

## *Chapter 17*

# Organising for a Philosophy of Internationalism and Multi-Disciplinarity in the Social Sciences: the Case of CROP, the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty<sup>1</sup>

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Projects come and projects go in the social sciences. But there are few international, multi-disciplinary, long-term research programmes which survive outside an institutional framework for any length of time.

This is not accidental. Universities and research institutions in the social sciences are not organised for the complex challenges of the real and multi-faceted world – and the real world is growing increasingly complex through internationalisation.

In the following is described a hitherto untried model of cooperation and development of research across disciplinary and national boundaries, using the knowledge accumulated in disciplinary and national studies as stepping stones into an open arena for poverty researchers and comparative poverty studies in developed and developing countries.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1991 the International Social Science Council (ISSC) decided that a new international, multi-disciplinary research programme should be initiated. The topic was to be poverty, thereby acknowledging the fact that world attention was turning to a problem which in spite of development aid and national efforts was on the increase in many parts of the world. No initial funding was provided for the implementation of the programme, and no documentation other than oral reports were available on previous models for such programmes. As newly elected ISSC vice-president with responsibility for scientific affairs, the author was given the task of designing and organising the new programme.

ISSC is based on a philosophy of internationalism and multi-disciplinarity, bordering on inter-disciplinarity, in research. It is a major responsibility of the ISSC to promote research programmes and develop further the social sciences. But so far the organisation has lacked the strength to provide institutional support for such a philosophy, and financially it has been too weak to sustain comprehensive research programmes.

## The challenges of modern poverty research

The advancement of poverty research has followed a different path in the Western world than in developing countries.

Poverty research has a long tradition in the Western world. Many of the studies have been closely tied to the search for solutions of an unacceptable ill, while some have been tied to the avoidance of certain solutions. Since the "solutions" call for concerted action from society at large, including basic political, economic, and social changes, poverty research has always been located in a political and economic minefield. This location has spilled over into the way research questions have been asked and the way research results have been presented and used. As a result, much of the research-based knowledge about poverty is limited in scope, atheoretical, influenced by current political structures, and empirically unsound as a base for future scientific work. Poverty studies are found within most of the social sciences, and the major part of the knowledge provided is disciplinary in scope. Integration of the different elements of knowledge has so far been rare. Until recently almost all the studies were done within a national context, except for a limited number of international studies based on indicators. Now comparative studies within Europe are on the move forward.

Poverty studies in the so-called developing countries are much fewer and do not have a long tradition. Many of them have been carried out by outside agents such as NGO's (non-governmental organisations), international agencies such as, for example, the World Bank, and external organisations on behalf of other nations. More often than not, those studies have been shaped by Western thought, thereby emphasising features which are alien or even irrelevant to poverty understanding in the region being studied. Some of the poverty studies are of high academic quality, in particular the micro-studies and the long-term comparative studies. But the brain drain among local poverty scholars is sizeable, the tendency being that the best poverty experts after a while move into non-academic roles such as consultancies, policy work, and political positions.

Given these developments in poverty research, one of the most immediate challenges of modern poverty research is to review past research and to sort out carefully valid and reliable knowledge which can be of use for future studies.

A rule of thumb seems to be that the poorer a country is, the poorer its pool of systematized knowledge about poverty. Even basic statistical data about poverty are scarce or non-existent in several countries. Therefore, a second challenge is to secure that a minimum of basic data

on poverty is available in all countries. One set of data ought to be useful for specific regional purposes, the other set ought to be useful for cross-cultural comparisons.

But data for cross-cultural comparisons is only the first step towards useful comparative studies. Besides the methodological problems involved in comparative studies (which are common to all kinds of topics), a third challenge for poverty research is to tie theoretically together poverty understanding from different cultures, and to sort out those causes and poverty manifestations which are culture-specific and those which are of a more general nature.

A fourth challenge is to confront and bind together the many elements of knowledge about poverty which are embedded in the different disciplines.

A fifth challenge is to reinstate poverty research as an academic field. Due to the political texture, the applied nature of poverty research, the many amateurs in the field, and the dominance of low-quality studies, the study of poverty has not attracted the attention of serious academics as it ought to have done, given its nature of a widespread social phenomenon.

A sixth challenge lies in turning poverty research into more of a theoretical field, thereby creating also a sounder basis for poverty intervention than has so far been the case. Up to now, poverty research has concentrated more on definitions and head-counts than on causes, processes, and consequences.

A seventh challenge is to create a new and more comprehensive paradigm for poverty research which integrates the behaviour and norms of both the poor and the non-poor. So far the overwhelming proportion of poverty research targets the poor populations and ignores the important role of non-poor populations in creating, sustaining and alleviating poverty.

Still another challenge is to make poverty research useful and policy-relevant, without losing the creative independence needed for new theoretical inputs.

With these challenges in mind, the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty, CROP, set out on its ambitious road towards creating an arena for poverty researchers in all corners of the world.

## Internationalising a social science programme

In principle, a truly international arena for poverty researchers should be open to all established and budding poverty researchers from every country and culture in the world. The issue can be argued definitionally,

i.e. internationalism means literally including researchers from all nations, whatever the state of the nation, developmentally, politically, or culturally. The issue can also be argued ethically, i.e. out of fairness no qualified researcher should be excluded, and extra efforts should be made to include researchers from countries which can not provide financially for the participation of their own people. The issue can be argued academically as well. Comparative studies in the social sciences open up for new insights. This may be particularly true in an under-researched field such as poverty where every new angle into the understanding of the phenomenon is needed if poverty research is to advance further.

In practice there are major barriers to the implementation of genuine internationalisation in the social sciences.

One set of barriers is of an academic and two-sided nature. Western social science has for a long time dominated the social sciences in non-Western countries, to such a degree that it has been termed neo-colonialism. A "qualified" non-Western researcher means for many Western social scientists, a scholar who is educated within a Western social science tradition and is familiar with ruling theories and methodologies in a specific discipline. At the same time, regional theorising, endogenous knowledge, and a more all-round university education in the social sciences which is less discipline-oriented and more problem-oriented, as is offered in many of the developing countries, has not been acknowledged as "proper" science. Poverty in developing countries, for example, has for a long time been defined in terms of Western perceptions of poverty, in the way it has been measured and described. Marshalled by influential Western scholars, poverty studies in developing countries have ignored characteristic features of the region. The shortcomings of these studies is one of the reasons why development aid and poverty alleviation programmes have not been successful.

Another set of barriers is of a practical nature. It is costly, both in terms of money and time, to organise international studies. Such costs increase several times when colleagues from third-world countries and the former east European countries are to participate as full-fledged partners in a comparative project. In general, their infrastructure is weaker than that of participants from Western countries, making communication cumbersome, travel arrangements costly, and access to library, data collection and research facilities difficult. Therefore, the tendency for Western scholars has been either to leave out comparative studies involving those regions or to minimise interaction with colleagues from regions with a weak infrastructure.

As a result of the present asymmetrical relationship between Western researchers with a strong infrastructure and dominant paradigms, and

non-Western researchers with a weak infrastructure and a broader social science approach and non-acknowledged paradigms, there may be too little incentive on both sides to cross the barriers and enter a fruitful and more symmetrical relationship through comparative studies.

A rich documentation of the conflicts created by cultural differences is found in particular in social anthropology. The same kind of conflicts can be expected when scholars from different cultures meet. Added to these basic cultural differences are also the differences stemming from the membership in different kinds of academic systems, differences in expectations to the outcome and use of a joint project, differences in style of work, the effects of the participation in different reward and opportunity systems, as well as the personal characteristics of the partners in the project. A whole set of trade-offs between potential partners in a comparative study will need to be negotiated before or during the process of cooperation. So far there is little documentation on such trade-offs. But it is more than a qualified guess that face-to-face contact throughout the project is a necessary condition if problems are to be overcome and internationalism is to materialise through comparative studies.

## Integrating the social sciences (and a few other sciences)

Different aspects of poverty research are found in most of the social sciences, as well as in history, philosophy, medicine, dentistry, etc. But there is a gulf between, for example, economic analyses of poverty, psychological understandings of coping behaviour of poor people, and sociological explanations of causes of poverty. If an understanding of poverty is to advance further, it is vital that the many valuable contributions from the different disciplines be confronted and integrated, one way or the other.

The issue of integrating research from different disciplines is a general problem which is not particular to poverty research, and it has been reviewed thoroughly throughout the literature. Two of the penetrating analyses are found in Allardt (1994) and the *Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (1995). Through a historical reconstruction of the development of the social sciences from the eighteenth century until now, it is shown how organisational interests have split a holistic approach to science, thereby undermining scientific progress. While there seems to be wide agreement on such an analysis, there seems to be less agreement on how to restructure the social sciences out of the present state of autonomous disciplines and how to create a better atmosphere of interaction and cooperation. The

phenomenon has many labels which all convey different shades of integration, such as multi-disciplinarity, multi-paradigmatic approach, trans-disciplinarity and inter-disciplinarity. The labels are not well defined. The implied assumption is some kind of transfer between disciplines of concepts, methodologies, or even theories. However, it is not clear how large the transfer should be to justify either inter-disciplinarity, or any of the other labels. Somehow there must be an upper limit to the amount of transfer taking place. Otherwise a discipline would lose its particular profile. While a discipline can stand a certain leaking out of its content, it can not control its borders if inundated by new concepts and methodologies that can not be fitted into the basic contents which define the specific profile of the discipline.

It may be intellectually accepted that a certain integration of the disciplines is necessary for scientific advancement. The idea is being put forward increasingly in several parts of the social science community, and it is particularly prominent in research councils and funding agencies. But the disciplines feel threatened. Since they command teaching and recruitment through the universities, any kind of real integration may be a long way off. However, it seems that learning by doing is the most efficient road towards integration for the time being. Still more scientists from different disciplines are put together in projects, and still more Western scholars educated within a certain discipline are cooperating with scholars from developing countries who are educated within a broad social science framework. Some of the projects break down early during the process. But those which survive seem to do so because the participants are willing to transgress their own disciplines and integrate concepts and ideas from their partners field of expertise. It seems to be the case that the more problem-oriented the topic of the research project, the more willing the researchers are to integrate substance from other disciplines than their own. Also, the longer the duration of the project, the more interwoven with aspects from different disciplines it seems to become.

## Organising for the challenges

The first CROP workshop concentrated on how to organise around this vision of an open, international, and interdisciplinary arena for the development of high-quality poverty research. The arena should at the same time function as an educational platform dovetailing researchers and policy-makers, without being caught by dominant stereotypes and political interferences. So far this vision has been a baseline for CROPs activities. But here, as elsewhere, compromises are being made along the way.

So far the research programmes under the ISSC have been elite programmes, in the sense that mainly well-known and highly qualified researchers have joined the programme, upon invitation only. This model for the advancement of the social sciences is in accordance with perceptions of the natural sciences where elitist troupes push forward towards the frontiers of research, while the train of mediocre scientists have responsibility for the education and form their teaching on the results brought forward by the few. The frontiers of the social sciences may be of a different nature, but that is a discussion for another time.

With the multiple purpose of promoting comparative poverty research as well as educating for poverty research, recruiting for the future and widening the perspective beyond Western dominance of the field, CROP set out on a different model. The basic idea was, and still is, to offer an open arena for *all* those who are currently engaged in poverty research, either directly as poverty researchers or indirectly as users of poverty research, as well as potential poverty researchers.

Apparently CROP went into a vacuum where poverty researchers and policy-makers alike were in need of an intellectual forum to discuss the many unattended issues which are linked to poverty research. Five years on, CROP has a network of more than a thousand members, of which almost half come from developing countries. The majority of the members are poverty researchers. Several of the members come from international and national institutions working with poverty questions, some come from the national ministries and NGO's, and a few from media and public relations.

One of the major achievements of CROP is the set of integrated instruments to promote comparative poverty studies and facilitate interaction and exchange of ideas among its members, which has been developed and implemented.

Organising *workshops* is one such instrument, and probably the most important prerequisite for the other activities under the CROP umbrella. The workshops serve several purposes. They are regional, in order to promote an academic arena for local researchers and to explore regional questions related to poverty. They give priority to issues so far unattended or under-researched. They are used as an introduction to a new project or as a follow-up of an ongoing project. They tie together the overriding research questions posed within the CROP framework. They have an educational and policy-promoting value. But more important than anything else, the workshops provide an opportunity for face-to-face contact where the personal and intellectual chemistry between potential partners in comparative studies can be explored.

While an open arena is a means towards internationalising the field,

the uncontrolled admittance of members to the arena needs to be monitored through a quality control of the activities. The gatekeeping functions are executed by a programme committee of experts appointed for each workshop. The committee has responsibility for the academic content of the workshop, the preparation of a background paper outlining the topic of the workshop, the preliminary acceptance of abstracts, the construction of the programme, and finally, its members function as editors if the papers presented are of sufficient quality to be published.

Up to now a major part of CROP's resources have been invested in carrying out workshops, thereby laying a foundation for other parts of the CROP activities. So far thirteen workshops and two international conferences have been organised, involving more than four hundred participants, some of whom have participated several times.<sup>2</sup>

Promoting *publications* in poverty research is another important instrument. Five publications have appeared so far, and five more are under preparation. In addition are several papers presented at CROP workshops, but published elsewhere. The publications are of three types: the ordinary scientific reports from a project; the consciously developed research tools which are needed for those engaging in comparative studies on poverty; and inputs into policy-making in the field. The *Handbook on International Poverty Research* (1996) is an example of the second type of publication. A group of poverty researchers from all over the world followed a standard procedure making a state-of-the-art review of poverty research in their region during the last decade, pulling out valid and reliable information which can be used as a base for further research.

The material in the handbook also demonstrates different methodological and conceptual approaches to poverty, thereby challenging the Western dominance of the field. A much awaited *glossary* on poverty definitions is under preparation and will be a useful tool for those doing comparative studies. The CROP inputs to the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and to the UN Summit on Social Development are examples of the third type of publications. Well ahead of the Habitat

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2 From 1992 to 1996 CROP organised/co-organised the following workshops/ conferences: «Poverty and social protection in Central and Eastern Europe», in Budapest; «Theories of economic growth and their significance for poverty reduction» in Paris; «Poverty and political participation with particular emphasis on the third world» in Bergen; «Urban poverty» in Bergen; «Views from the top: Elites and poverty» in Rio de Janeiro; «The regional state-of-the-art review on poverty research» in Paris; «Poverty and participation in civil society» in Copenhagen; «Law, power and poverty» in Oñati, Spain; «Feminisation of poverty» in Oslo; «Poverty and the environment» in Sabah, Malaysia; «Social Costs of Poverty» in Bergen. "Glossary on poverty concepts" in London; and "Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Mediterranean", in Crete.



conference CROP prepared a workshop on *Urban poverty, with particular emphasis on the third world*.<sup>3</sup> The CROP input to the Social Summit came by invitation from UNESCO to organise a Round Table on *Poverty and Participation in Civil Society* at the Summit.<sup>4</sup>

The CROP network is the most important resource of the organisation, and *active networking* is a vital instrument to keep the arena going and give continuation to the activities. The networking is performed on several levels. On the individual level CROP functions as a centre for exchange of information on poverty research to scientists, the media, and policy-makers, as well as for linking potential partners in comparative projects. A database containing the entire network has been created, as has a data base on ongoing research projects. On the institutional level CROP has made an effort towards co-organising workshops with other organisations, such as UNESCO, UNCTAD, ILO, national ministries, and research institutions. On the one hand, such co-organising secures a regional or institutional participation in workshops and projects. On the other hand, it expands CROPs network and disseminates information about poverty research into wider circles. On the more general level CROP distributes a newsletter and has its own webpage. Since members of CROP increasingly are being invited to events where poverty is on the agenda, information about updated poverty issues is being circulated to a still wider audience.

Initiating *comparative research projects* is another important instrument, and in some sense the ultimate goal of CROP. But it is also the most difficult activity to implement, given the obstacles mentioned above, and the limited organisational and financial resources. The aim of CROP is to initiate, inspire, organise, and participate in collaborative projects, more than running the show alone. The first step towards launching a new project is the organisation of a preliminary workshop where interested parties can meet and present their ideas. The second step is to decide whether the project lies under the CROP sphere of interest, i.e. whether it is comparative, includes projects in both developed and developing countries, is neither mono-disciplinary nor uni-cultural, pushes towards the frontiers of poverty research, fulfils academic criteria of quality and implementation, and seems organisationally viable. So far preference has been given to studies which include aspects of the relationship between the poor and the non-poor as well. At present four major projects are

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3 The papers were first published as a special issue in *Environment and Urbanization*, and then fed into the general background report for the conference (*An Urbanizing World. Global Report on Human Settlements 1996*).

4 A publication based on the papers from the Round Table is forthcoming.

under way, plus a few minor ones which may or may not grow further.<sup>5</sup> For each project a core group of researchers has the joint responsibility for designing the study and setting the scientific framework for the project. Once this theoretical and methodological framework has been settled on, an open invitation to join goes out through the CROP network. Potential participants will have to work within this framework and the concrete guidelines established, in order to secure a certain amount of comparability and quality control. The core group functions in partnership as project directors.

The activities outlined above are likely to have a certain educational impact as well. But it is difficult to evaluate the actual effect. Younger scholars, for example, may participate in workshops, but are less likely to be accepted as participants in projects. The same may be true for peripheral scholars and budding poverty researchers. Therefore, the *educational instrument* needs to be more focused and explicit. The idea of a travelling college is now being explored. On the curriculum for such an enterprise ought to be issues concerning methodology, theory, and ethics involved in doing comparative poverty research, worked out in such a way that both regional issues and issues of a more general nature are included. On the drawing board is the idea of a pool of experts travelling to regional universities, giving courses in collaboration with local colleagues.

The *policy-making* instrument is present in most of the activities mentioned above, either directly through the networking, participation of policy-makers in workshops, and participation of researchers in policy-making fora. Indirectly it may have an effect through the distribution of newsletters and publications.<sup>6</sup>

The core instrument for binding all the CROP activities together is the *Secretariat*. It is here the networking is carried out, files are kept and updated, workshops are prepared and organised, publications and projects are co-ordinated and followed up, grant applications are written and financing sought, newsletters are produced and distributed, webpages

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5 The four are: Elite perceptions of poverty and the poor; Social costs of poverty to the non-poor; A Follow-up of the UN Social Summit, and The role of the state in poverty alleviation.

6 The Handbook on poverty, for example, was launched at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris by the UNESCO Director General personally, thereby receiving wide media coverage. The internationally known Chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development, the Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, wrote the foreword. Both of these events gave prestige and legitimacy to the book, which UNESCO subsequently decided to co-publish and distribute copies of to all local UNESCO offices

are being updated, a massive correspondence is being carried out, and scores of enquiries are being answered.<sup>7</sup>

## Constraints, compromises and dilemmas

On the one side are the visions and the philosophy of the CROP research programme. On the other side is the real world and the many constraints it sets on the ideal demands to a research programme which does not fit into the ordinary organisational slots or mainstream thinking.

The constraints imposed by disciplines and lack of internationalism in research have already been mentioned. They leave their marks on every activity.

Some of the other constraints stem from a much more pleasant trend. When CROP started it was all up-hill. It was time consuming to get a network going, to find the right partners for a workshop, to generate money for even the smallest project, to organise a secretariat from nothing, and to gain acceptance for the new model of organising research that was being tried out. Now the situation is different. From the large network are generated all kinds of initiatives for projects, publications, public meetings and workshops. CROP has become also an attractive partner for some of the national and international institutions, and invitations to participate in many kinds of research activities are pouring forward. This is an ideal situation. But it creates problems of prioritising, given the limited capacity at the Secretariat.

Some of these activities are forwarded by crop to individual researchers or groups and institutions in the network. This is in accordance with the CROP ideology to fertilise poverty research wherever it is found. But other activities call for a concerted or long-term investment which individual researchers or institutions in developing countries seldom command. As a result, CROP either has to turn down a proposal or negotiate to take it on. Such prioritising is not easy. It is always tempting to take on a project which is properly financed, even if it is on the fringes of the CROP agenda. While it is easy to turn down a proposal from Nestlé (not that they ever asked!) to do research on poverty and the need for bottled food among infants in Southern Africa, there are other vested interests which are more subtle. The organisation of CROP is now

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<sup>7</sup> The CROP Secretariat is small, much too small for the many activities now accumulated under CROP. The staff consists of a full time co-ordinator and a half-time secretary, supplied with the working hours of the Chair of CROP and voluntary work from participants in the CROP network.

running so smoothly that financially lucrative offers have come, inviting CROP to enter into research which is only marginally related to poverty. Offers setting unacceptable terms for the project (as for example who is not to participate in a workshop) likewise occur, as do offers anticipating the results before the study is under way.

The network of CROP is mainly based on individual researchers, and part of the ideology is to integrate them into a larger intellectual community of poverty researchers, and to make visible their contributions to the field. This ideology influences the choice of activities, indicating that initiatives from «the grassroot» ought to be given priority. There is no shortage of intellectually stimulating proposals coming forward from the network. But more often than not, they are not organisationally viable. It will take sizeable resources from the CROP Secretariat to get them flying. So how shall CROP choose if faced with a choice between the many small projects and a large contract from, for example, the World Bank? The Bank administrates one of the largest and highest qualified research pools in the world. Lately some of this expertise has been turned to poverty research. So far the Bank has been dominated by a paradigm of development which at best has not been conducive to poverty alleviation. CROP has been hesitant to approach the Bank, mainly because of a need to cultivate a different kind of expertise on poverty issues.

When collaborating with units in the UN system there is usually no conflict of interest. The system is too heterogeneous for any paradigm to be dominant. So topics laid out for research are broad enough for the participation of many actors and the introduction of new angles of understanding. Collaboration with research-oriented organisations run smoothly. Collaboration with some of the ministries and NGOs may be more difficult, because they are usually action-oriented and expect delivery on a short term basis.

The pressure to become action oriented comes also from within the CROP network, in particular from third-world participants. The response so far has been that individuals are welcome to enter into actions or action research, but CROP as an organisation is academic in scope. A major goal of CROP is to provide new data and sound theorising for all activists and policy-makers to use as they see fit. But CROP as an organisation neither signs petitions in favour of good causes, nor engages in concrete programmes of poverty alleviation. Ideally the policy-making instruments should be kept separate from the academic instruments in such a way that policy-making considerations do not interfere with the basic scientific process. Issues of relevance to policy-making should be raised, and results should be disseminated to policy-makers. But the actual design and implementation of studies under the CROP umbrella is

not the domain of policy-makers. This seems to be an issue which has to be defended again and again.

Within the prioritising of the activities are hidden also other dilemmas which need to be opened up. For example, it is tempting to choose partners for activities who are well organised, well funded, and have a good research network with a certain experience in doing comparative studies. In short, they are likely to come from an established institution in the Western part of the world.

When choosing between investing limited resources in workshops or in research projects, it is necessary to be aware of other choices being made simultaneously. Workshops, for example, will further a wider selection of participants than will research projects. Workshops will serve the broader educational purpose better than will research projects carried out by experienced scholars. Workshops will reach into the regions and bring out the more peripheral scholars. While research projects will recruit a fewer number of people, the latter more likely will be found in the regional and institutional centres, thereby narrowing further the international participation.

Or put in a different way, the open arena will be kept open through workshops and will be limited when prioritising projects. The elitist model and Western thought permeate also the concrete project arrangements, and it calls for workshops as well as projects to secure both the broad participation and the high quality research CROP is aiming at.

The same kind of dilemma emerges when modern technology is introduced as one of the networking instruments or in a project. The more CROP invests in electronic transfers of information and the development of comparable databases, the larger becomes the gap between researchers without such infrastructure and those who access it. One way to close the gap is to increase information in paper versions and to invest in primary data. But again, when resources are to be prioritised, the cheapest solution is closest. Paper versions have been expanded, while the more costly collection of primary data, and the researchers depending on them, have been cut out.

CROP is built on the foundation of comparative studies and the knowledge which can be drawn from linking causes and manifestations of poverty in one country to that of another. But as is well known, the comparative methodology has not been developed into a valid and reliable research tool. Discussions are raging as to the shortcomings of large cross-cultural databases. Comparative studies are increasingly making use of such bases. In-depth micro-studies have their shortcomings as well, but supply studies from the large databases with a wealth of information. The comparative study of processes seems to be advancing,

while the earlier emphasis on comparative studies of institutions has been on the decline. The dilemmas in the choice of incomplete methodologies is not particular for CROP. But since CROP furthers comparative studies, the problems seem to be more pertinent. The reaction so far has been to emphasise the need for a multiplicity of approaches, also methodologically, and to stress the need for systematic cross-country analyses, either *pre* or *post festum*.

Still another dilemma is linked to the loose organisation of CROP. The policy is to decentralise as many activities as possible and to give absolute academic autonomy to the group of experts appointed to run the activity, whether it be a workshop, a publication, or a project. This policy is in accordance with basic academic traditions, and secures vested interests, loyalty to the activity, and an output for which the group is responsible. The CROP Secretariat provides the support and the infrastructure. However, there is a two-edged sword built into this kind of organisation. On the one hand the level of activities in poverty research expands, as are the intentions of CROP. On the other hand, in some of the activities the group responsible takes property of the activity and turns credit and academic output into their own institutions. If this tendency becomes dominant, CROP will be depleted of the very results which are necessary to legitimate new funding and keep the programme going.

## Future development

Besides the many challenges mentioned above, CROP is faced with two major problems: the need for a stable long-term financing and a sustainable organisation.

Integrating peripheral researchers and making the programme truly international calls for sizeable resources, and even more is needed to create a symmetrical relationship with regard to infrastructure between the haves and have-nots participating in comparative studies.

The problem can be resolved only over time and through a massive injection of resources earmarked for that very purpose. Moving towards interdisciplinarity calls for quite a different strategy, although financially well-off projects can always entice researchers to cross the borders of their disciplines.

Financing the infrastructure of the programme is by far the largest problem. Short-term activities such as workshops and publications have not been difficult to fund. Long-term activities such as projects are somewhat more difficult to fund. But the general trend is that money for the Secretariat and the administration of the many activities are hard to come by.

So far the programme has been run through an ad hoc economy which makes it difficult to implement long-term planning. Funding is coming from many sources, most of them providing one-time grants of a few thousand dollars and a few providing one-time grants of up to a hundred thousand dollars. Since there is no guarantee that a grant will be repeated, the people of the CROP Secretariat have developed equilibrium talents in piecing monies together while waiting for new grants to come in.

National funding sources are not keen to go international, international funding sources are not as wealthy as they used to be, and foundations prefer research programmes built on the elite rather than an open arena.

The CROP programme has an initial duration of 10 years. Its success (and the immense poverty problems) indicates that comparative studies in poverty ought to find a more permanent home than an organisation mainly run by volunteers.

Taken the present philosophy of CROP as also the future guidelines for a comparative research programme on poverty, at least 3 models can be visualised:

1. The present model can be refined, and part of it can be tailored to fit the demands of some of the funding agencies to secure a proper funding also of the infrastructure.
2. The present model can be further decentralised, creating either regional or national CROP committees which will be responsible for carrying out comparative studies and provide their own infrastructure.
3. The establishment of an international institute for comparative studies on poverty, based on the philosophy of CROP. Since there may not be a "natural" home for an interdisciplinary and international research programme of this kind at the national institutions and universities, the best location may be under the umbrella of an international body which is willing to secure the integrity of the programme and disseminate the results to a world-wide audience. It may be a good omen that the Director General of UNESCO has called for an input to explore this third model.

## References

This paper is based on the following documents, and basic references and more information on CROP can be found therein:

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