

Inequalities Research Network Workshop
“Networking for Global Justice”

Wednesday 15 November 2017 between 10:30am-2pm

Venue: Edward Boyle Library Conference Room, University of Leeds

Post Workshop Summary Notes

1. Background

This workshop was primarily aimed at social science researchers and focused on social and economic inequalities in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and Global Challenges Research Fund. The aim of this cross faculty workshop was to explore the potential benefits and value of mapping and linking existing research networks aimed at reducing inequalities – for example, to develop critical mass, heighten the profile of such research or explore ways in which we might collectively engage with global development research opportunities and build capacity.

2. Welcome and introductions

Ghazala Mir (GM), University of Leeds

GM welcomed participants to the workshop, which had been designed to provide a creative space for networking and bringing ideas together. The event aimed to map and link existing research, as well as looking at developing and future research.

Participants were invited to introduce themselves to the group and provide a key word to summarise their professional interests. These included:

- Social activism;
- Politics;
- Immobility;
- Social justice;
- Inequalities;
- Collaboration;
- Gender;
- Social inequalities; and
- Injustice.

3. Key note:

Mike Savage (MS), London School of Economics

Issues of inequality have become increasingly important over the last decade, and it is only in this timeframe that economists have started to lead research agendas in the field. Increasingly organisations have moved from looking at ‘poverty’, shifting focus to consider inequalities.

As a result of its work in this sphere, LSE has received significant external investment, enabling the creation of the Inequalities Institute, working with large, external organisations outside the traditional faculty structure, and the Atlantic Fellows Organisation.

The fellowships are part of a 20 year programme designed to create leaders of the future. In total, 600 fellows will participate, ultimately forming a large, inclusive, international network.

Despite this, major research funding is not targeted directly towards inequalities research; it debates the true nature of equality and whether it is already a thing of the past. Since the global financial crash in 2008, inequality has flat lined, and in many European countries, levels are decreasing.

Milanovic looks at global inequalities and demonstrates that both the very affluent and populations from emerging economies have seen improvements in terms of income in recent years. However, the western working class has not seen any significant increase in wealth or income. In Latin America, issues of inequality are less prevalent, though there is an enormous rural/urban divide.

It is important to differentiate between income and the wealth economy, which increased prior to the 2008 crash and continued to do so subsequently. While, overall, there is less research interest in wealth, Picardie notes a substantial increase in the proportion of the French population expecting to inherit £750,000 or more. The shift to a wealth economy is representative of a major intellectual shift: many of the self-made super rich come from extremely affluent backgrounds.

It is also noted that countries which have greater inequality also have the lowest rates of social mobility.

Rethinking of economics is a key and urgent issue and there are encouraging developments here. CORE economics is an example of new methods of teaching economics which reflect this.

Discussion

There is a lack of data relating to the urban poorest. Due to difficulties in collecting data, survey results do not include the poorest populations of megacities.

It was suggested the role of economics in the inequality debate is irrelevant and serves to mask issues of poverty and social injustice. These are political rather than economic debates. MS suggested that we should not think of economics as divorced from politics.

4. Socially Inclusive Cities Network

Ghazala Mir, University of Leeds

GM had been involved in workshops seeking to develop key research questions, which led to the creation of the GCRF Socially Inclusive Cities Network. The network brings together academic partners with NGOs and public service providers and is working together to map ways to develop socially inclusive cities in Vietnam, India, Kenya and Nigeria; it is clear that there are common issues and potential solutions across these countries.

Specifically the Socially Inclusive Cities Network aims to look at evidence and data gaps, and the role of research, pool expertise and link to other networks to identify the best models for collaboration, and develop a research agenda. Each network member is conducting a literature review and producing a country report.

The network is using this model to understand key drivers of exclusion at macro, institutional and micro levels. Ultimately the project is solution focused, mapping initiatives onto these drivers to understand where research gaps lie.

5. GCRF Foundation Award: Surveys for urban inequality

Helen Elsey (HE), University of Leeds

Surveys for Urban Inequality is working with partners in Vietnam, Nepal and Bangladesh to understand city inequalities.

The DHS Programme and WHO use similar methods of research, which have resulted in the development of health services. However, data collection does not take into account increased levels of urbanisation and so does not represent or reflect the needs of the urban poorest. Surveys for Urban Equality is making use of innovative methods, such as using satellite imagery, to better understand these populations.

The project is looking at non-communicable diseases as defined by WHO, specifically mental health and injuries. Traditionally donor money has been invested in education and health programmes however, unlike this project, it had not focused on working with local governments to build capacity.

HE concluded by outlining some of the specific challenges for GCRF Foundation Award holders, specifically the short timeframes at the beginning of projects. These issues are counteracted by the development of strong partnerships with project partners. The opportunity to make direct links with donors and policy makers is of particular value.

6. AHRC Aid and Journalism Network

Chris Paterson, University of Leeds

The Aid and Journalism Network was an earlier recipient of AHRC research network funding. It aimed to kick start an international conversation and provide a voice critiquing funding approaches in the field of journalism.

The group, put together using existing networks, worked to hold three international symposia with scholars in Africa and South America. As a result, existing research gained increased exposure and new research initiatives were encouraged.

There are currently plans to exploit relationships developed through the Network to secure future funding.

7. GCRF Network: INTALInC

Karen Lucas, University of Leeds

INTALInC seeks to build research partnerships to investigate the travel needs of low income populations in cities in the Global South. The Network has matched UK universities with partners in developing countries to facilitate exchanges of knowledge and expertise.

INTALInC focuses on mobility rather than transport, and key activities aim to look at where vulnerable populations need to travel and how they get there. The network works with five UK based institutions, as well as universities in Bangladesh, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda who each work with their UK partner to hold workshops engaging local and international stakeholders. As a consequence of securing additional funding from the Volvo Research Foundation, the Network has recently extended to include two new members in Kenya and South Africa.

Mobility is a key component of all the Sustainable Development Goals. As well as impacting affordability, transport poverty limits access to other services and economic opportunities, and results in issues such as time poverty.

Ultimately INTALInC seeks to develop a lasting collaborative group of academic and non-academic organisations to bid jointly for funding in mobility policy development. The group is also working to produce a series of country-specific policy briefing reports.

8. World Café

During the workshop there were opportunities for participants to join one of three world café breakout groups to share their research interests, map networks and to explore the potential merits of joining forces as a 'network of networks'. The outputs from the three breakout sessions have been summarised below.

Group 1: Inequality themes (Ghazala Mir / Juliet Jopson)

Questions posed to the group:

- *What are your research interests?*
- *What are the key priorities and challenges for present and future research?*
- *What are the most pressing research questions and challenges in this area?*

Research Interests

- Health, mental health, disadvantaged communities, UK and European, Equal North Network (Michelle Addison)
- Minority women, domestic violence, Pakistan, Muslim (Faiza Tayyab)
- Urban politics, Mexico City, markets and traders, infrastructure for consumption (Leon Felipe Tellez Contreras)
- Health promotion, developing research capacity, Zambia, mental health (Sally Foster)
- Natural resource governance, rule of law, cities, climate change resilience, Africa (James Van Alstine)
- Development aid, interactions with local and national government agendas, benefits to communities (Michael Savage)
- Urban public transport infrastructure, how it impacts on poorest people, health care access (Thiago Guimares)
- Access to employment opportunities
- Social inclusion via public services, minority ethnic and religious groups, international research, inequality focused networks (Ghazala Mir)

Key Priorities

- **Political agenda** – need to engage policymakers to get on side role of local government important but difficult to engage
 - Political scientist and economists need to be involved too
 - Make change more sustainable – how to get it 'institutionalised' so it doesn't drop off the political agenda or is not corrupted by institutionalisation and so ends up missing the original point

- Take account of macro level – how to change the political landscape? Ministerial dialogue. Scenario analysis – good tool to engage or retreat. Look for windows of opportunities e.g. linking to climate talks (Community of Practice)
- Access to politics / policy needs to be facilitated through local partners
- Identify key stakeholders, funders, policy, NGOs, communities – where are the open doors? Find win : win situations
- Doing more with less
- Developing methodologies to capture underrepresented groups – some that are opposed to current policies on exclusion are not ‘recognised’ as legitimate by local authorities because of pressure from central government and concerns about impact on resource allocation
- Inequality solutions involve shift in power – how do we influence this shift since it involves the powerful giving up power?
- **Data mobilisation** to influence decision making
 - Different speeds between academic and partners requirements for collecting data and generating outcomes
- **Methods** - Model better ways of engaging and capacity building – generate more equal relationships
 - Mobilise stakeholders – community empowerment – from small scale to something that can’t be ignored
 - Theory of change – academic partners to become more used to using these, co-production with partners. Think about how it leads to impact.

In summary, there is a need to engage with political change at all levels, working with both local and national governments. Researchers need to be selective about the groups and individuals they engage with. Working with the ‘wrong’ groups can lead to wasted time and resources.

Group 2: Mapping Networks (Karen Lucas)

Questions posed to the group:

- *What inequalities networks are you aware of?*
- *What are their key priorities and topic areas?*
- *Which regions do they operate in?*

Existing networks:

- Equal North Network focus on health and social inequalities
- LSE International Network
- Leeds Inequalities Research Network

Key discussion points:

- Undertake a mapping exercise to gather information on activity across the HE sector
- Data could be the common focus for the network
- Opportunity to link existing networks– suggestions included links on each other’s websites and also the possibility of a collaborative event across universities
- Would need high level champion to facilitate joining up across universities
- Sustainability highlighted as a future concern due to lack of funding to support some of the networks

In summary, it was suggested that wider networks should be built across Universities to develop web and other resources. LSE, Equal North and Leeds could work together to create a larger scale event, but funding is a key problem in the development of sustainable networks.

Group 3: Joining Forces (Sophia Kennedy)

Questions posed to the group:

- *How could a Network of Networks help you?*
- *What is the value of linking together in this way?*
- *What good practice can we learn from existing collaborative networks?*
- *Potential for future (academic / non-academic) collaborations in this area?*

Key discussion points:

- Potential to assist with overcoming barriers and influencing policy makers
- Opportunity to learn from best practice and exchange ideas
- Capacity building
- Would be helpful to conduct a mapping exercise (to include subject area, locations, and link to SDGs) to share amongst the network
- Need to build on existing networks such as the Centre for Global Development, Inequalities Research Network, etc.
- Consideration to be given to sustainability of developing networks beyond current funded research projects
- Should aim to maximise impact on the ground by becoming a co-ordinated force

In summary, a mapping exercise should be carried out to look at existing collaborations. There is a need for a tangible focus to bring people together and relieve the burden of duplicated efforts. Was data sharing possible? Networks need to identify and promote the added value they bring to the research agenda.

9. Next Steps

- Copies of the presentations to be circulated amongst the group
- Explore potential for a follow up collaborative event across more universities – Karen, Ghazala and Mike Savage to liaise
- Explore potential for a PGR event