

Review

Social Inequality as an Abstract/Concrete Concept

Mehran Zaeri

Freelance Social Scientist

Abstract: An observer can view inequality in two different ways; Subjectivity of inequality and Objectivity of inequality. In an inter-subjectivity aspect of inequality after all a consensus in perception begins to shape; a general point of view which generate the public opinion. Have-nots, is a society where most of opportunities goes to few people, and majority of people have less access to these opportunities. Although the poor shapes a specific strata there are political solution as remedy.

Key Words: Inequality, Poverty, The poor,

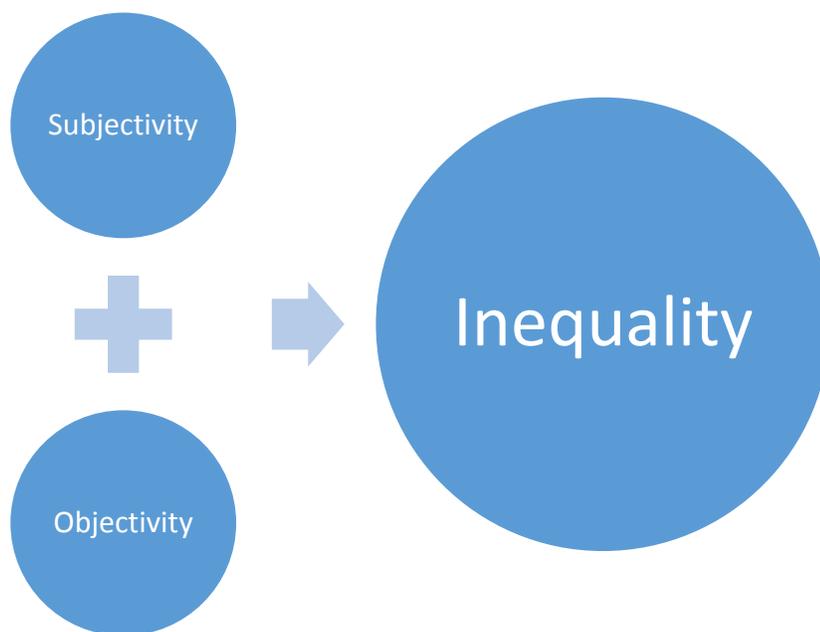
Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

INTRODUCTION

Inequality:

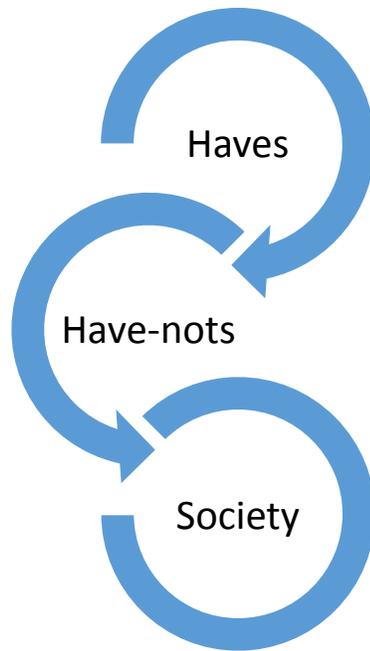
An observer can view inequality in two different ways;

- a- Subjectivity of inequality; the indicator could be people's perceptions and concerns of inequality.
- b- Objectivity of inequality; the indicator could be the income diversity groups.



In an inter-subjectivity aspect of inequality after all a consensus in perception begins to shape; a general point of view which generate the public opinion.

An interesting image which can illustrate inequality is the society of haves and have-nots ¹; A society where most of opportunities goes to few people, and majority of people have less access to these opportunities.



1-Inequality and the American Public, Results of the Third Annual Maxwell School Survey, Conducted September - October, 2006, Working Paper 2006-01, *Revised January, 2007*, Jeffrey M. Stonecash, Maxwell Professor, Campbell Public Affairs Institute, Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs
Syracuse University

Poverty:

While thinking of Have-nots, the idea of **poverty** exposes which, of course is

a problem in every society; Pete Alcock (1993) explains the issue as such;

“... the problem of poverty is an exaggerated aspect of an unequal distribution of resources in which some are so far below the rest that they are excluded from many important aspects of current living standards..”²

Later he impose the solution and its importance respectively;

“... antipoverty policy is extended to include the redistribution of a range of resources to assist those who cannot participate fully to become more integrated into society.”³

This would extensively be a question of social inclusion and its importance in creating societal integrity wide overspreading in public sphere.

2- Pete Alcock (1993), *Understanding Poverty*, THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS and London, Great Britain.

3- Ibid

What does poverty mean initially?

“ Poverty means going short materially, socially and emotionally. it means spending less on food, on heating and on clothing than someone on an average income” _Oppenheim, 1990, p3.

What does poverty makes as a result? As an answer I can say; it takes away the tools to build the future. How many people live in poverty?

“ The evidence of living standards are dramatic... one third of population is living in poverty.” _ Moore, 1989, p.5

Here the reasons for identifying the problem of poverty rises, because it is necessary to take action. But as there is no consensus on the notion of poverty as a problem thus the solutions on that are quite different, since poverty problem is a political concept although it is searched scientifically.

Poverty goes back to the history of society, for instance in UK in seventeenth and eighteenth century the majority of people are separated from the land and become workers and by losing the control on the means of producing material and become dependent on wages from paid labor; those who cannot work for wages , cannot support themselves and become poor. Novak (1988).

OPPENHEIM, C. (1990) *Poverty: the Facts* (CPAG)

MOORE, J. (1989) ‘ The End of the Line for Poverty’, speech to Greater London Area CPC, 11May

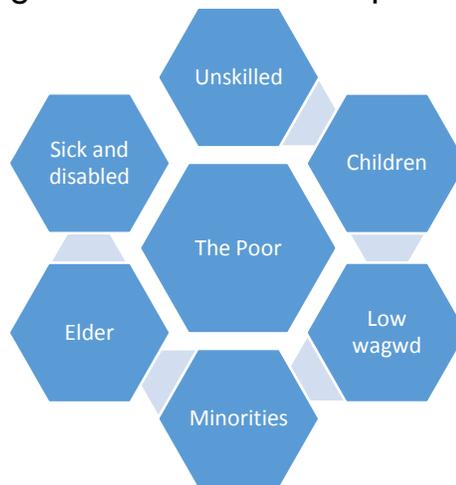
NOVAK, T. (1988) *Poverty and the State: an Historical Sociology*(Open University Press).

According to Ferge and Millar(1987) poverty is not the reason of individual weakness. It is the result of social forces- classes, groups and agencies and institutions which operate in producing a social order in which one is poor.

Who are the poor?

- Those without skills and qualifications according to market needs won't have access to a waged labor.

- Those who are sick may not be able to be employed
- Those who have disabilities may not fit to do a job.
- Members of minority ethnic groups have less chances of finding labor.
- Older people may be considered out of range of fit to job since it is thought that they might have been retired before.
- The workers who have low wages and there is no hope for a better payment in future.
- Children whose taking care is a burden for parents face poverty too.



FERGE, Z. and MILLAR,S.M.(eds)(1987),*Dynamics of Deprivation*(Gower)

It is possible to summarize these phenomena in one as unemployment. Thus the rate of unemployment in each society is a good indicator to understand which people are in poverty. And as I mentioned before since the poverty is a political issue, the poor people will face political decisions. It is important for poor people who is in power ideologically, I mean conservatives, centralists or left wing parades.

There are different political trends in facing poverty in a given society:

- Neo-liberalism is reduced state support.
- Conservatism does not like the state to interfere much with the operation of market economy.
- Social democrats seek to intervene or interfere in the market economy and believe in providing benefits to the poor.
- Revolutionary socialist aspire to change capitalist society to socialist society in order to remove poverty.



Conclusion:

Social inequality is a wide-spread phenomenon in every society. It changes to a negative concept while there are much more differences among people so that a have-nots strata comes to existence. The opportunities go to a small minority and lack of supplies is scattered all in a large part of population. Poverty seems to be a political concept for which different political ideologies have variety in prescription. Some believe that the government should not interfere in market economy operation in favor of the poor. But to the author of this article the best understanding of this problem is in the hand of social democracy which intervenes in the benefit of the poor without examining their poverty.

References:

1-Inequality and the American Public, Results of the Third Annual Maxwell School Survey, Conducted September - October, 2006, Working Paper 2006-01, *Revised January, 2007*, Jeffrey M. Stonecash, Maxwell Professor, Campbell Public Affairs Institute, Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs Syracuse University

2- Pete Alcock (1993), *Understanding Poverty*, THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS and London, Great Britain.

3- Ibid

4- OPPENHEIM, C. (1990) *Poverty: the Facts* (CPAG)

5- MOORE, J. (1989) 'The End of the Line for Poverty', speech to Greater London Area CPC, 11 May

6- NOVAK, T. (1988) *Poverty and the State: an Historical Sociology* (Open University Press).

7- FERGE, Z. and MILLAR, S.M. (eds) (1987), *Dynamics of Deprivation* (Gower)