2015 ELECTION MANIFESTO POVERTY AUDIT

Rationale for audit chapters

ACADEMICS STAND AGAINST POVERTY UK

Contents

Introduction

We consider a society to be flourishing when people's needs across different areas of life are consistently met[1]. Our definition of human needs is based on Max-Neef *et al.*'s (1989) typology of universal human needs. The topics, and consequently chapters, for the election manifesto audit were selected on the basis that they play an important role in the fulfilment of one or several human needs in contemporary Britain and therefore represent a crucial element of a flourishing society.

Table 1 below describes those needs alongside more colloquial terms that have been chosen to make our analysis more accessible and relevant to the UK context[2]. The table also provides examples of different ways each of these needs may be fulfilled.

Table 1: Universal human needs

Needs (after Max-Neef *et al.*, 1989)	*Colloquial term*	Examples
Subsistence	*Essentials of life*	Home, shelter, income, healthy body, healthy mind
Affection	*Meaningful relationships*	Family, intimacy, sharing, nature
Protection	*Feeling safe*	Benefits, health care, tenant security, police
Understanding	*Self-development and learning*	Education, exchange, internet, thinking critically
Participation	*Community involvement*	Neighbourhood, places of worship, online forum, volunteering
Leisure	*Leisure time*	Being outside, day-dreaming, playing, hobbies
Creation	*Self-expression*	Building, curiosity, designing, art
Identity	*Sense of identity*	Culture, language, tradition, work
Freedom	*Making your own choices*	Freedom, open mind, equal rights, autonomy

We consider the above nine needs to be non-hierarchical, with the exception of subsistence needs (what we refer to as *essentials of life*). The latter represent the foundation of a flourishing life.

In the next chapter, we outline 17 policy areas, which play a key role in creating conditions for the fulfilment of the different needs described in *Table 1* above. These topics are what we consider material/significant for the poverty audit and for which we sought to commission authors.

There are a number of topics for which we were unable to commission a chapter in time for the publication of our 2015 Election Manifesto Poverty Audit. All such cases are

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[1] For a full account of the Flourishing Life Narrative, see http://ukpovertyaudit.org/

[2] The same terms and examples are used in the illustration of a flourishing life – see http://ukpovertyaudit.org/.

referred to in relevant footnotes in the next chapter. A fuller analysis is intended for future audits.

It is important to note that trade-offs arise in the way policies affect different needs. For example, the contested HS2 high speed network[3], proposed by the government to increase economic linkages between London, the West Midlands, Leeds and Manchester is expected to have positive implications for economic growth and employment. However it also entails trade-offs in relation to the landscape, natural habitat, communities and local economies that will be affected along the proposed route[4]. Weighing up these considerations involves policy makers and politicians accessing and assessing facts and figures and balancing this with their value judgements. A separate report will be published after the elections outlining key elements in the policy setting process and how the dynamics between these elements affect the fulfilment of societal needs.

This document was written by Debjani Ghosh and Julia Oertli (ASAP UK Methodology Working Group). We are grateful for review comments on this document from Iason Gabriel (University of Oxford) and for comments on an earlier version received from Keith Horton (University of Wollongong and member of the ASAP Advisory Board).

The Methodology Working Group is responsible for any errors, omissions or inconsistencies in this report. We invite comment on our selection of the material audit chapters and on how we have described their linkage to poverty and flourishing.

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[3] See https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/high-speed-two-limited.
[4] See for example http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/hs2.

Key policy areas that fulfil universal human needs

All the policy areas set out in this chapter are important for the fulfilment of different human needs, which must be consistently met for a person or society to flourish. These areas are by no means exhaustive and we welcome comment on our selection.

Health

Healthcare fulfils two core needs. A sound body and mind is one of the *essentials of life*, as it affects all other needs. For example, a person who has experienced psychological trauma and does not receive the necessary care to help them cope with related anxieties, depression or stress, will not be able to flourish in other areas. They may not be able to sustain *meaningful relationships* with family and friends as a result of a depression, their performance at their workplace could suffer and they may not be able to communicate their experiences, which could result in social isolation.

Secondly, having access to affordable and reliable healthcare helps a person *feel safe* by knowing that their bodily and mental health is supported when needed.

Employment

Employment fulfils multiple needs. It relates to the *essentials of life* by allowing a person to have an income with which they can secure a home. Often, the level of income will determine the quality of one's home, which has further consequences for flourishing. For example, a badly insulated house or flat with an inefficient heating system that produces in high energy bills can present a financial burden for a household (NEF, n.d.). Rising energy prices have increasingly forced households on low incomes to choose between heating and eating (Beatty *et al.*, 2014). Last year, an estimated 2.28 million households experienced fuel poverty in England alone (DEC, 2014: 5).

However, employment is more than just income. It is a key aspect of a person's ability to *develop* themselves, *learn* and nurture a *sense of identity*. The quality and nature of employment is therefore a key aspect of employment in fulfilling these needs. Job security, for example, can affect how *safe* and stable a person feels in their life, which, in turn, affect the *essentials of life*. The rise of zero-hour contracts, for example, has contributed to an increase in food poverty in recent years (Cooper *et al.*, 2014).

Income gained from employment is also needed to undertake *leisure* activities, to travel to see friends and family (*meaningful relationships*) or to pursue higher education (*self-development and learning*). Employment is thus a key policy area, which plays a crucial role in the fulfilment of multiple needs.

Welfare and social security

A robust welfare system that is accessible to all people regardless of their socio-economic background, age, ability or gender is at the core of a person's sense of security in life. Even for people who do not require welfare support, knowing that the state would help if life became very difficult for unforeseen circumstances is a central condition for a person to *feel safe*. Welfare support can link directly to *essentials of life* by providing shelter, income support or food. By ensuring an essential basis for flourishing and a sense of security, people's ability to have *meaningful relationships*, engage with their *community*, have *time for leisure* and *make their own choices* will be positively affected.

It is important to note that receiving state benefits is often associated with social stigma, which can have a negative impact on, for example, a person's ability to engage with friends and neighbours, if one feels a sense of shame. However, this is a consideration related to the public discourse and values associated with welfare and not a reflection of the important role a social safety net plays for societal flourishing.

Housing

Housing is amongst the *essentials of life*. Without a home, a person cannot *feel safe* or have a sense of *community*. Tenant insecurity can be a major source of anxiety and stress, which has a negative effect on a person's ability to flourish. The quality of housing is equally important (see also section on Employment above). Living in overcrowded accommodation, for example, can have detrimental implications for a person's physical and mental health. 3% of households experienced overcrowding in the UK in 2013 (Sayers and Trebeck, 2015: 34).

Inhabiting a place so as to feel 'at home' plays a crucial role in a person's *sense of identity* and *self-expression* (Clapham, 2010). In the UK, without proof of residency, it is difficult to get a job, receive state benefits or undertake education. Housing therefore affects multiple spheres of our life.

Agriculture[5]

Agricultural systems directly affect *essentials of life* by providing people with the food to sustain a healthy body and the energy to go about their daily lives. Agriculture contributes 0.6% to the United Kingdom's economy, and provides about 75% of the food we eat (National Statistics, 2014). The balance is imported, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables (*ibid.*). Trade policies and currency fluctuations will have a significant

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[5] Due to time constraints, we were unable to commission an author for the 2015 audit.

impact on imported food and prices. Such trade policies also affect the prosperity of global citizens (Chang, 2002).

In 2013, the trade gap in food, feed and drink widened by 6.7% in real terms to £21.3 billion (National Statistics, 2014). As a nation dependent on imports to meet our food needs, food security is an issue of national/societal concern. In addition, food poverty at the household level has risen dramatically in recent years due to increases in food, housing and energy prices, coupled with low or stagnant wages and insecure employment contracts (Cooper *et al.*, 2014). As previously noted, food poverty is closely linked to employment and housing policies and the related earnings and expenditures within a household.

Education

Education is most immediately related to the need for *self-development and learning*. Education in the widest sense – at school or university, through an apprenticeship, in one's job, in the home, through family and friends or in the natural environment – allows a person to understand the world around them.

Skills such as listening, communication and analysis play a crucial role in a person's ability to maintain *meaningful relationships*, find ways to *express themselves* and *make their own choices* by knowing the options and risks around them. Having a good education also shapes a person's employment opportunities, which in turn affect the *essentials of life*.

Culture, art and sports[6]

Culture, art and sports provide an important platform for *self-development and learning* as well as *community involvement*. By combining *leisure time* with physical and intellectual activity, culture, art and sports have a direct relationship with *essentials of life* by helping people keep a healthy body and mind.

Different forms of cultural expression such as music, film, art or performance provide key opportunities for *self-expression*, both in an active and passive sense. Going to a film festival, for example, can stimulate one's curiosity, while creative art classes at school may inspire pupils to build, design and invent new things.

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[6] Due to time constraints, we were unable to commission an author for the 2015 audit.

Disability

The manner in which a society treats its most vulnerable members is indicative of its values. Disability has a profound effect on the fulfilment of *all nine human needs*. Whether disability arises at birth or later in life, it can severely limit a person's ability to participate in community activities, make their own choices, find a job[7] and have meaningful relationships. Disability is therefore a cross-cutting policy issue and politicians need to be mindful of whether provisions are in place to ensure those who experience disability have equal opportunities to flourish.

Transport[8]

An affordable and functioning transport system is a key enabling factor to satisfy a wide range of needs. It affects people's access to places, where they may find opportunities for *leisure*, *community involvement* or *learning*. Transport also directly relates to *essentials of life* by allowing people to travel between their homes and workplaces. A good transport system is also a crucial factor for the maintenance of *meaningful relationships* with friends, family, networks and to allow people to experience the natural environment.

Judicial system[9]

A functioning and impartial judicial system, which treats everybody equally, is critical in allowing people to *feel safe*. A reliable police force and legal processes to bring criminal activity to justice, access to legal aid, protection of civil liberties and human rights, data protection and freedom of information are important factors in a person's ability to move freely, enjoy *leisure time* without fear and *make choices* about their own lives.

For individuals, consumer laws, civil laws or the Housing Act can play an important regulatory role throughout a person's life. Businesses rely on laws that cover areas such as trade, commerce, intellectual property or patents. Civil society organisations are regulated by charity law. All of these areas can affect the *essentials of life* by shaping a person's housing and employment opportunities, or regulating the quality of goods and information we consume.

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[7] The relationship between mental health and employment is well established (DWP, 2013).
[8] Due to time constraints, we were unable to commission an author for the 2015 audit.
[9] We were only been able to commission an author to write about criminal justice, but hope to extend this analysis in future audits.

Fiscal and economic policy

Decisions by the government in relation to the country's financial and economic system affect people's ability to flourish at its very core (*essentials of life*). For example, job creation through generating demand in the economy can allow thousands of people to gain employment and income, with the related benefits for flourishing described above. On the other hand, cuts in public services, such as education, culture and arts or the police force, can severely diminish opportunities to fulfil the need for *learning*, *self-expression* and *feeling safe*.

Money and banking

The state determines what money is and underwrites its value. However, it is commercial banks that primarily create it, decide who receives it and how it is spent within the economy - that is, on consumption, buying existing assets or productive investment (Ryan-Collins *et al.*, 2012).

Access to credit affects a wide range of needs. For example, an affordable mortgage can allow a family to buy a home (*essentials of life*), *feel safe* and develop a sense of *community* by being permanently located in one particular neighbourhood. Similarly, low-interest student loans can transform a person's career opportunities and allow them to flourish in relation to *learning and self-expression*. Loans for working capital can allow small businesses to stay afloat and/or expand.

Devolution[10]

Spaces to engage with local decision-making processes are key in fulfilling a range of needs. Being part of a democratic society can play an important role in creating a national *sense of identity*, where different groups feel represented as part of a unity. Democracy, particularly in devolved form, is also a key mechanism for political *self-expression*, including dissent. Finally, devolved democratic decision-making can be an enabling factor for a council or town to feel like a *community*, where its members share a common vision and values.

There has been a trend towards the devolution of decision-making to local levels in British history. The establishment of the Welsh and Scottish parliament is one example, but more recently, within the context of this general election, parties with different regional representation have gained a stronger voice. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is also working towards more accountability at the local level (see DCLG, 2015).

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[10] Due to time constraints, we were unable to commission an author for the 2015 audit.

Defence[11]

The British Army, Royal Navy and Air Force are part of the national defence architecture, which provides the basis for a safe and protected space in which British society can flourish, thus affecting the *essentials of life*. By defending the UK's interests and territories and providing security within national borders, the military defence system plays an important role in ensuring a stable environment in which people can *feel safe*.

UK defence forces also affect the flourishing of global citizens through its responses to humanitarian crises[12] and military interventions in foreign conflicts (for example the 2003 invasion of Iraq[13]).

Migration[14]

Immigration can have a profound effect on people's *sense of identity*. One's identity may feel both threatened and enriched by the presence of people from different cultural and religious backgrounds and lifestyles. Some may feel threatened by the arrival of people who are different to the rest of the neighbourhood, which may affect their sense of *community*. Immigration can also link directly to *essentials of life* where jobs or homes enter competition with people from abroad. On the other hand, the arrival of immigrants with their unique knowledge, cultures, traditions and practices can also be an important opportunity for *self-development and learning* as it provides opportunities to step outside one's comfort zone and experience something new.

National security concerns are frequently associated with migration into the UK (*feeling safe*). UK military interventions abroad, for example, in the name of the 'war on terror', appear to have contributed to the perception of security threats moving much closer to home (Stevens and Vaughan-Williams, 2014).

International development[15]

International aid plays an important role vis-à-vis national *identity* by positioning the UK as a key advocate for and defender of international aid. There is also a perception that, in a world of increasing conflict and instability in recent years, by supporting other

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[11] Due to time constraints, we were unable to commission an author for the 2015 audit.

[12] See for example http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/what-we-do/providing-humanitarian-assistance.

[13] For a range of measures to assess the impact of the invasion, see http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11107739.

[14] We commissioned two migration chapters to explore fully the individual and security aspects of a policy area of high focus in this election.

15 We commissioned two international development chapters so as to cover the aid dimension and role of institutional mechanisms that affect long-term development prospects of other nations.

societies to become more stable and flourish, the UK's national security will be safeguarded (see DfID, 2014). This may affect people's *sense of safety* at home.

International aid is often seen as the major vehicle to support the flourishing of societies overseas. Frequently overlooked in public discussions on international development are institutional mechanisms for trade, tax, debt and climate change, which have a significantly larger impact on southern countries than international aid (see for example Chang, 2002). Often, such impact is negative, for example, through tax evasion by British corporations abroad, which results in significant losses for the host countries of those corporations.

Sustainability

The natural world around us affects everything – from our *health* to *leisure time* and *feeling safe*. Considering and respecting environmental limits in our lifestyle choices and policy decisions is not perceived as a systemic issue in public debate. Yet, climate change and the limits of our planetary system are well-explored (Sayers and Trebeck, 2015) and of fundamental importance to the flourishing of a society and the individuals within it.

Losing one's home to flooding can undo years of hard work and undermine a person's ability to flourish in multiple areas. However, we live in a society in which the natural world is taken for granted and therefore tends to fall low on the list of priorities in political as well as individual decision-making.

Further linked to issues of sustainability are energy considerations[16]. Which sources are used to meet the energy needs of British society – fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas (including through fracking); nuclear energy; renewable sources such as biogas, biomass and solar, hydro and wind power – are important decisions with potentially lasting consequences that will affect the flourishing of future generations.

The sustainability of our energy consumption has implications beyond climate change and the conservation of our natural environment. For example, air pollution from fossil fuels has been shown to bear significant costs for public health (Rabl and Spadaro, 2000).

Sustainability, including the use and production of energy, lies at the core of a flourishing society as it affects the *essentials of life* and, subsequently, all other needs.

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[16] Due to time constraints, we were unable to commission an author to examine this topic in detail for the 2015 audit.

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