

Confronting Poverty – Uniting Disciplines for Global Impact

I am honored to have taken part in the multidisciplinary workshop called *Confronting Poverty – Uniting Disciplines for Global Impact*, hosted at *Université catholique de Louvain* (UCLouvain) through the European university alliance *Circle U.*. Here I was accompanied by fellow master's students from Kings College London, University in Pisa and UCLouvain, who further represented a variety of disciplinary fields, such as law, international affairs, economy, public health, governance and linguistics, to mention some.

Guided by a handful of experienced and inspiring professors from the respective universities we interactively reflected on a variety of issues related to the overarching topic of *poverty*, also taking important intersectional dimensions, like migration, gender and language, into account. The perspectives discussed were multidimensional, leaving us with a holistic, yet analytical, lens – or a *glocal* (local + global) lens – considering both larger, international policymaking, as well as less generalizable, contextual regards.

What I take with me from this workshop is a broader understanding of the many forces sustaining and reinforcing the existence of poverty, from how media and public discourses refer to people living in poverty (Kleut & Drašković, 2021, p. 43-44), who is able to debate poverty in the public and who is not (De Cock, 2025, p. 7), how people living in poverty are viewed in extremes – either *devalued* as inherently miserable or *idealized* as outstandingly creative (Grignon & Passeron, 1989 referred in Hambye, 2025, p. 6-11), how gender gaps are often neglected due to household-oriented perspectives in statistical research on poverty (Scaglioni, 2025, p. 3), to how people symbolically position themselves in complex class hierarchies.

All of these perspectives were intriguing and thought provoking, and if I were to focus on a dimension that caught my attention the most from this workshop, I would say it was discussions about the relationship between class hierarchies within different migrant diasporas, and how positions in these hierarchies can reflect motivation and ability to integrate into the larger societal context for which one might have inhabited. In this discussion, I for example remember that one of my Italian colleagues shared a reflection on the possibility that employers in Italy exploit their employees from the Global South – with low wages and undignified working conditions – might justify these actions from a place of ignorance, where they assume living conditions in the Global South to be worse than they in reality are. Relativising these imagined conditions of the Global South, some might disregard their employees' well being, with the argument that “the workers are better off in these conditions than where they descend from”. And, although I would contest that argument regardless of whether conditions were worse in the Global South or not, I found her reflection on misrepresented, and generalized, visions of the Global South to be an interesting possible factor for poor treatment of work migrants from this part of the world, and how this poor treatment further can discourage integration to the larger society.

We further discussed the concept of *habitus*, from the perspectives of sociologists like Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias, which refers to how people position themselves and others in social class hierarchies. In this discussion it became clear that we, as students from a variety of different countries, had quite different perceptions of how for example clothes position people in social hierarchies – while a certain fashion would be considered high end in one context, it would be considered the opposite in another – *habitus* seems to be context dependant.

To conclude, I would say that participating in this workshop has been an inspiring source to further curiosity and exploration on the topic of poverty in social systems – from unequal dynamics in personal relationships to large scale issues with global impact, highlighting the importance of understanding how these, at the end of the day, are inevitably intertwined.

References

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