

Social exclusion as a multidimensional process. Subcultural and formally assisted strategies of coping with and avoiding social exclusion (CASE)

EU – Framework Programme IV, Targeted Socio-economic Research
(aus dem 18-month-report)

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Scientific overview

The period of this report saw the conclusion of the interview-phase of the field work and the start of an analysis and interpretation of the data. Interviewers were debriefed and asked to write a final summary report on the experience and what they learned in it. A co-ordinating meeting and workshop on data interpretation was held in Bologna, February 3-6, 2000. The data-collection phase was concluded by reports on inquiries which were distributed as the 3rd internal report (deliverable # 4). The report on the communities in which we worked was completed a short time afterwards and comprised deliverable # 5. The outlines of further procedure laid down in the Bologna meeting were filled with detailed considerations in the following months in extensive e-mail exchanges. Sorting and beginning interpretation of data resulted in first lists of topics to be treated in analyses. First results of data analysis on a national level begin to become available.

The literature reports on the "State of Social Policy" from the individual countries plus their comparative analysis were published as a two-volume brochure „CASE Project Papers # 2/1 and 2/2" and can also be down-loaded from the project homepage.

Summary of the specific objectives for the relevant period

The main tasks for the third half-year period of the project were:

- * conclusion of field work: interviews and their documentation
- * consolidation of contacts in the communities studied
- * compilation and indexing of narratives of episodes of social exclusion
- * analysis of narratives in individual countries
- * development of a list of topics for individual and comparative analyses

Overview of the technical progress including survey of the work carried out during the specific period and its main results

*** *Literature reports for individual countries:***

*** *Comparative literature report:***

*** *Selection of research sites:***

Descriptions of the research sites selected were discussed during the Durham meeting in July and subsequently revised and expanded. Together they constitute a volume of 70 pages which was in its completed form submitted in October 99. They will be an important basis for more elaborate descriptions of the communities studied that can be given after the phase of field-work next year.

In general the areas chosen are disadvantaged parts of the cities, but nowhere the worst. Some have special characteristics like a pronounced conflict between traditional inhabitants and a „new“ part of the population, often foreigners and poorer people, or being a run-down place that is being re-developed or having a special problem-group. The bulk is disadvantaged in an unspectacular way. We will get material for comparing all kinds of communities and life-situations and gain experience with possible measures against social exclusion in very diverse surroundings and conditions.

*** *Development of methods and research instruments:***

Research instruments and methodology were developed in several stages, from first drafts produced in Vienna through adaptations drawn up in each city, trial interviews, the extensive discussions we had during the methods workshop in Durham, July 99, to the final versions derived from that after the conference and in more trial interviews.

We have to make sure we can, in the interpretation, identify the interest in telling this story to this person (the interviewer) and other persons (on other occasions when this story has been told before; to the „public“ behind the interviewer) - do they tell it as a „sad story“ of having been victimized (once or all their lives), as a story of adversity successfully mastered, as a story of having won in a conflict, etc. It is these „story formats“ or „working alliances“ offered in telling the stories that give us valid information on what

experiences with social exclusion really mean - and whether and how which resources will be utilized in difficult situations if they can be made available.

For purposes of documentation we developed a set of code sheets to be used in interviews:

Documentation of the inventory of possible stories

Documentation of each individual episode in detail in two ways:

retelling the narrative in a summary way

code-sheet for episodes

Documentation of information on the person, the situation, the way contact was made (code-sheet for person)

The code-sheets are, on the one hand, important instruments to describe the information that has to be gained about each episode and person in the interview. On the other hand they are no „substitute questionnaires“ and should by no means be misunderstood as such by the interviewers. There is a measure of independence between interview and coding its result in that the main result is the narrative of each episode and its summary retelling by the interviewer using the frame of relevance presented by the respondent. It is only after this essential step that the information gained is also coded in a formal way. The other danger is that the code-sheet influences the process of interviewing itself in an unintended way (beyond indicating the information that is needed). The interview is supposed to be narrative (not primarily biographical, but allowing some biography if relevant) and respondent-centered, and certainly not of the question-&-answer type. These ambiguities make very good and very well-trained interviewers mandatory.

*** *Recruitment and instruction of interviewers***

*** *Field work: interviews and their documentation***

We had hoped that it might be possible to do all interviews in the last months of 99. Only in one case (GB) did this work out. In all others we have up to two thirds of the interviews by the beginning of December and must do the rest in January. There is a realistic chance that this part of the field-work will be finished before the Bologna conference (beginning of February) in all cities.

As planned access to potential respondents was gained in different ways: referral by institutions, random walk, snowballing. The experience is that access via institutions in the area was more difficult than expected in many cases, whereas the random walk access proved easier than we had feared, although there are clear indications that this is different for different categories of respondents.

A first list of situations of social exclusion that were encountered in the interviews can be drawn up from summaries derived from interviewers' reports:

- unemployment,
- not in a situation to take up wage labour - typical for women who have to care for children or elderly/handicapped family members or are denied permission to work by husband,
- returning to work and trying to re-enter work,
- insecure, part time and badly paid work,
- discrimination and difficulties at work - that may even result in the social agent leaving work,
- situations of extreme pressure in professional work settings - that may even result in personal breakdown and leaving work,
- a continual existence on government 'training' schemes,
- early retirement (because of illness),
- collapse of small businesses for the self employed,
- not enough income for subsistence, heavy debts,
- lack of opportunities to get informal work and other informal means of subsistence,
- discrimination due to ethnic differences,
- discrimination due to being a member of a marginal group,
- ethnic and gender difference which prevent participation in mainstream culture, and a mainstream culture that doesn't understand the needs of ethnic minorities and the needs of women.
- a variety of 'disabilities',
- lack of education and training, and lack of access to education and training,
- lack of mastery of dominant language (and its many consequences),
- crime and violence,
- family tensions and break-up (may have special consequences for women - loss of family support),
- bad housing, not enough space, poor local environment,
- neighbourhood troubles,
- failure and mistakes of mainstream institutions such as schools and the health service, which have severe consequences for the life chances of individuals,
- failure of social security and social assistance,
- difficulties with legal claims,
- difficulties with authorities,
- lack of opportunities, exclusion from opportunities and barriers to opportunities,
- ill-health, and its consequent caring roles,
- restricted mobility (due to a number of causes)
- etc.

We can, from the same source, draw up a provisional list of resources mobilized and used in different situations of social exclusion:

- use of local voluntary agencies,
- use of some local authority or government agencies,
- use of agencies and advice centers which help with claims to social benefits,
- family, friends and cultural support networks,
- mobilization of any existing personal resources such as money, possessions, and personal support networks,
- religion, religious institutions,
- stealing and deceit,
- drugs and alcohol,
- a sustaining personal strength, which was often supported by an excluded group's cultural value system.
- withdrawal from public space, trying to live unobtrusively, even avoiding claims of social benefits (especially foreigners).

We can also make an attempt to order situations of social exclusion according to „level“ or „severity“:

- Severe exclusion, which means that a social agent is not just isolated from one or more of the commonly known social formal and informal institutions and patterns of association, but s/he exists largely in his/her own world. It is rare for these situations to extend over a long period of time, but in suicidal situations this is fairly common.
- A series of advanced situations of exclusion where social agents, through a combination of social and economic factors, are outside many mainstream institutional forms of inclusion, and they are faced with considerable barriers to becoming included in various institutions and patterns of association.
- A series of intermediate situations of exclusion in which social agents experience exclusion from some institutional forms and arrangements but they, nonetheless, are still involved in some mainstream institutional frameworks.
- A series of preliminary situations of exclusion that often involve minor disruptions to a social agent's ability to be able to participate in economic, social, political and cultural life.

There may be other ways of arranging the data, so this should be seen as a very preliminary attempt to order interview-experiences before a more thorough analysis has been possible. It is still valuable to collect these impressions gained in a live experience of communities, people and situations: they can be starting-points for further elaborations, modifications, also refutations - and inspirations for other researchers who may have had different experiences.

Final report/book:

The programme of the Stockholm CASE-meeting (September 2000) followed the planned structure of the final report. The proposed structure of the report stood the test.

Agreement was reached on responsible authors/teams for each chapter:

- Introduction: aim and argument of this report *Heinz Steinert, also touching questions of methods/procedure, based on an update of proposal)*
- a/ Capturing the multidimensionality of social exclusion *teamwork by Bridgette Wessels, Fabio Quassoli, Janine Jansen/Siep Miedema)*
- b/ Participation and its limits (Post-fordism and the emphasis on social exclusion) *Heinz Steinert*
- c/ Indignant presentation of social exclusion (moral claims) *Frankfurt (with contributions from Stockholm, Bologna ..)*
- d/e/ Normalizing presentation of social exclusion *Vienna (with contribution from Durham)*
- f/ Socialisation and individualisation of problems and of coping *Stockholm (with contributions from Groningen, in discussion also considered by Barcelona, Bologna, Vienna)*
- g/ Dis/integration of definition, resources and coping (as conditions of success/failure) *Bologna (with contribution by Leipzig)*
- h/ Community/associations/subculture as resource *Durham (with contributions made by Groningen, in discussion also considered by Barcelona, Vienna, Leipzig)*
- i/ Unusual/complex strategies of coping *Groningen (with special contributions by Barcelona, some from all)*

Material studies:

- Securing subsistence with and without employment *Henrik Tham*
- Excluded in Sweden *Anita Roenneling*
- Work, disqualification, education *Helga Cremer-Schäfer*
- Illness and disability: the body and its limitations *Bridgette Wessels*
- How to make ends meet in a situation of illegality (living without a permit) *Inge Karazman-Morawetz*
- Double difficulty: female and foreigner *Bridgette Wessels*
- Ab/using the family *Tomke Böhnisch*
- Housing *Fabio Quassoli*
- Neighborhood problems, discontent *Gerhard Hanak*
- Politics against social exclusion: state, market, community and the individual *Arno, discussing the empirical results and drawing conclusions in terms of political implications, supported by Christa, best knowing literature and site reports, contributions by Georg and Ian on European social policy discourse.*