. So, does it matter that dominant forms of poverty analysis tends to offer only the thinnest sociological perspective on 'the poor' or that some groups are represented as deserving while others are not? How do these representations of the poor shape the anti-poverty interventions of various trustees of development? And how do these acts of intervention – what might be called the effort to govern poverty – shape the political subjectivity of the poor in terms of their proposed status as rights-bearing citizens? Development studies has few answers to these questions at present. Rather, what prevails is a polarised contestation between two broad camps, which we might term the sceptics and the optimists. The

sceptics, broadly following Ferguson's (1994) critique of development as 'the anti-politics machine', tend to deride contemporary efforts to help the poor within the current phase of neoliberal order as inevitably technocratic, depoliticising and disempowering for the poor. On the other hand are the optimists, who suggest that the possibilities for empowerment at the current juncture not only remain but may actually have been widened by the allegedly 'technocratic' approaches within the Post Washington Consensus era (e.g. Corbridge *et al.*, 2005).

However, this currently polarised debate needs deepening

and refining in both theoretical and empirical terms. An ongoing research project within the AISE theme is currently exploring these issues, and trying to establish the extent to which efforts to tackle chronic poverty might transform the citizenship rights and status of the poorest people. With in-depth studies of a range of specific interventions, including the role of education, social protection and social movements (see below for the list of case-studies), it becomes possible to perceive more clearly the critical politics of challenging the underlying causes of chronic poverty.

This research summary was written by Sam Hickey

Endnotes

- 1 O' Connor argues that 'poverty knowledge' draws on a relatively narrow, often quantitative body of data and analysis to the exclusion of the much broader wider body of social science research that is available on poverty-related issues and contexts.
- 2 This tendency cuts across several sectors or issues, including mechanisms for justice and reconciliation (Allen 2006); social protection in the form of NUSAF (Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey 2008); 'military' efforts to protect locals from LRA attacks via 'homeguard'-style approaches (Branch 2005), and a more general Presidential discourse on the need of self-reliance in the North (Golooba-Mutebi 2007 in The Sunday Monitor).

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