Andrew Pickup Bursary -Report 2023-

Placement Organisation	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)
Student	Azul Fourcade (MA Anthropology of Development and Social Development)
Role	Research Assistant

Introduction

In partial fulfilment of the Master in Anthropology of Development and Social Transformation, a dissertation called "Children of the Loopholes: Young Professionals' Life-Stories of Social Mobility in Buenos Aires, Argentina" was carried out and presented to the University of Sussex, and this would not have been possible without the help and patience of the Andrew Pickup Award, the Global Studies Placements' Office and OPHI.

About the organisation and student's role

Organisation

The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) is a policy-research centre with a strong focus on making poverty policies in the world, particularly the Global South focus into designing and implementing more evidence-based policies. They do this by promoting and teaching on multidimensional poverty (based on Amartya Sen's capabilities' approach). For this aim they not only do research and consultancies directly with governments and in their peer collaborative network, but also provide for self-guided modules and courses (such as the Summer School). The organisation is based within the Oxford Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. More information can be found in OPHI's official webpage (link).

Role and main tasks

As a Research Assistant I worked on different topics and with different senior professionals within OPHI. My main tasks were to review deadlines and requirements for publications and conferences; analyse and recommend authors and policy makers for papers and book reviews' calls; make literature reviews and analyse datasets for report writing. However I also worked in proof-editing texts and maps, learning about how the Multidimensional Poverty Index not only is built and analysed but also communicated to wider audiences. The last two projects I worked on involved, first of all, long hours of analysis and understanding of different national reports - particularly from Spanish-speaking countries - to build a database that will later feed an annual OPHI research. Secondly, I worked in the last month on the preparation of key documents for a conference to be held in the winter of 2024, which involved not only hard work (in combination with the last days of work on my dissertation) but also a challenge given that I worked particularly on the health dimension, which is not my area of expertise. All these tasks have helped me understand better both the theoretical and practical dimensions of the Capabilities approach, which was key for my research.

As a RA I was also invited to participate in global meetings of the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN), particularly in the America Region in which I learned more about a topic related to both my research topic and my professional interest, which is the direct implementation of the Multidimensional Poverty Index towards children and youth. It was such an opportunity and honour to be able to learn about the MPI implementation in Sri Lanka and Nigeria, but also to learn about MPI (global and child-focused) progress made in my native region, South America, from those responsible for carrying it out in different countries, such as Bolivia and Brazil.
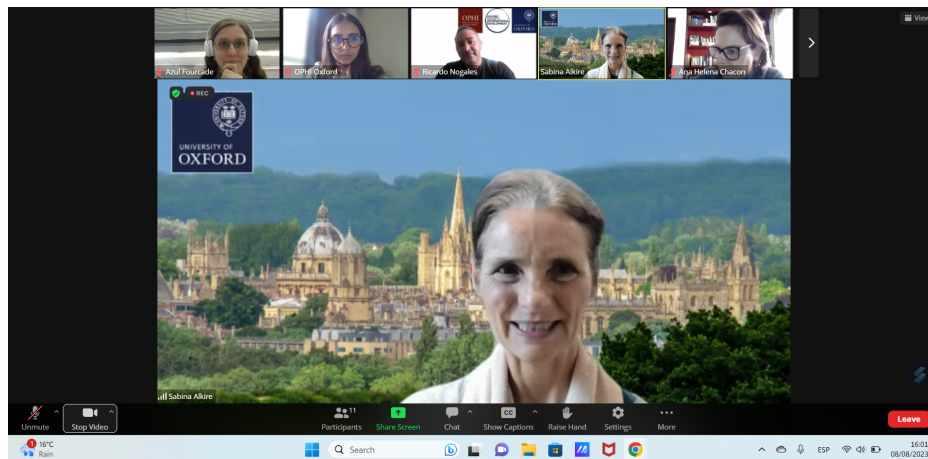

Photo 1: Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN) Conference Call Americas.

Research on Young Professional Adults' Social Mobility in Argentina

The dissertation's aim was to analyse the different pathways young professionals in Buenos Aires take towards upward mobility. To do so, it analyses these young professionals' life stories following Crivello and Morrow (2020)'s 'ecologies of support', focusing on both individual and structural factors that have allowed these young professionals to move 'up the ladder'. To explain whether the macro systems of Argentina enable or hinder individuals' development and accomplishments, the analytical framework here combines Sen-Nussbaum's capability approach and Bourdieu's theorisations on cultural capital and habitus.

The findings were threefold. First, it was found that though pathways to social mobility are diverse, they all rely in different ways on their ecologies of support, mainly individual resources, supporting relationships and communities. Second, more evidence was brought to the Argentinian literature on the issue, agreeing on the importance of the government through social security and education strategies, in order to help both citizens survive and cope, but also develop further and flourish. However, some limitations within these systems provoke an 'adverse incorporation' of those most underprivileged, reproducing social inequalities instead of 'levelling the field'. Third, that social mobility can be defined in a more broad term than a 'class' or 'socioeconomic status' passage. Though and following YPBA's perceptions, currently their socioeconomic positions have changed from those of their parents and their own upbringing, they do not feel they 'belong' to a new class, but rather that not only now they have a new and diverse 'fan of opportunities', but also that they are 'freer' to pursue the life they value and choose.

The possibility to do a placement with OPHI during the months of June to August was extremely helpful to understand the Capabilities Approach and Sen's work. Particularly not

regarding human development understood broadly but taking into account Sen (2000)[1]'s work on the nature and scope of social exclusion: since, even when exclusion seems not to be a constitutive deprivation on its own, it might be, in light of causal process, instrumentally exclusive. The research's focus was the capital-capabilities-functionings conversion (firstly introduced by Hart 2014[2]) into upward social mobility, and establishing the relationship or degree of *'dependence'* on "what institutions exist, how they function, and how inclusionary they are" -institutions such as family, school, government and market (Sen 2000, 33).

Reflections on the benefits of the bursary and next steps

First of all, the Andrew Pickup Award allowed me to carry out this placement with the tranquillity to know that all my expenses were taken care of, both regarding transportation and accommodation. Not only was I able to visit Oxford, get to know the team and my supervisor, OPHI's Director, Sabina Alkire, but also I was able to resign to my work at the Cafe for the whole placement's duration, enabling me to fully and solely focus on both my placement and my dissertation. Without the bursary I would not have been able to go and visit the organisation, losing the opportunity to make the most out of the experience of working for a highly renowned organisation.

Visiting Oxford proved to be, as mentioned in my application, crucial for both the development of the placement itself, but also to consolidate professional relationships and projects constructed during my work at OPHI.

In one of my meetings with Sabina, we discussed different opportunities in which I may continue to be of use for the organisation in the months to come.

Photo 2: Rainy day in Oxford, after a successful day (both at the office -sadly, last meeting- and as a tourist!).

As mentioned before as well, it is my desire that after both placement and this soon-to-be-defined projects, I would also have the opportunity to connect OPHI both with my alma mater, Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina, and, after these year national and local elections, with the government sector in my country, in order to continue working for a topic very dear to me, as it is poverty and human development.

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[1] Sen, A. (2000) Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny, *Social Development Papers No. 1*. Office of Environment and Social Development - Asian Development Bank.

[2] Hart, C. S. (2014) *Aspirations, Education and Social Justice: Applying Sen and Bourdieu*, Bloomsbury.