2015 ELECTION MANIFESTO POVERTY AUDIT

Methodology

ACADEMICS STAND AGAINST POVERTY UK

Contents

Overview

"The word 'audit' is being used in the UK with growing frequency. In addition to financial audits, there are now environmental audits, value for money audits, management audits, forensic audits, data audits, intellectual property audits, medical audits, teaching audits, technology audits, stress audits, democracy audits and many others besides." (Power, 1996)

The UK has a long history of public sector audits that extends to medieval times (Maltby, 2008). This manifesto audit is distinctive as it seeks accountability from those in positions of executive and legislative power. This is in contrast to public sector audits where government officials are held to account.

A country that is flourishing, economically, socially and environmentally, is one where its citizens and residents are able to lead meaningful lives, as they define it; and have the resources to meet their needs consistently over time. In effect their lives are free from poverty. The manifesto audit's objective is to assess the extent to which party manifestos provide the confidence that policies will enable British society to flourish within environmental limits, both now and in future. This chapter sets out the principles underpinning the audit, scope and process.

Independence, transparency and materiality are the three key principles that animate this work. Independence has been achieved by commissioning academics who are experts in their respective topic area, and explicitly requiring peer reviewers to comment and advise on the neutrality and objectivity of their analysis. Public disclosure of the audit guidelines (see Appendix 1), peer review form (see Appendix 2) and the audit process (see below) are the primary means to provide transparency.

Materiality is a term associated with financial audit. In the context of this audit, it refers to issues which will be of significance to the users of this report, i.e. voters. We have addressed materiality in two ways. Firstly, by identifying policy areas that link to societal and individual flourishing. Further information can be found on www.UKPovertyAudit.org. Secondly, authors were required to comment on the equity and sustainability implications of policies in their respective topic area.

Manifestos are a time-honoured tradition in British politics, and a key communication tool for political parties to articulate the society they hope to co-create and to describe their policies. We focus on manifestos as the evidence base for the audit as it permits a level playing field for analysis. It would have been desirable to examine other information. However, the relatively late release of manifestos meant we did not have the time to do supplementary analysis.

This audit has been designed by the Methodology Working Group. The team was led by Debjani Ghosh and its members are Julia Oertli and Sara Mahmoud. Oversight was provided by three academics – Iason Gabriel (University of Oxford), Sandy Schumann (University of Oxford) and Keith Horton (University of Wollongong and member of the ASAP Advisory Board).

The audit process started with the development of a narrative that expressed what flourishing is. The next step was the design of audit guidelines, and peer review and quality assurance processes. The flourishing narrative was created through a literature review and dialogue with academics, students and think tanks at a workshop. It was then refined through a two-stage review process involving Iason Gabriel, Sandy Schumman and Keith Horton. Further information on the narrative can be found on www.UKPovertyAudit.org.

The audit guidelines template (see Appendix 1) was created by the Methodology Working Group and refined following a pilot and subsequent review by Iason Gabriel and Sandy Schumann. The peer review form (see Appendix 2) was designed by Sandy Schumann based on best practice and refined following feedback from Iason Gabriel and the Methodology Working Group. Keith Horton also provided review comments on this document, audit guidelines and peer review form.

Authors and peer reviewers were appointed based on their expertise and availability to work to the very short timelines. To begin with, authors created a baseline for their policy area and scored the parties across a series of multiple choice questions covering equity dimensions, transparency of costing and where relevant sustainability dimensions. Each author then wrote their assessments and provided an overall score. These submissions were sent for peer review and authors made revisions made as appropriate.

Meta-analysis to derive the high-level findings was conducted by the Methodology Working Group. This analysis has also been reviewed by Iason Gabriel.

The Methodology Working Group is responsible for any errors, omissions or inconsistencies in the audit report. We welcome feedback on the methodology; and over the next 12 months will improve its design for future ASAP audits both in the UK and across the world.

Appendix 1: Audit guidelines

Context

The problem of poverty has many dimensions. We believe that it is best understood not only as the absence or lack of access to resources, but also as a wider set of constraints on the ability of individuals to lead flourishing lives. Building upon the Capability Approach developed by Sen (1999), we understand a flourishing life to require more than meeting people's basic needs. Details can be found on pages 2-4.

Audit overview

The audit (pages 5-6) has three distinct sections.

Section A includes three questions that allow you to define an evaluative a baseline specific to your research area. This section can be completed before the manifestos are published. We recommend that you do this so as to fully engage with the "flourishing life" approach we are adopting for the audit (250 words).

Section B asks you to evaluate the manifestos against your baseline understanding as defined in Section A. This section comprises of several multiple choice questions and is designed to help you structure your analysis.

Section C asks you to put your analysis developed in Section B in writing, referring to your baseline articulated in Section A (750 words).

Definition of a flourishing life

Drawing on Boltvinik (2005), we understand **flourishing** as a *process* in which people are able to meet a set of self-determined and dynamic needs, which will vary throughout their lives and change across space, time and according to different social contexts.

Our understanding of a flourishing life draws on Max-Neef's typology of universal human needs outlined in the table below. According to Max-Neef (1989), there are nine universal human **needs**, which are non-hierarchical except for subsistence needs (such as food and shelter), which preceed other needs.

Table 1: Typology of needs after Max-Neef et al. (1991)

Need	Examples
Subsistence	Food, shelter, work, physical and mental health, living environment
Protection	Social security, health care, cooperation safe dwelling, care
Affection	Friendships, family, privacy, intimacy, generosity, respect, sense of humour
Understanding	Literature, study, critical capacity, meditation, curiosity, intuition, analysis
Participation	Responsibility, rights, expression of opinions, dedication, cooperation
Leisure	Imagination, tranquillity, spontaneity, peace of mind, remembering, relaxing, being alone, day-dreaming, enjoyment
Creation	Imagination, boldness, curiosity, building, designing, inventing, interpreting, expressing
Identity	Sense of belonging, self-esteem, consistency, commitment, growth, shared values, customs, language
Freedom	Autonomy, open-mindedness, equal rights, awareness, passion, self-esteem

People's ability to flourish depends upon the interplay of:

- The development and application of their resources (monetary and non-monetary);
- Opportunities;
- Enabling factors and barriers (disabling factors) which influence their desired outcomes; and
- Planetary boundaries.

These parameters are outlined overleaf.

Table 2: Parameters for a flourishing life

Parameters for a flourishing life	Definition	Examples in relation to a particular need	
		Example One: Need for good physical health	Example Two: Need for participation in social life
Resources	External inputs that help **individuals** develop the capacities that allow them to pursue activities to fulfil their needs. They can be psychological[1] monetary[2] and non-monetary[3].	Balanced diet, health care, time for sleep and exercise, knowledge of healthy lifestyle, budget for healthy foods and sport activities	Self-esteem, relationships, internet, knowledge, ability to express one's opinion, time to participate
Opportunities	Available spaces (physical and virtual) in which activities can take place that allow the achievement of desired outcomes. These spaces are created at societal level.	Cycling route to work, local farmer's market, affordable gym membership, reasonable work hours and holidays	MP surgery, local pub, community centre, online discussion forum, cooperatives, neighbourhoods, religious centres
Enablers	Social, cultural, political or environmental factors that **allow** resources to be mobilised towards desired outcomes.	Passion for sports spreading with 2012 Olympics	Functioning democracy, tradition of volunteering, open access to information
Barriers	Social, cultural, political or environmental factors that **hinder** resources from being mobilised towards desired outcomes.	Aggressive advertisement and spread of fast food chains	Discrimination against particular social groups, inequality, censorship
Natural environment	The natural landscape and planetary processes and systems, which enable the equitable and sustainable use of resources between populations and across generations[4].	Balanced climate and weather conditions for agricultural yields, outdoors spaces for exercise, clean air	Places of scenic beauty to visit and/or to pursue an active lifestyle

Opportunities, enablers and barriers are to a large extent determined by the **institutional context**. We recognise that institutions themselves are a product of historic and prevailing social values. Political parties represent a particular set of social

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[1] They include optimism, autonomy and self-esteem and can be mapped to two core domains of personal well-being (NEF, 2009).

[2] This includes income, assets and free goods and services (for example health care, a car, school books).

[3] This includes time, skills, knowledge, relationships and physical and mental health.

[4] These include air quality, bio-diversity (loss), chemical pollution, climate change, (global) fresh water, land-use change, nitrogen cycle, ocean health, ozone depletion and phosphorous cycle (Sayers and Trebeck, 2015).

values, which are reflected in their policies. These policies will shape the existing institutional landscape and affect the degree to which a flourishing life is possible for different segments of British society.

Inequality arises because individuals and groups in society have access to differing levels of resources and opportunities to apply these resources, and they experience the impact of external enabling and disabling factors in different ways.

<div align="center">

Definition of poverty

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We understand **poverty** as the inability to flourish. Poverty occurs when existing multi-dimensional needs cannot be fulfilled. This means poverty cannot be understood simply as the failure to attain a minimum level of income. For example, if subsistence needs are satisfied, but other needs (as per Max-Neef's typology of needs outlined above) remain unmet, an individual will not be flourishing but in a state of poverty.

Our definition of poverty does therefore not rely on absolute or relative poverty measurements, whether based on an income floor or inequality (e.g. the bottom 10% or 60% of median income). Instead, it reflects a broader understanding of people's dynamic needs and the interplay between the resources and opportunities available to them – as well as enabling factors and barriers in the external environment that allow these needs to be satisfied. Our approach also recognises the importance of human **agency** and the structures and spaces, which support or restrict such agency in achieving desired social outcomes.

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AUDIT QUESTIONS

The focus of this audit is on the way in which policy proposals, contained within the party manifestos, influence the complex process of flourishing. The guiding question is:

Do the manifestos of each party provide you with confidence that the party's policies will enable British society to flourish within planetary boundaries, both now and in future?

A. Baselines

This part draws heavily on your academic expertise. The aim is to develop a baseline against which to conduct an analysis of the manifesto texts (250 words in total) that covers the following three issues:

1. What would be a good social outcome(s) in your topic area in the UK context?
Please note that we consider a good social outcome as one that recognizes and responds to the legitimate needs and preferences of different social groups[5] and takes account of its sustainability within planetary boundaries and across generations.

2. What are the relevant parameters influencing the above good social outcome(s)?
Please refer to the elements outlined in Table 2 above.

3. What are the major challenges the next government will face when trying to achieve the outcome(s) described above?
Governments invariably have to make trade-offs as part of policy making due to resource scarcity. They face challenges in balancing financial, economic, social/cultural, political and environmental issues. It should be noted that challenges in some situations can be reframed and perceived as opportunities for policy intervention.

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[5] These include differences across age, gender, socio-economic background (or class), ethnic background and household composition.

Compare and contrast the party manifesto proposals with respect to equity, sustainability and transparency. Please respond to the questions below in relation to **your topic area**, referring to the baseline developed in Section A. Please note that we do not expect all of the questions to be addressed in the manifestos, but ask you to consider the whole set of questions as it is important to record any significant omissions made by the parties.

Example:

Party Question	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
1a) Score	*5*	*2*	*4*	*4*	*3*	*2*
Any comment?		*Only refers to working age adults*				*Privileges young adults*

I. Equity

1. To what extent do the manifestos discuss good social outcomes that recognise and respond to legitimate needs and preferences of the following social groups:

a) Different age groups
Examples of age groups may include children, people of working age including young adults, people of pension age.

① Ignored
② Privileges a single age group (which one?)
③ Privileges a single age group, but acknowledges implications for other age groups
④ Acknowledges the implications for multiple age groups, but overlooks inter-generational implications
⑤ Acknowledges the implications for multiple groups including inter-generational implications

Party Question	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
1a) Score						
Any comment?						

b) Different genders and sexual orientation

① No information provided
② Information allows assessment in a few areas of life
③ Information allows assessment in some areas of life
④ Information allows assessment in all areas of life
⑤ Information shows trade-offs across different areas of life

Party: Question:	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
1b) Score						
Any comment?						

c) Different socio-economic backgrounds

Please refer to the ABC1 demographic categories, which include: upper middle class, middle class, lower middle class, skilled working class, working class, those at the lowest level of subsistence (*http://www.abc1demographic.co.uk*).

1️⃣ Ignored
2️⃣ Privileges a single group and does not mention others (which one?)
3️⃣ Privileges a single group, but acknowledges implications for other groups
4️⃣ Acknowledges the implications for multiple groups, but overlooks vulnerable groups (eg. physical and mental disability)
5️⃣ Acknowledges the implications for multiple groups including vulnerable groups (eg. physical and mental disability)

Party: Question:	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
1c) Score						
Any comment?						

d) Different ethnic backgrounds

Please refer to the Office for National Statistics' categorisation, which includes: White, Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups, Asian/Asian British, Black/Africa/Caribbean/Black British, Other ethnic group (*http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/measuring-equality/equality/ethnic-nat-identity-religion/ethnic-group/presentation-of-ethnic-group-data.html*).

1️⃣ Ignored
2️⃣ Privileges a single group and does not mention others (which one?)
3️⃣ Privileges a single group, but acknowledges implications for other groups
4️⃣ Acknowledges the implications for multiple groups, but overlooks marginal groups (eg. asylum seekers)
5️⃣ Acknowledges the implications for multiple groups including marginal groups (eg. asylum seekers)

Party: Question	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
1d) Score						
Any comment?						

e) Different household compositions

Examples of household compositions may include single or one-person households, dual income households, households with no children.

1️⃣ Ignored
2️⃣ Privileges a single household composition and does not mention others (which one?)
3️⃣ Privileges a single household composition, but acknowledges implications for others
4️⃣ Acknowledges the implications for multiple household compositions, but overlooks vulnerable groups (e.g. single parents)
5️⃣ Acknowledges the implications for multiple household compositions including vulnerable groups (e.g. single parents)

Party: Question	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
1e) Score						
Any comment?						

2. To what extent do the manifestos discuss good social outcomes that recognise and respond to legitimate needs and preferences of different UK regions?

1️⃣ Ignored
2️⃣ Privileges a single region and does not mention others (which one?)
3️⃣ Privileges a single region, but acknowledges implications for others
4️⃣ Acknowledges the implications for different regions, but overlooks more economically vulnerable regions (e.g. in receipt of EC funding)
5️⃣ Acknowledges the implications for different regions including more economically vulnerable regions (e.g. in receipt of EC funding)

Party: Question	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
2. Score						
Any comment?						

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II. Transparency

3. To what extent are the parties transparent about the evidence base used to formulate their policies in your research area, including whether pledges made have been costed or not?

☐1 No information provided on theoretical or empirical basis of policies and associated costs
☐2 A single example
☐3 A *few* examples and costed proposals but no clear position on trade-offs
☐4 A few examples and costed proposals, with clear position on trade-offs for current generation
☐5 A few examples, costed proposals and clear position on trade-offs for current and future generations

Party: Question	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
3. Score						
Any comment?						

III. Sustainability: Triple bottom line

Only to be completed if there is anything specific in your research area pertinent to this issue.

4. We are also going to be assessing the extent to which the manifestos discuss good social outcomes that take account of their sustainability within planetary boundaries, financial and economic viability and social considerations (short and long-term). Is there anything you would like to raise here from examining the different party manifesto commitments in your research area that is pertinent to the triple bottom line?

Planetary boundaries may refer to air quality, bio-diversity, chemical pollution, climate change, fresh water, land-use change, nitrogen cycle, ocean health, ozone depletion and phosphorous cycle (Sayers and Trebeck, 2015).

Examples of financial and economic viability may include affordability and inter-generational sustainability.

Examples of social considerations may include the quality of relationships, networks, neighbourhoods, families, communities and friendships.

Party: Question	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
4. Any comment?						

C. Analysis

I. Compare and contrast the policy proposals in the party manifestos for your research area, assessing whether they will enable a greater likelihood for British people now and in future of experiencing a flourishing life. Please write around 750 words, referring to your answers in Sections A and B. This standalone text will be used in the final report.

II. Final rating:

Do the manifestos of each party provide you with confidence that the party's policies, *in your research area*, will enable British society to flourish within planetary boundaries, both now and in future?

- 1 Very low confidence
- 2 Pretty low confidence
- 3 Medium confidence
- 4 Pretty high confidence
- 5 Very high confidence

Party:	Con	Lab	LibDems	Green	UKIP	SNP
Rating						

Appendix 2: Peer review form

Dear Reviewer,

Thank you for agreeing to review this chapter for the UK poverty audit.

Please complete this review form with ratings for four key aspects, that is, the chapter's theoretical soundness, analysis, writing style and neutrality as well as general comments and recommendation. Please note that any comments under the sections in this form entitled 'Suggestions to authors' will be forwarded to authors. Comments to the editors are optional.

The chapter is subject to double-blind peer review and we ask that reviewers respect the confidentiality of the review process. Please inform us of any potential conflicts of interest, such as a situation where a reviewer might be able to identify an author by his/her writing.

Once again, thank you for time and we look forward to receiving your review.

Sincerely,

Academics Stand Against Poverty UK

| Chapter title: |
| Reviewed by: |

A)   THEORY

How would you rate the chapter's theoretical soundness? Is the baseline (section A of the audit guidelines) founded on relevant theoretical frameworks/models?

1 — Poor   2 — Fair   3 — Average   4 — Good   5 — Excellent

| ***Comments to editors*** |
| |
| ***Suggestions to author/s*** |
| |

B)   ANALYSIS

a) How would you rate this article's analytical rigor? To what extent is the analysis (section C of the audit guidelines) based on the baseline (section A of the audit guidelines) and the evaluation (section B of the audit guidelines)?

1 — Poor   2 — Fair   3 — Average   4 — Good   5 — Excellent

| ***Comments to editors*** |
| |

Suggestions to author/s

b) To what extent do the ratings provided in section B of the audit guidelines align with information within the party manifestos? Please provide an overall evaluation and highlight any discrepancies you have identified in the comment section, noting the respective party and area (e.g., equity, transparency, etc.).

1 — Poor   2 — Fair   3 — Average   4 — Good   5 — Excellent

Comments to editors
Suggestions to author/s

C)   WRITING STYLE

How would you rate the chapter's style of writing? To what extent would the writing resonate with the general public or policy makers?

1 — Poor   2 — Fair   3 — Average   4 — Good   5 — Excellent

Comments to editors

D)   NEUTRALITY

To what extent does the writing reflect a politically neutral stance?

1 — Poor   2 — Fair   3 — Average   4 — Good   5 — Excellent

Comments to editors
Suggestions to author/s

E)   GENERAL ASSESSMENT

General comments to editor

General suggestions to author/s

F) RECOMMENDATION

Please insert "X" into the relevant box to indicate your final recommendation:

[ ] Accept without changes,

[ ] Revise and resubmit with minor changes,

[ ] Revise and resubmit with major changes, OR

[ ] Reject

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