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Well-Being and Quality of Life Research

Nikolaos E. Myridis
Editor

Poverty and Quality of Life in the Digital Era

Interdisciplinary
Discussions and
Solutions

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Preface

There is a lot to be said for poverty, after all, everyone has heard a lot about it. Numerous facts also exist and are continuously created about poverty, as well as many projects, actions, bodies, announcements, etc. However, poverty continues to exist even severe. And despite so many words, works, etc., hundreds of millions of people on the planet are experiencing poverty. However, the poor are in pain and suffer from poverty, while everyone else is talking and dealing with poverty without danger. The overall result consists in that the poverty is mitigated in places and the pain it gives birth is somewhat relieved.

Nevertheless, it is a failure of our time that there are still (so many) poor people on Earth and this fact does not honor modern society. In fact, the existence of the poor and the rich is one of the greatest discriminations. A modern society that brags about its advances and its tolerance finds itself incomplete and inexcusable in the face of poverty.

This volume contributes to the global effort to fight poverty. It is the result of a laborious work that lasted almost five years and in which more than 20 academics contributed. This book is not “bringing owls to Athens.” Its main objective is to substantially contribute, either directly or indirectly, to the solution of poverty. The short (brief) of this volume denotes semiotically, among other things, the shortening and the shortness of the time required to solve the problem of poverty. This problem should already have been solved.

The context in which the issue of poverty is embedded and through which it is considered in the book in hand is the digital context, the digital era. It could not be otherwise, since our entire era has been digitally transformed. Moreover, the whole issue should be reviewed in the light of the fourth Industrial Revolution.

This volume is divided into three parts. The first part is entitled “Poverty & Quality of Life in Industry 4.0” and consists of three chapters. In Chap. 1, a brief and supervisory view with relative analysis of the poverty issue is presented. Moreover, aspects of the modern Quality of Life are given. The previous elements were transacted through computational analyses and infographics, within the digital framework. The aims are analyzing, measuring, and solving poverty. The second

chapter tries to achieve a “miracle,” i.e. it proposes the distribution to poor people of the waste on the (stocked) shelves of supermarkets, using mathematical operations and keeping the loss of these companies to a minimum. Finally, Chap. 3 focuses on the European Area (European Union) and on the level of countries where it makes relevant comparisons. Also, through the digital transformation, which is now completed, the authors of this chapter approach somehow the corresponding digital poverty.

Next part is entitled “Poverty, (digital) Culture & Media,” where Chap. 4 provides an interesting semiotic analysis with case study of poverty that of South Africa, transacted through audiovisual material provided by UNICEF. Furthermore, the fifth chapter provides a useful comparative study on the relationship of (conventional and digital) poverty to watching television and digital media.

Finally, the third part of this book is inscribed as “Interdisciplinary Poverty.” Chapter 6 in this part proposes the use of education, even lifelong learning, in support of poverty reduction (in its broader sense). Finally, the seventh chapter of this volume presents a study that shows how art can become a springboard to fight poverty.

I would like, finally, to sincerely thank the authors; not only them but also the poor of all the world who, with such perseverance, silently and uncomplainingly endure the cross of poverty. We may even apologize to them, either because of our luxury and over-consumption, or because of our indifference, they still suffer. . .

Thessaloniki, Greece
2021

Nikolaos E. Myridis

Contents

Part I Poverty and Quality of Life in Industry 4.0

- 1 **(e)Analysis of Poverty and Quality of Life** 3
Nikolaos E. Myridis
- 2 **Redistribution of Perishable Food as a Corporate Social Responsibility Tool That Confronts Poverty** 41
Ioannis Mallidis, Volha Yakavenka, Paraskevi Kapetanopoulou, Efstathios Bouhouras, and Dimitrios Vlachos
- 3 **Digitization and International Development: A Descriptive Analysis of the Networked Readiness Index in Eight European Union Countries** 53
George Barboutidis and Emmanouil Stiakakis

Part II Poverty, (Digital) Culture and Media

- 4 **Poverty and Children in South Africa: The Promise of Equality. A Semiotic Analysis** 83
Dimitra Sarakatsianou and Nikolaos E. Myridis
- 5 **How Digital Poverty Affects Television Viewing Habits** 105
Anna Podara and George Kalliris

Part III Interdisciplinary Poverty

- 6 **Embracing Poverty with Lifelong Learning** 127
Styliani Giossi and Panagiotis Giavrimis
- 7 **Art as a Tool of Tackling Poverty and Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups** 145
Ofilia Psomadaki and George Kalliris

- Index** 159

Part I
Poverty and Quality of Life in Industry 4.0

Chapter 1

(e)Analysis of Poverty and Quality of Life



Nikolaos E. Myridis

*‘The money which you hoard up belongs to the poor’
(St. Basil the Great)
“Blessed are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness,
for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6)*

Abstract Poverty is maybe the most serious problem on the planet and in history. The UN goal is to end global poverty by 2030 (a target that reprogrammed due to Covid-19). If the issue of poverty is likened to a mountain range in this chapter, an attempt is made to approach it by visiting the peaks of that mountain range. Various analyses are presented for this sampling, as well as particular e-analyses, where analytics and infographics are used. What inspires the presentation is the brief and as complete as possible sampling of the poverty problem, with reference to its principle obvious or, mainly, obscure aspects; moreover, the need to reveal real causes, reasons, situations that exist below and within the problem of poverty, which are in fact its coherent axes. By settling (solving) these situations, the axes break and the structure of poverty partially or completely collapses. The visit to peaks-samples of the poverty’s mountain range is realized via the main road-map of the subject, as far as this is possible in the context of an edited volume chapter. Such aspects as those of poverty’s roadmap are—in increasing hierarchical order—etymology, historical background, social components, the modern economic and technological environment (Industry 4.0 and Digital Economy), the dimensions of poverty, poverty asymmetry, etc. The consequence of this chapter’s presentation is the (silent or worded) provision of solutions to the biggest problem of poverty.

Keywords Poverty · Quality of life · Properties of poverty · Poverty dimensions · Digital poverty · Multidimensional Poverty Index · Multidimensional Poverty hyper-Index (MPHI) · Industry 4.0

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1.1 Introduction

Poverty, in addition to the existential issues of eternity, is perhaps the most serious issue on the Planet, as in History, along with other issues such as diseases, human suffering, and crime. Poverty exists:

1. Either as a primary problem, such as e.g., in countries with reduced economic potential and productive capacity.
2. Or, as a secondary complicated issue, which depends on, arises from, etc. other problems, such as e.g., war.

According to the Borgen Project poverty is the biggest issue in the world. The effort to tackle the problem of poverty is certainly not new; however, as it is reasonable, poverty is considered to be a problem for people in all phases and generations in History. In this endeavor one should distinguish both:

1. Collective actions to solve the problem of poverty.
2. As well as individual operations on a micro scale
but also
3. Mixed attempts at solution (e.g., huge donations of individuals).

In any case, the phenomenon of poverty is directly mixed with wellbeing, as well as wealth, a fact that cannot go unnoticed. This observation shows, among other things:

1. The deep roots of the problem of poverty or, to be precise, its inherentness in Humanity.
2. The even apparent difficulty of its solution.
3. The osmosis of the phenomenon (Fig. 1.1), etc.

Characteristic and eloquent are illustrations that directly depict such situations (e.g., osmosis), such as for instance, the one shown in Fig. 1.1 or in Fig. 1.2.

One of the reports, that of Oxfam¹ (January 2017), mentions the following shocking, entitled “Obscene gap between rich and poor:” eight (8) people own wealth (as much) as the poor half (1/2) of the planet’s population of 3.6 billion people.

Trying to solve the problem of poverty immediately and in one go is like trying to find the solution (cure) of all diseases in one go. Although, the cure for poverty could be overwhelmingly accomplished with massive, coordinated movements.

¹Oxfam is a co-alliance of twenty charitable organizations, which has been founded in 1942 to stop the causes that result in poverty.



Fig. 1.1 Pictorial expression of the osmosis and difference between poverty and wealth

1.2 Etymology

The “poverty-wealth” pair is a set of opposite semantic terms (Lévi-Strauss 1958). This means that when one studies the issue of poverty, one will necessarily treat also the issue of wealth as well.²

The etymology of the word “poverty” comes from the ancient French “pauvre” and that in turn from the Latin “pauper” and “paucus” which mean “little.”

Moreover, the etymology of the corresponding Greek word meaning poor, i.e., “πτωχός,” is also interest. This interest results from the use of this Greek word as a prefix in several compound words of the English dictionary that refer to poverty. Such words are:

ptochology, ptochologist, ptochocrat, ptochocracy, ptochogony, ptochoist, etc.

Thus, the origin of the Greek word “πτωχός” (poor) has different conjectures; one of them relates it to “ἐκπεπωκέμαι τοῦ ἔχειν” i.e., “to lose one’s ownership” (The Great Etymologic 1782).

Finally, a worldwide term closely related to poverty is the term *favela* (Fig. 1.3), which relates to the favela plant (Brazil).

²The continuous (and frenzied) trajectory of centrifugation from God, the antievangelical way of the selfish accumulation of wealth and power on the altar of self by simultaneous and consequent injustice to the detriment of others, it was expected to lead with mathematical precision to this eschatological limit.



Fig. 1.2 Comparativity: Poverty vs. wealth (*top left to bottom right*). (a) starvation: the starving child on the verge of death begs with all her/his remaining strength for a few crumbs of food, while (s)he should say: “Give me the goods you took from me!” (<https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/1999/32244/7/1999-Tom-Stoddart-GNS2-AL>) (b) super Yacht (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/33104187@N04/4949190412/>) (c) house in Mozambique (<https://pixabay.com/el/photos/%ce%bc%ce%bf%ce%b6%ce%b1%ce%bc%ce%b2%ce%af%ce%ba%ce%b7-%cf%86%cf%84%cf%8e%cf%87%ce%b5%ce%b9%ce%b1-%cf%86%cf%84%cf%89%cf%87%cf%8c%cf%82-%cf%87%ce%b1%ce%bc%cf%8c%cf%83%cf%80%ce%b9%cf%84%ce%bf-509490/>) (d) skyscrapers

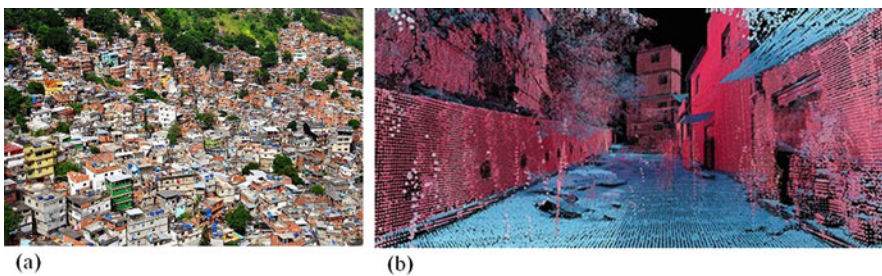


Fig. 1.3 Favela (a) photograph (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Favela#/media/File:1_rocinha_favela_closeup.JPG) (b) 4D favela (project by the MIT Sensible City Lab (<https://senseable.mit.edu/favelas/>))

1.3 Historic Fauna and Flora of Poverty

Initially, it should be noted that it is of great importance, as well as in the case of poverty, of delving in historical sources to extract important knowledge and wisdom. One could therefore cite innumerable presumptions of historical sources, but also from historical facts with many more critical findings, solutions, etc.

Intermediate links in the dipole *poverty-wealth* are charity and mercy. The giver of charity is of course an almoner.³ We should distinguish the use of the title “almoner” between the Eastern Christian Church and the Christian “Churches” of the West. In the first case, the title “almoner” is used/given as a recognition of the ultimate charity acts of a person. The Eastern Christian Church continues the tradition of rendering the term “merciful/eleymon” only in exceptional cases of Saints who have demonstrated this quality. A typical example is St. John the Almoner or Merciful or Eleymon. In contrast, in the West, the term is attributed to a holder of an institutional position in the context of good administration as well as a tradition.

In the satirical representation of the social stratification depicted in Fig. 1.4, in the context of the capitalist system’s consideration, the views of the industrial workers are reflected (1912 AD). The expressions of each layer of stratification—as context of the poster—are characteristic, while the layer of the most oppression is that of the workers:

We work for all – We feed all (workers)
We eat for all (bourgeoisie)
We shoot at you (army corps)
We rule you (leaders)

Finally, we have decided that, in the context of the herein treatise, the following two stories are of great interest, among innumerable others, relating to the issue of poverty and money. The latter are drawn from the practical experience of Christianity which is found in the ascetic communities of Egypt of the first Christian centuries. The aforementioned stories are parts of a book called “Gerontiko” (*Γεροντικό = Book of Elders*), where many relative events have been written down:

1. The story of Saint Vitalios, who was working all day and then he was giving his daily wage to a prostitute in Alexandria every night, provided she did not sin (prostitute herself) that night.
2. The story of the ascetic who, returning to his cell (*kellion*), saw thieves fleeing who had snatched all his belonging. When he found out that they had forgotten to take his wand, he ran after them to give them that last loot that they forgot.

Has the passage of time and History, respectively, brought progress in the issue of poverty, i.e., its reduction? Probably not. Poverty continues to exist and is even severe. The following observation is characteristic: the old rich world was as poor as

³The word *almoner* is akin to the greek word “ελεήμων.”

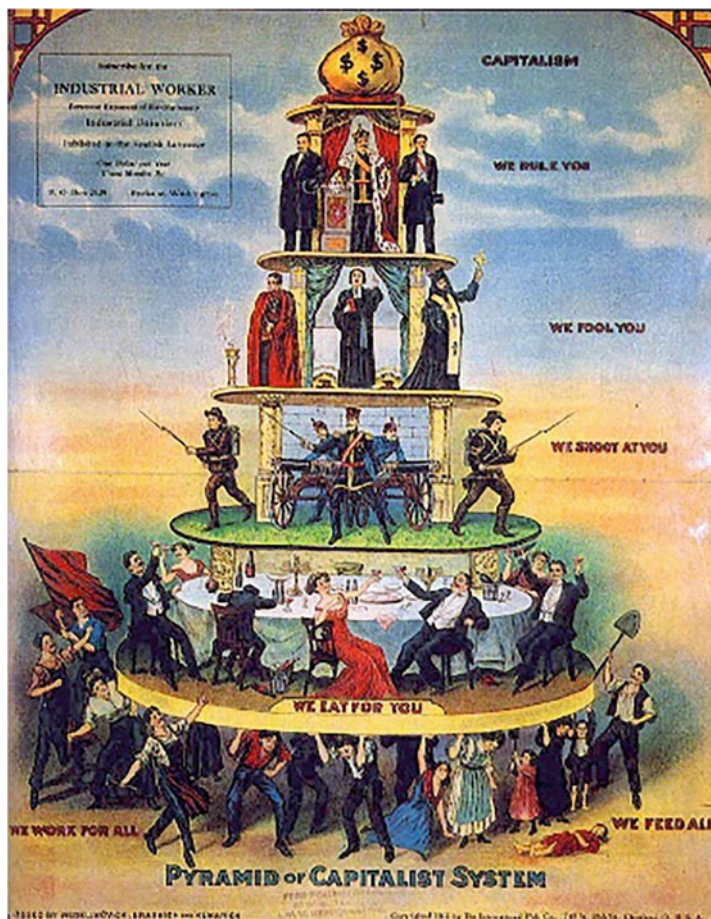


Fig. 1.4 Drawing representing the social pyramid of capitalism system (the Pyramid of Capitalist System) and therefore imaging the social layers, as published by the Industrial Worker Newspaper (Washington, 1912) ([wikipedia/commons/e/e8/Pyramid_of_Capitalist_System.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pyramid_of_Capitalist_System.jpg)) (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pyramid_of_Capitalist_System.jpg)

the current poor world (Ravallion 2015). A somehow indicative measure of the evolution of global poverty can be seen in the World Bank data on the total world GDP per capita for the period 1960–2020 (<https://data.worldbank.org>). It turns out that world GDP per capita has increased by about 25 times since 1960 (in US dollars).⁴

⁴<https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/WLD/world/gdp-per-capita>