

## Social Exclusion in Europe: Old Wine in New Bottles?

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*In this article it is first demonstrated how the social sciences have taken the term social exclusion on board, without jettisoning the terms poverty, deprivation and marginalization. Then the definitions of social exclusion and the policies to combat social exclusion, as they are formulated by the institutions of the European Union, are discussed. A number of different explanations of the differences and the relationship between poverty and social exclusion are also discussed with reference to recent political and social scientific discourses. European social science has been speculating as to why this name-change and change in the conceptualization of the disadvantaged segments of our populations has occurred, and a number of explanations have been given. A few illustrations of the incidence and distribution of poverty and social exclusion within the member states of the European Union are also given, in order to point out the persistence and increasing severity of processes and situations of deprivation in (Western) Europe. Finally, it is concluded that there exists a multitude of reasons for the promotion of the concept of social exclusion in the present situation of late modernity; and it is argued that social exclusion reflects new processes and situations in what, in early modernity, was called poverty.*

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the long-term or recurrently unemployed;  
those employed in precarious and unskilled jobs,  
especially older workers or those unprotected by labour regulations;  
the low paid and the poor;  
the landless;  
the unskilled, the illiterate, and school drop-outs;  
the mentally and physically handicapped and disabled;  
addicts;  
delinquents, prison inmates, and persons with criminal records;  
single parents;  
battered or sexually abused children, those who grew up in problem households;  
young people, those lacking work experience or qualifications;  
child workers;  
women;  
foreigners, refugees, immigrants;  
racial, religious, and ethnic minorities;

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the disenfranchised;  
beneficiaries of social assistance;  
those in need, but ineligible for social assistance;  
residents of rundown housing, disreputable neighbourhoods;  
those with consumption levels below subsistence (the hungry, the homeless, the Fourth World);  
those whose consumption, leisure or other practices (drug or alcohol abuse, delinquency, dress, speech, mannerism) are stigmatized or labelled as deviant;  
the downwardly mobile;  
the socially isolated without friends or family.  
(Studies on specific social categories in the research literature on social exclusion compiled by Silver (1994: 548-9))

## Introduction

As is apparent from the long list of social categories which have been researched by social scientists under the heading of social exclusion, it is by no means a one-dimensional concept. Hilary Silver (1994: 536) correctly remarks that "... exclusion appears to be a vague term loaded with numerous economic, social, political, and cultural connotations and dimensions." "The concept - if often conflated with the new poverty and inequality, discrimination and the underclass - is also expressed in such terms as superfluity, irrelevance, marginality, foreignness, alterity, closure, disaffiliation, dispossession, deprivation, and destitution. This means that exclusion must also be analyzed 'onomasiologically' defining the same concept with reference to more than one term" (Silver, 1994: 539). Nevertheless, it is becoming more and more common for the term to be used within both political and social scientific discourses.

On the other hand, poverty and social exclusion are, by no means, new phenomena in Europe. The fact that some people have a hard time making ends meet because they lack sufficient resources has always been with us. Nevertheless, the post World War Two experiences of rapid economic growth, full employment and a dramatic expansion of the welfare systems carried with them a promise of the eradication of poverty, if not of social inequality. At the mid 1970s it could be said that in Northern Europe poverty had been reduced to a residual phenomenon, and it was expected only to be a question of time before the Southern part of Europe would follow suit in this process of eradicating poverty as a widespread and constant condition.

Unfortunately, this optimistic prospect has not come true. Mass unemployment and increasing inequality have been the course of development in Europe over the last two decades; a situation which has been magnified by the breakdown of the state socialist economies in Eastern Europe, and the increased competition on the world market from East Asian and American economies.

Simultaneously, we have witnessed a remarkable shift away from the term poverty and towards the concept of social exclusion when situations and processes of deprivation have been discussed in Europe in recent years: "Thus, towards the end of the 1980s a conceptual shift occurred from poverty to social exclu-

sion..." (Bhala & Lapeyre, 1995: 2). This paper tries to analyze whether we are dealing with a new phenomenon or a new appearance.

First, it is demonstrated how the social sciences - increasingly - have taken the term social exclusion on board, without jettisoning the terms of poverty, deprivation and marginalization. Then the definitions of social exclusion and the policies to combat social exclusion as they are formulated by the institutions of the European Union are discussed. A number of different explanations of the differences and the relationship between poverty and social exclusion are thereafter discussed with reference to recent political and social scientific discourses. European social science has been speculating as to why this name-change and change in the conceptualization of the disadvantaged segments of our populations has occurred, and a number of explanations have been given. One is the political sensitivity of poverty. In some countries poverty must be eradicated since a lot of resources are spent on welfare systems. If poverty is identified it is as a critique of the existing policy measures. Social exclusion, on the other hand, may be identified; and though it is most unfortunate, it can be dealt with. Another explanation emphasizes a semantic differentiation of the same phenomenon and identifies social exclusion as a francophone concept with roots in continental European social science, while poverty is the Anglo-American concept for essentially the same processes and situations. Still others see poverty as a condition or a situation, while social exclusion emphasizes the processes; i.e. it is a more dynamic concept. According to this view poverty is strongly related to (long-term) unemployment; and it has to do with a lack of basic economic resources following on from the lack of paid employment. On the other hand, social exclusion is the marginalization process affiliated with the denial of access to societal institutions of integration.

Other explanations see social exclusion as the end result of extreme poverty; the socially excluded are the "down and out" segments of our (urban) population. The final explanation we have traced locates the two concepts in different historical times: poverty is a modern phenomenon related to (early) industrialization, while social exclusion is its postmodern or postindustrial equivalent. Here, both poverty and social exclusion must be understood with reference to their opposites: wealth and integration. Poverty is an early modern condition for the majority of people (the working class) brought on to them because of the exploitation by the rich (the bourgeoisie). Social exclusion is a postmodern condition for a minority of people who are marginalized from mainstream middle mass society.<sup>1</sup> This last explanation is consistent with the new political emphasis on the development of a so-called *underclass*. A few illustrations of the incidence and distribution of poverty and social exclusion within the 15 member states of the European Union are given in order to point to the persistence and increasing severity of processes and situations of deprivation in (Western) Europe. Finally, it is concluded that there exists a multitude of reasons for the promotion of the concept of social exclusion in the present situation of late modernity, and it is argued that social exclusion reflects new processes and situations of what, in early modernity, was called poverty.

The aim of this paper is, however, not only to discuss the various meanings of social exclusion, but also to try and explain its increased 'popularity' among social scientists and politicians.

## Recent Changes in Social Scientific Emphasis: An Overview

In table 1 below, the development in entries in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) concerning the terms social exclusion, poverty, deprivation, marginalization and underclass is given for the last ten years. From 1986 to 1993, there appeared an average of 2.6 articles on social exclusion in the Index. During 1994, 36 articles were published on social exclusion; and during the first seven months of 1995 another nine papers appeared under the heading of social exclusion. This is an average of 25 entries for the last two years, a tenfold increase. In relation to the approximately 500 papers published under the heading of poverty each year, social exclusion is still a minor research area; but although many more papers have been published concerning poverty over the last couple of years, the increase is only about twofold. Hence, interest in social exclusion has increased much more, which also holds true when we compare the development of publications concerning marginalization and deprivation.

*Table 1. Number of entries in the Social Sciences Citation Index 1986 - 1995.*

Year	Social Exclusion	Poverty	Deprivation	Marginalization	Underclass
1986	2	209*	51*	9	8
1987	0	209*	51*	1	17
1988	1	209*	51*	1	28
1989	4	209*	51*	3	36
1990	6	209*	51*	3	19
1991	2	237	57	4	21
1992	5	256	78	7	22
1993	4	290	54	7	42
1994	36	469	224	25	62
1995**	15	577	231	34	74

Source: Social Sciences Citation Index on CD-ROM 1986-1995 (July).

\* Average yearly entries 1986 - 1990.

\*\* Extrapolated on the basis of the first seven months of this year.

Of course, not all the entries under the heading of social exclusion are what we would expect to find. For instance, one of the two articles from 1986 is entitled: "Social rejection, Exclusion, and Shunning Among the Gombe Chimpanzees"! Though undoubtedly a very serious problem for these monkeys, it does not indicate an increased usage of social exclusion within social science. Likewise, it is not obvious that an article from 1994 entitled "About the Good Uses of Cow-Dung and Women in Northern India" reflects a new interest in social exclusion, not to mention the fact that the paralleling of women and cow-dung could be considered offensive. Actually, a number of papers on women do not, necessarily, correspond

to our everyday common-sense understanding of social exclusion, such as "Indirect modes of Aggression Among Women of Buenos Aires, Argentina," also from 1994; or an article, from that same year, which tells us that "Hostile behavior During Marital Conflict Alters Pituitary and Adrenalin Hormones." So, we should interpret the scoring within the SSCI with caution. Nevertheless, it is unquestionable that, generally, we can identify increased publication activity concerning matters of social exclusion, poverty, deprivation, marginalization and the underclass during the last ten years, and that this is especially true for the term social exclusion.

## Social Exclusion in the Context of the European Union

The promotion in Europe of the term social exclusion must be accredited to the Commission of the European Communities (now Union). Because of French dominance of the sections of Directorate General V responsible for social policy, social exclusion has become a *common part of Commission vocabulary*.

This does not, however, change the fact that there exists quite a lot of confusion about the conceptualization, definition and operationalization of poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore, the concept of poverty has to some extent been substituted by the concept of social exclusion. It has, rightly, been argued that poverty and social exclusion are being used interchangeably within the European Union: "The European Union often uses the concepts of poverty and exclusion interchangeably implying that the two concepts are the same" (Bhala & Lapeyre, 1995: 6). It is, thus, indicated that what was once called poverty is now being called social exclusion, or that some people use the one concept while others use the other, to discuss the same phenomenon. As a starting point we shall, very briefly, clarify a few definitions as they have been presented by the European Communities.

Both within the academic community and within the European Communities there has been some consensus about the definition of poverty during the last decade. Despite the fact that no official definition exists within the European Communities, we can come close with the formulations given below. In the *Council Decision* of 19 December 1984, we find the following phrase:

The poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of persons, where resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member States in which they live. (Quoted from Ramprakash, 1994).

This definition is parallel to the one given by British poverty researcher Peter Townsend in his famous study of *Poverty in United Kingdom* (1979). The two important elements of the definition are the lack of various kinds of resources, on the one hand, and the "normal" or the generally acceptable way of life on the other (i.e. poverty is a negative deviation from a societal norm caused by insufficient resources). The problems, however, arise when this definition is to be operationalized for the purpose of estimating the magnitude and incidence of poverty in any given population.

Towards the end of the 1980s, the European Communities decided to initiate a *Medium Term Action Programme to Foster the Economic and Social Integration*

of the *Least Privileged Groups*, which in every day parlance became known as the *Poverty 3 Programme*. (Commission, 1989a). This was the third action programme initiated by the Commission in the fight against poverty. But the term poor had been substituted by the term the *least privileged*, and this was also the point in time when the EC institutions began to talk about social exclusion. In connection with the Poverty 3 Programme, an *Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion* was established (Room, 1990), and from now on the term *social exclusion* is part of the official language of the European Communities. The same year a *Council resolution* of 29 September 1989 about combating social exclusion was accepted. Here we find the first definition of the phenomenon. It is

emphasized that social exclusion is not simply a matter of inadequate (resources), and that combating exclusion also involves access by individuals and families to decent living conditions by means of measures for social integration and integration into the labour market;

accordingly request the Member States to implement or promote measures to enable everyone to have access to:

- education, by acquiring proficiency in basic skills,
- training,
- employment,
- housing,
- community services,
- medical care.

(Quoted in Robbins, 1993.)

Based on these formulations the Observatory's first coordinator, Graham Room (1990), coined the following definition of social exclusion:

(Individuals)... suffer social exclusion where a) they suffer generalized disadvantage in terms of education, training, employment, housing, financial resources, etc. b) their chances of gaining access to the major social institutions which distribute these life chances are substantially less than those of the rest of the population; c) these disadvantages persist over time.

Compared to the definition of poverty given five years earlier, one can say that the common resources have been made more explicit with examples of social and cultural institutions like education, health care etc.; and mechanisms barring people from the institutions which deliver these resources are emphasized. Finally, a certain degree of persistence in the situation is expected. Yet from these definitions social exclusion does not seem to encompass a qualitatively different dynamic or situation than poverty.

It is, in other words, not very clear whether we are dealing with two different phenomena, and if we are, what distinguishes them. But we can make it clear how the European Commission interprets the differences by quoting a *Communication from the Commission* of 23 December 1992:

The concept (of social exclusion) is a dynamic one... referring both to processes and consequent situations... More clearly than the concept of poverty, understood far too often as referring exclusively to income, it also states the multidimensional nature of mechanisms whereby individuals and groups are excluded from taking part in the social exchange, from the component practices of rights of social integration and of identity... More generally, by highlighting the risks of cracks appearing in the social fabric, it suggests something

more than social inequality and carries with it the risk of a fragmented society. (Commission, 1992.)

In line with these formulations the former President of the Commission, Jacques Delors (1993), has stated that: "... we will in future continue to distinguish between poverty and social exclusion", and, further, "... although exclusion includes poverty, poverty does not cover exclusion."

In those Member States where the concept of social exclusion has been implemented (e.g. in Denmark), it has generally been taken to mean the poorest of the poor, a sub-set of poverty; thus the magnitude of social exclusion is estimated to be only a fraction of the number of poor people. On the contrary, as made very explicit by Jacques Delors, social exclusion is defined much more broadly than poverty in Commission parlance. Here, poverty is a sub-set of social exclusion.

It must be concluded that the concept of social exclusion is a new and contested one-within the European Union, too. With respect to this paper, the problem is hence that the processes and situations discussed are not consequently and consistently referring to social exclusion as defined in the European Union documents, and, furthermore, in most countries of the Union the concept of social exclusion is, if used at all, a very new and loosely-defined concept. Finally, there are hardly any quantitative estimates of the magnitude and incidence of social exclusion in Europe. So when Jacques Delors made reference to the 55 million Europeans claimed to be affected by social exclusion, the figure presented the amount of people whose income was less than 50 per cent of the national average, i.e. the income poor (Delors, 1993).

## Various Explanations for the Shift from Poverty to Social Exclusion

As indicated above, poverty and social exclusion are used interchangeably within the EU; but we also saw that there is a tendency to substitute poverty with social exclusion. A number of possible explanations are given in the following.

### *1st explanation: the political sensitivity of poverty*

In some EU Member States poverty had become 'politically incorrect', and was therefore substituted by social exclusion. Such a claim is, of course, hard to prove; it only circulates among various EU experts, diplomats, and civil servants as part of their collective memory. There are no official documents stating this reason for the shift in vocabulary. Yet it is hinted at in Graham Room's paper for an EU conference on transnational research studies on social exclusion held in London in 1994. There he wrote: "How far these shifts (from poverty to social exclusion, p.a.) reflected any more than the hostility of some governments to the language of poverty, and the enthusiasm of others to use the language of social exclusion is a matter for debate" (Room, 1994: 6).

To a society boasting of being a 'welfare state', it is an embarrassment to be confronted with the fact that a substantial part of the population is living in poverty. The existence of poverty indicates the failure of welfare arrangements. By redefining the phenomenon as social exclusion, it can be understood as a perhaps serious, but nevertheless individual, problem, attributable to personal dispositions or failures rather than to societal processes and dynamics.

*2nd explanation: a semantic differentiation of the same phenomenon*

The very simplistic understanding of the conceptual changes presented above is being challenged or supplemented by a much more substantial explanation which refers to two different academic traditions. A number of writers inform us that social exclusion is a concept originally phrased by French intellectuals, and that it is strongly related to French social policy parlance. Thus Hilary Silver (1994: 531-2) "... traces the evolution of the term 'exclusion' over time, notably, but not exclusively in France;" and she states that "The coining of the term is generally attributed to René Lenoir (1974), who was then Secretary of State for Social Action in the (Gaullist) Chirac Government." Furthermore, she writes:

Whereas poverty and inequality have become accepted concepts in social science, it is more accurate to consider the term 'exclusion' as a 'keyword' in Raymond Williams' sense, in French Republican discourse. It not only originated in France, but is deeply anchored in a particular interpretation of French revolutionary history and republican thought. From this perspective, 'exclusion' is conceived not simply as an economic or political phenomenon, but as a deficiency of 'solidarity', a break in the social fabric... The concept of 'poverty' which originated in the United Kingdom... (Silver, 1994: 537).

Graham Room (1994; 1995) also argues along this line when he talks about "the very different theoretical paradigms which these two traditions for analyzing poverty and social exclusion appear to involve":

Research into poverty in its modern scientific form is primarily an Anglo-Saxon - more specifically a British - product of the 19th century. It is closely associated with the liberal vision of society... In contrast, notions of social exclusion are part of a continental tradition of social analysis... Social exclusion is the process of becoming detached from the moral order... (and) it is the Conservative vision of society... that inspires the continental concern with social exclusion (Room, 1995: 3-4).

For Room, poverty is primarily concerned with issues of distribution in the form of lack of disposable resources for households or individuals. On the contrary, social exclusion is about relational issues, i.e. inadequate social participation, lack of integration and lack of power.

It is clear that social exclusion is French and that poverty is Anglo-Saxon; but it is not so clear that they necessarily mean different things. The very influential work of Peter Townsend (1979) mentioned earlier talks about *deprivation* when analyzing poverty in the United Kingdom, and does so very much in the same vein as French social science. Likewise, when René Lenoir, in the mid 1970s, estimated that about ten per cent of the French population were socially excluded, and when he mentioned the various categories to be included under this heading, it was not distinguishable from what would elsewhere have been termed poverty (Lenoir cited in Silver, 1994).

*3rd explanation: poverty is a condition; social exclusion is a process*

Poverty is strongly related to (long-term) unemployment. It has to do with a lack of economic, social and cultural resources. On the other hand, social exclusion is the marginalization process affiliated with the denial of access to societal institutions of integration. This explanation was found to exist within a number of the projects under the EU Poverty 3 Programme, as it has been summed up by da

Costa et al. (1994). "The projects which addressed directly the distinction between *poverty* and *social exclusion* understand the latter basically as a *process* and poverty as an *outcome*. This approach may attach to poverty a static character..." (da Costa, 1995: 5).

This is also the distinction made by Graham Room, as we saw above, which is unsurprising given that Room was responsible for matters of research under the Poverty 3 Programme during its first couple of years, as a member of the so-called Central Unit running the programme. We must expect the people involved in evaluating and developing this programme to seek distinctions from prior terminology. Yet the fact that the logo for the programme clearly spelled *Poverty 3* indicates the difficulties in separating the two concepts.

*4th explanation: social exclusion is the end result of extreme poverty*

The socially excluded are the 'down and out' segments of our (urban) population. This explanation is often referred to by French sociologist Robert Castel. He defines social exclusion as follows: "Social exclusion, including the modern form we see, is thus a penalty which expresses a complete detachment from the productive order and total socio-affective isolation" (Castel, 1990: 3). It is admittedly very French in its formulation, but clearly defines a situation, an outcome. Here, the socially excluded are the worst off, a sub-set of the poverty segment in the population.

This is also one of a number of explanations mentioned by Alfredo Bruto da Costa (1995: 3) and others, and often with reference to the work of Robert Castel (1990). In da Costa's interpretation

... problems of poverty and exclusion may be seen as a *process* that involves various stages, that go from de-integration from *work relations* to de-integration from *family ties* and *social relationships*. Castel... refer(s) to this process as '*social marginalization*' and reserve the term '*social exclusion*' to its extreme phase. *Poverty* would be more closely related to a state of deprivation and to some form of detachment from work relations, whereas *social exclusion* would refer to a deeper (extreme) stage of the process of marginalization, implying also the weakening or rupture of family ties and social relationships (as exemplified by the homeless, the tramps, etc.) (da Costa, 1995: 3; emphasis in original).

This kind of definition of the socially excluded is also the common one used within Danish social policy and social science. In 1992, Torben Fridberg at the National Institute of Social Research published a study entitled *The Socially Excluded (De socialt udstødte)*. Here, the socially excluded are defined as "those who more than temporarily are both unable to provide for themselves in ways acceptable to society or the individual, and who are unable to take care of themselves in ways acceptable to society or the individual." (Fridberg, 1992: 10; translation p.a.). The group is comprised of individuals labelled as

- street children,
- substance users (e.g. drug abusers),
- criminals,
- people living in shelters,
- mentally ill,
- people in personal crisis and victims of violence,

- groups among the early retired,
- groups among the long-term social assistance recipients,
- groups among refugees and immigrants. (Fridberg, 1992: 9).

They are characterized not only by a marginal relationship to the labour market, but also by a marginal or non-existent integration into society in general. This is also the case in a report evaluating the projects concerned with excluded and vulnerable people under the so-called SUM programme (a social policy development programme) (Jeppesen, Boolsen and Nielsen, 1992). Here, the excluded are defined as

- the homeless who are in contact with shelters etc.,
- drug and alcohol abusers,
- mentally ill. (For more about Denmark see Abrahamson, 1994).

The Danish case is not exceptional in the European context; rather this is the common way that polity understands contemporary social exclusion.

*5th explanation: poverty is a modern phenomenon; social exclusion is its postmodern equivalent*

Both poverty and social exclusion must be understood with reference to their opposites: wealth and integration. Poverty is an early modern condition for the majority of people (the working class) brought upon them because of the exploitation by the rich (the bourgeoisie). Social exclusion is a postmodern condition for a minority of people who are marginalized from mainstream middle mass society.

When there is a change in the ways both social science and political systems approach misery and disadvantage, at least one school of thought would look for changes in the social structure for an explanation. Perhaps because of its formal affiliation with state socialism, Marxist-inspired social science has not been so very popular lately. Nevertheless, a Marxist-inspired analysis seems to be able to deliver the most promising explanation of the emergence of the emphasis on the concept of social exclusion in relation to contemporary processes and situations of disadvantage and misery.

With the establishment of capitalist relations of production in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, deprivation among the working classes became the *norm*. Compared to the lives of the bourgeoisie, working-class families were deprived of even the most essential needs, such as sanitary installations, adequate schooling, health care, social security, etc., and they were deprived of these means exactly because of the class relationship. The bourgeoisie was able to live a life of abundance and affluence because it was able to exploit the working classes; the rich were rich because the poor were poor. Poverty was, correctly, viewed as an extreme form of inequality, but it was not a problem that only applied to a minority of the population. On the contrary, poverty was the 'normal' way of life for working people. Of course, the lifestyle of the working classes excluded them from the life of the ruling classes, but the poor were not excluded from 'mainstream' society; they *were* mainstream society. Therefore, policies to combat poverty were focused on the redistribution of material resources between the opposing classes and not, generally<sup>2</sup>, focused on integrating the poor into the lifestyles of the bourgeoisie, the minority population.

In early modernity, the rich and the poor were interdependently related - we cannot understand the one without the other (Procacci, 1993; de Swaan, 1988).

My thesis is that this is no longer the case. I shall not venture into the debate over whether we are still living in a society guided by modern forms of rationality, or whether we are experiencing a condition of postmodernity, a radically different social order (for a balanced and sober discussion, see Harvey, 1989). On the other hand, we cannot remain ignorant to the profound changes in the social structure that modern society has undergone in Europe during the course of this century. Apart from the very contested term of postmodernity, sociology has labelled the changes the coming of post-industrial society, the programmed society, the service society, the information society, post-Fordist society, etc. Despite internal differences, these various approaches agree that manufacturing of material products by the assembly line in huge factories is not anymore, if it ever was, the most common way that worker and capital meet. Most jobs are to be found outside manufacture, in different kinds of service industries, and capital is invested more and more in industries of communication. The capital market is completely internationalized, and the most common way of life is similar in all contemporary 'highly developed' societies all over the globe. It is based on wage work within some service sector or another, bringing in a household income sufficient for maintaining home ownership, high levels of education, social security, health care, and a leisure life in the form of vacations and bought-in services resembling what the bourgeoisie had at the turn of the century.

This middle mass society has become the new societal norm, which is not to say that nobody is denied such a 'middle class' way of life. As the illustrations given in the next section of this paper show, a considerable fraction of European Union populations still experiences lack of material resources in relation to the aspirations set by the middle mass norms. But they are a minority. 'Normal' people do not fall poor thanks to the generalization of wage work and the systems developed under the heading of the welfare state. Yet some people do not have the ability, or the inclination, to join in this normal middle mass society; they become socially excluded. If social exclusion means something other than poverty, it refers to those who are left outside mainstream society, who are living a life radically different to 'normal' ways, those who are disconnected from the prevailing social order; they are disintegrated. The poor were traditionally *not* disintegrated; they were living the lives of most people. Nowadays, the socially excluded may, at best, form local 'cultures of disadvantage'; they are creating the fragmented society, as the Commission has it, and as such they are potentially threatening the prevailing social order. In that sense, today's socially excluded resemble yesterday's poor. That is why our institutions of power maintain that they should be integrated.

## Empirical Illustration of the Extent and Distribution of Disadvantage in Europe

Not so much because of its elaborateness or comprehensiveness but rather because of its availability, it has become customary to use household income or expenditure as a proxy for resources, and then to define a level of income/expenditure to be insufficient, e.g. 40, 50 or 60 per cent of the average or median national income. The poor, then, are those households with less than, say, half the average

national income or expenditure. This has been termed an objective definition of poverty, and has been used as an estimate for the extent of social exclusion as well, e.g. when the *Observatory* indicates the magnitude and structure of disadvantage (Robbins, 1994).

Needless to say, different rates of poverty are reached whether one uses income or expenditure, whether one uses households or persons, and, of course, whether one uses a 40, a 50 or a 60 per cent cut-off line. As an example, poverty in the Netherlands in 1988, measured as persons with less than 40 per cent of the average expenditure, was 1.5 per cent, while 50 per cent gave 4.8 per cent, and 60 per cent gave 11.4 per cent of the people to live in poverty. If, as an other example, we compare the poverty rates calculated with respect to households and persons, we see that 17.4 per cent of all Irish households had an expenditure below the average in 1985, while the same was true for 19.5 per cent of Irish people. Likewise, measured as less than 50 per cent of average expenditure, it indicates that 9.2 per cent of people in Luxembourg lived in poverty in 1987, while measured as those with less than half the average income, it only gave a poverty rate of 5.1 per cent. In Finland the opposite results were reached. Here the 50 per cent income poverty gave 2.5 per cent, while the expenditure poverty gave 5.0 per cent (Eurostat, 1990; Ramprakash, 1994; Ritakallio, 1994).

A more elaborate way to try and estimate lack of sufficient resources among households has been developed as the so-called consensual or subjective poverty definition. Here, a representative sample of the population is being asked what they consider to be the very lowest net monthly income that the household would need in order to just make ends meet. This is an indirect way of reaching a resource threshold. Alternatively, people are first asked from a long list of items to identify what they consider to be necessary, which people should be able to afford and not have to do without. Second, they are asked which items they actually have. By doing this, a deprivation index is constructed. This has been termed the direct consensual poverty definition. Here, the poverty line will be, normatively, set at a certain degree of deprivation; e.g. households lacking adequate nutrition, housing, health care etc. An exercise has been done by Eurostat to develop a subjective or consensual poverty definition, and the results are that this method yields higher values than the objective methods. E.g. the objective measure of 50 per cent average expenditure for households in Spain gives us 17.5 per cent, while the subjective calculation gives 21.2 percent (Ramprakash, 1994).

All this illustrates that *the definition is crucial to the results*. Furthermore, there are enormous problems of data comparability and quality, which also make it imperative to be very cautious when poverty rates are interpreted. Since the only available data for all the European Union countries are the ones based on average expenditure, and *only* for that reason, these are the estimates given in the Table 2.

Table 2. Poverty rates measured as households with <50 per cent average national expenditure 1980 - 1989.

	1980	1985	1989
Belgium	6.3	5.2	7.5
Denmark	8.0	8.0	4*
Germany	10.3	9.2	10.8
Greece	20.5	17.4	20.8
Spain	20.3	17.4	17.5
France	18.0	14.8	14.9
Ireland	18.5	17.4	16.1
Italy	12.0	14.7	22.0
Netherlands	6.9	7.9	6.2
Portugal	31.4	31.7	26.5
United Kingdom	14.1	18.9	17.0
Luxembourg	-	-	9.2
Finland**	6.0	6.3	5.0
Sweden***	5.0	7.0	9.0
Austria	-	18.1	13.1

Sources: Eurostat (1990). Inequality and poverty in Europe (1980 - 1985). Luxembourg: Statistical Office of the European Communities. Rapid Reports Population and social conditions No. 7.; Ramprakash, D (1994). "Poverty in the countries of the European Union: A synthesis of Eurostat's statistical research on poverty." *Journal of European Social Policy*, vol. 4, no. 2:117-128; European Commission (1994). *Employment in Europe 1994*. Directorate General V. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.; Ritakallio, V-M (1994). *Köyhyys suomessa 1981 - 1990. Tutkimus tulonsiirtojen vaikutuksista (Poverty in Finland 1981 - 1990: A study of effects of income transfers)*. Helsinki: STAKES: Tutkimuksia 39; Gustafsson, B (1994). "Assessing poverty: Some reflections on the literature." Paper. Gothenburg: Department of Social Work, University of Göteborg.; Lutz, H., Wagner, M., Wolf, W. (1993). *Von Ausgrenzung bedroht: Struktur und Umfang der materiellen Armutsgefährdungen österreichischen Wohlfahrtsstaat der achziger Jahre*. Vienna: Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales.

\* These figures are derived from another study commissioned by Eurostat, applying the same methodology. The Danish figure may be underestimated due to data problems.

\*\* Yet another source; but same methodology using persons as unit. Years are 1981, 1985 and 1990.

\*\*\* These figures are not directly comparable since they measure persons with <50 % income.

In total around 15 per cent, or one in seven, of all households in the European Union can be said to be poor, measured as those with less than half the average national expenditure. This is equivalent to 55 million. The smaller countries of Northern Europe, the Nordic countries and Benelux countries have the lowest rates of poverty in Europe. Here, about 5 to 9 per cent of the population were found to be living in poverty at the end of the 1980s. The German poverty rates are slightly higher at a level of 9 to 12 per cent. In the United Kingdom, Ireland, France and Spain poverty rates were around and slightly above the EU average of 15 to 17 per cent. In Greece, Italy and Portugal between 21 to 27 per cent of the populations lived in poverty around 1989.

The development during the 1980s has been ambiguous. If we are to trust the data, poverty has decreased in Spain, France, Ireland, Portugal, Austria, the Netherlands and in Finland, while it has been increasing in Sweden, the United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium and Germany. The dispersion of poverty among the member states has been reduced during the last decade, since the tendency, very crudely, has been a decrease for the countries with the highest rates of poverty, and an increase for many of the countries with the lower rates. We do not have more recent calculations of comparable poverty rates; but, unfortunately, the national data indicate, at best, a stable or, more often, a likely increase in poverty incidence during the first half of the 1990s (Abrahamson & Hansen, 1995).

When asked whether they are having problems making ends meet, even more Europeans end up as poor by such a subjective definition; close to 20 per cent believes this to be the case (Ramprakash, 1994). On the other hand, far fewer people are considered to be socially excluded from their communities, as this concept is understood in most of the member states; maybe a factor of five less than those suffering from insufficient or few resources. So perhaps only three per cent of all Europeans are completely shut out from society, while perhaps up to 20 per cent are having problems making ends meet (See also Ferrera, 1993).

Another recently published survey conducted in 1993 looks specifically at poverty and social exclusion (European Commission, 1995). When asked directly, very few people consider themselves to be "definitively" excluded from society, a total across the EU of only 0.8 per cent, with a variance from 0.1 in Denmark to 1.5 in Greece; yet 12.1 per cent consider themselves to be "excluded from society to some extent", varying from 3.5 in Denmark to 27.3 per cent in East Germany. These values are, to a large extent, due to a methodological problem of systematic under-representation of poorer and socially-excluded people from the samples. So we must expect the real figures to be higher. The respondents were also asked whether "in their immediate entourage (families and friends) there are certain individuals who are today facing a situation of poverty." The answers are given in the Table 3.

*Table 3. Individuals expected to be facing poverty, 1993 in per cent.*

Belgium	16.5
Denmark	5.9
Germany (West)	11.9
Germany (East)	13.6
Greece	36.2
Spain	14.4
France	26.6
Ireland	20.0
Italy	16.9
Luxembourg	11.5
Netherlands	7.8
Portugal	26.8
United Kingdom	16.9
EC 12	17.4

Source: European Commission (1995). Eurobarometer Survey: The perception of poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Brussels: DG V.

To a large extent the perceived incidence of poverty follows the measured degree of resource poverty, with the exception of the very high figures for Greece (more than one in three) and the relatively modest rate of Spain, beneath the EC average.

The survey follows a similar survey conducted in 1989, thus making it possible to compare some issues over time (Commission, 1989b). The respondents were asked whether they perceive that their society is being polarized, i.e. whether "the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer". Seventy per cent of EU citizens believed this to be the case in 1989, while 80 per cent thought so in 1993. Hence the survey confirms the impression from the national reporting of poverty, that it is on the increase during the 1990s in Europe.

## Conclusion

Judged by the quantitative increase in scientific concern about issues of poverty, and especially with social exclusion, we must gather that it is an increasing problem, however defined and measured. From reading through the titles of papers published under the two headings of poverty and social exclusion in the Social Sciences Citation Index, it is, furthermore, the impression that poverty is more about structural, material and 'objective' phenomena, while social exclusion is more about individual, subjective and psychological phenomena.

Clearly, social exclusion was brought on to the European policy agenda by the Commission of the European Communities and the Council from the end of the 1980s via their resolutions, communications, recommendations, green and white papers, action programmes, etc. The EU formally distinguishes social exclusion from poverty by relating the former more closely to the denial of social rights and by defining social exclusion in broader cultural terms in contrast to the understanding of poverty as insufficient income. In reality, however, the use of social exclusion and poverty is used interchangeably in EU circles.

The brief examination of various explanations of the differences between social exclusion and poverty and of why the former has gained currency against the latter revealed that social exclusion is less controversial (i.e. more politically correct) than poverty; that social exclusion is French and originates in a Republican way of thinking, while poverty is English and stems from a Liberal tradition; that social exclusion is often associated with a process of marginalization from society, while poverty often describes an outcome, a situation of too few resources; that social exclusion to many governments and people of Europe indicates the worst off, the down and out, the most disadvantaged part of the population. Finally, it is suggested that, to the extent that social exclusion is to mean something different than poverty, it is a reflection of the changes in social structure toward post-Fordism, postmodernism, post-industrial society, service or information society, or whatever name sociology finds appropriate. Social exclusion is the postmodern equivalent to early modern poverty; and it can be conceptualized in a different way.

Estimates of rates of poverty and social exclusion within the European Union show a considerable dispersion, with the highest incidence in the West and the South. Furthermore, survey data suggest that hardly anyone considers themselves to be socially excluded, and very few people think that such a phenomenon is present.

It can, hence, be established that social exclusion, perhaps, is a more adequate concept than poverty when discussing processes of marginalization in developed post-industrial societies. At the same time, however, in the everyday life of political and social scientific discourse, social exclusion and poverty, very often, refer to the same processes and situations. So, in 'reality', social exclusion is very much a case of old wine in new bottles.

## *Notes*

1. The term 'middle mass' is used to indicate that the included majority of the late or post-modern society consists of more classes, namely: the vast majority of the working class (notably the salaried workers), large parts of the petty bourgeoisie and some parts of the bourgeoisie.
2. In general, because charity organizations and so-called friendly societies were trying to teach members of the working classes to be 'gentlemen', to refrain from excessive drinking, maintain high hygienic standards etc. It is probably not a coincidence that traditional charitable organizations are currently being mobilized in the fight against social exclusion. Now the time is ripe for trying to change the behaviour of the disadvantaged in order to try and integrate them into the general societal norms.

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