

the political agenda of the Union. The intergovernmental conference that will meet in 1997, with the objective of revising the Maastricht Treaty, may offer an opportunity to bring back to the centre stage the social concerns, in general, and poverty and social exclusion, in particular.

I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that, in my opinion, the two principles that were less successfully implemented within the Poverty 3 programme concerned participation and the policy implications. Indeed, to foster participation means, *inter alia*, to empower the poor. And such an aim, if taken seriously, would imply major social changes that most probably no European society is prepared to accept. Something similar happens with the policy implications. When working at the local level it is important to distinguish local problems – that is, problems with local causes and local solutions – from mere local manifestations of national or wider problems – therefore, demanding national or wider solutions. Here, the implementation of the necessary policies depends upon their acceptance by the national or regional authorities.

What I wish to stress is that, notwithstanding the relevance of the approaches and of the scientific bases of the strategies, action to combat poverty and social exclusion has also an important political component that should not be underestimated.

### ***The contradictory concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion***

by Else Oyen (University of Bergen)

Let me start by saying that neither social exclusion, nor social inclusion, are analytical concepts. They are political concepts, and they have been introduced for political reasons. The original concept launched by the European Union's Targeted Socio-Economic Research (TSER) programme was poverty. Apparently the politicians found this concept too loaded, so they asked for another concept and were satisfied with social exclusion/inclusion.

Now poverty may not have been a much more precise concept. But sizeable amounts of research have gone into identifying different conceptual contents and their contexts, and at least we know the major weaknesses of the different kinds of poverty concepts and the areas in which to search further.

The politicians' choice is legitimate. They point their fingers at an important social process, and ask the researchers to find the necessary screws and bolts to stop or reverse the process. The researchers' response may be less legitimate. They pick up the concept and are now running all over the place arranging seminars and conferences to find a researchable content in an umbrella concept for which there is limited theoretical underpinning. The

original document<sup>3</sup> they react to is a mixed bag of moral, political and academic statements and good wishes for an enormous amount of uncoordinated research questions, to be provided with minimal funding. Connect the five sets of Objectives in the six page document provided, and the hollowness of the exercise becomes visible.

The picture reflects a trend in the social sciences by which applied social science means that the social science research agenda is set by non-social scientists, and hungry researchers run where the money is. I would rather see the social science community set the agenda for how important social issues can be tackled, through concerted efforts and long time investments in providing basic insights and relevant data for meeting such challenges as social exclusion. The result is that poverty, the real and nasty poverty, becomes invisible because it is being hidden under the umbrella of social exclusion which embraces several other phenomena.

So much for the policy issues. Let me now turn to some of the theoretical issues which trouble me.

Social exclusion/inclusion is portrayed as a dichotomy. Either you are out or you are in. But that in itself gives us a static theory. Actually people are moving in and out, and we need a dynamic theory which leads up to work within certain time-spans. The choice of time-span will influence the observed consequences of social exclusion/inclusion. Using, for example, a life-span as the observational unit will provide different results than using a randomly chosen period of say five years. The dichotomy is deceptive in other ways. There already exists a sizable grey zone area between social exclusion and social inclusion where the majority of the population is found. One hypothesis is that people move closer to and further from some kind of social exclusion or some kind of social inclusion (depending on how we define the two concepts) most of their lives and in different phases of their lives. During those movements a grey zone is generated and upheld where people mill about in constantly changing positions in relation to the two extreme points.

Social exclusion is a process leading to some undesirable place, while social inclusion is leading to some desirable place. Is the undesirable place part and parcel of the desirable place, or are we relating to two different kinds of places which call for different analytical understandings? For the sake of simplicity, let us decide to concentrate on the concept of social exclusion in the following, and leave the problems of social inclusion and the interrelation of the two concepts behind us for a while.

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<sup>3</sup> The reference is: European Commission, DG XII (Science, Research and Development), Targeted Socio-Economic Research (TSER), Fourth Framework Programme (1994-98), Area II, 1-5.

Before we start it is necessary to specify the context in which social exclusion is supposed to be at work. Is it exclusion from civil society (another umbrella concept), the labour market, political life, voting, university education or access to hospitals which is in focus? This question has already been raised by many, but it still needs to be repeated. However, it should be added that it is not an unreasonable hypothesis that exclusion from the different arenas mentioned here is generated through different processes, and not from one and the same process, unless we move up to a higher level of generalization.

Now, if this is the case, we are faced with an entire set of processes producing social exclusion. How do these processes actually fit together? Do they all work in the same direction and under the same conditions? Most likely not. Again, if this is the case, how do we fit them together in a synthesis under the label of social exclusion?

Let us for a moment look at the role of the Scandinavian welfare state tradition and its impact on the understanding of social exclusion. Traditionally, the Scandinavian welfare state has been described as universalistic, i.e. all citizens should have the same rights and be covered under the same health and social policy programmes. While it does not work so in practice, the welfare state has certainly been a major instrument against social exclusion, and there is still a fairly strong ideology expressed about the need for inclusion, equality, justice and share of resources. The Scandinavian welfare states have been described also as "averaging societies", i.e. societies where the idea of equality dominates to such a degree that individuals deviating too much from the normal are pulled towards an average standard through the politics of the welfare state and taxation. Although it sounds a bit dull, the picture is not altogether wrong.

The level-of-living studies developed in four of the Nordic countries during the late sixties and the seventies can be seen as an expression of both the universalistic approach and the averaging societies. Upon the request of the governments (except in Finland where the initiative came from the research community) social researchers were asked to provide a mapping of the living standards of the entire population on a set of extended social indicators. The approach was new in at least two ways. The focus was on everybody, not only the deprived part of the population. The indicators went far beyond the traditional economic indicators and the few social measures thrown in for good measure. The indicators covered systematically important areas for participation in society, such as access to public life, membership in organizations and networks, social and political positions, voting and personal feeling of influence, etc. The indicators also followed the more traditional trail of mapping individual resources, such as education, health, family network, use of leisure time, work conditions and well-being.

On the basis of these studies, a political instrument was developed which has been put to use in monitoring social exclusion. The national bureaux of statistics were ordered to follow up the studies on a continuous basis, and each of the

welfare state countries now publishes profiles of the different population groups on a wide set of indicators. Examples of such groups are single parents, elderly people, immigrants, etc. In the comments following the profiles, the national bureaux point out which groups are losing out at present and discuss how the resource distribution profile of the population looks compared with earlier years. The profiles are not used to monitor exclusion of only certain groups; they can be tailored to all kinds of groups. They have also become an instrument in social negotiations, for example in wage settlements and collective claims for social benefits.

The indicators have all the same weaknesses that other indicators have. But brought together they give a fairly good picture of the landscape of social exclusion in some vital areas, and they add significantly to making the excluded visible. They tell us nothing about processes of exclusion, but they provide a good basis for generating hypotheses. The way I see it, such data are one of the several necessary tools to be developed if we are to proceed with a broad social understanding of processes of exclusion, and of where the cut-off points for society's tolerance of social exclusion can be drawn.

The same data tell us very little about social inclusion. It may be argued that there is no upper limit to social inclusion, and the more included and individual it is, the better. Politically, the upper limits can be established through different kinds of taxation. Empirically, people define their hierarchies and set the upper limits through negative sanctions and according to built-in images of right and proper behaviour. But the upper limits of a certain distribution is hardly the issue here. The concept of social inclusion used for the purpose of TSER is meant to include only the excluded. So first the excluded have to be identified. Then follows the question as to how much inclusion for the excluded is needed (before a certain result/state/desired place is obtained), and where the actual tolerance limits for inclusion go (similarly to the discussion of poverty lines). Who is to be the beneficiary of less exclusion/more inclusion, and who is to extend less exclusion/more inclusion (similarly to the classic discussion on social welfare), and through which mechanisms is it all to be done?

All these questions, and many more, need to be answered before we can start using the concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion as valuable tools in our understanding of poverty.

### ***Some reflections on social exclusion***

by Paul Streeten

#### ***Exclusion broadens the concept of deprivation***

The shortest shorthand definition of poverty eradication is income (jobs) plus social services plus participation, or development of the people, for the