

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This **IDS Bulletin** is an oddity: a publication by an institute specialising in *developing* countries, which consists almost entirely of papers about *developed* countries. There is a justification, however. It lies in the rapid growth in writing about a new concept, 'social exclusion'. Despite some pioneering work by the International Institute of Labour Studies on social exclusion in the South<sup>2</sup>, most writing on social exclusion has been in and about the North, originally in France, but now more widely<sup>3</sup>. The new writing represents new thinking on a new problem, namely the rapid growth of poverty in rich countries. Poverty has been driven rapidly up the policy and research agendas of the European welfare states, of the USA, and also of Eastern Europe's transitional countries. Increasingly, it is discussed in the vocabulary of social exclusion.

Our purpose is to draw attention to the new debate; and beyond that to address two sets of questions:

- First, how does the new thinking on social exclusion relate to the large body of work on poverty and poverty reduction? Is 'social exclusion' merely a re-labelling of poverty? Is it an explanation of poverty? Or does it offer something entirely new?
- Second, does the new debate in the North offer opportunities for dialogue between North and

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<sup>1</sup> The articles in this **Bulletin** were first presented as papers at a workshop on 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in North and South', jointly sponsored by IDS and the Poverty Research Unit at the University of Sussex, and held at IDS on 28–29 April 1997. The workshop was supported financially by the International Institute for Labour Studies and by the British Overseas Development Administration (now Department for International Development). A report on the workshop has been published as O'Brien et al. (1997).

<sup>2</sup> This is briefly discussed in de Haan's contribution; for an overview of the work of IILS, see Gore and Figueiredo, (eds) (1997), and IILS (1996).

<sup>3</sup> Cannan provided an overview on social exclusion and French social integration policies in the April 1997 **IDS Bulletin** (Cannan 1997); recent work on Britain includes Walker and Walker (eds) (1997), London Research Centre (1996), and Jordan (1996). Research on social exclusion has been summarised in the annotated bibliography prepared for our project (O'Brien and de Haan 1997).

# Poverty and Social Exclusion in North and South

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IDS Bulletin Vol 29 No 1 1998

South? Does the debate on social exclusion in the North offer new lessons for the South? Conversely, are there insights from the South that will enrich debate in the North?

In brief, our answers to these questions are that the concept of social exclusion does offer something new to those of us who work on developing countries, particularly in its focus on the institutional processes which lead to deprivation; and also that the new debate in the North will make it both easier and more necessary for colleagues working on either side of the geographical divide to share findings and collaborate. There are qualifications to these conclusions, but in general we are optimistic about the potential.

## 2 What is 'Social Exclusion'?

We obviously need to start with the term 'social exclusion'. De Haan (in this volume) provides us with a guide to the genealogy of the concept, and to the bewildering diversity of ways in which it is currently used. One definition is that social exclusion is

the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live (European Foundation 1995: 4).

This definition focuses on the process of social exclusion. Others lay greater emphasis on multiple deprivation as a defining feature of social exclusion: low income, an insecure job, poor housing, family stress, and social alienation (Paugam 1995). In either case, social exclusion may take the form of, or result in, an income markedly lower than that customary in the society, failure or inability to participate in social and political activities, or otherwise a life on the margins. The poor are excluded, but so are the old, the homeless, the disenfranchised, the mentally ill, and the culturally alienated.

The social exclusion debate originated in France and draws specifically on the French tradition of national integration and social solidarity. The opposite of social exclusion is then 'social inclusion', with the idea of the social bond at its heart. Exclusion, in the French discourse, is associated with the rupture of the social bond (Lenoir 1974).

There are competing paradigms of inclusion and exclusion, however, and Silver (1994) has identified three: the *solidarity paradigm*, founded in French ideas about social solidarity; a *specialisation paradigm*, dominant in the US and perhaps the UK, where exclusion is tied to notions of discrimination; and a *monopoly paradigm*, dominant in Western Europe, in which exclusion is associated with group monopoly formation.

Different interpretations reflect different national traditions and debates, but also, as Evans makes clear in this volume, different fiscal systems and institutional frameworks. For example, in France, the term was popularised by Lenoir (1974), to describe groups who fell through the insurance-based social safety-net: as the title of his book, 'Les Exclis: Un Français sur Dix' makes clear, as many as one French person in ten fell through the net. In Britain, social assistance is differently structured, with less dependence on formal insurance, and few are 'excluded' from help in the French sense; nevertheless, social exclusion is frequently identified as a phenomenon linked to multiple deprivation (Walker and Walker 1997).

In principle, it is right that national debates should evolve in ways which reflect local realities. We should note Harwin and Fajth's point (in this volume), however, that different definitions lead to different policies, and that adjudicating between the paradigms may circumscribe policy choices. For example, policy drawn from the solidarity paradigm is likely to emphasise the integrative role of the state; whereas that drawn from a monopoly paradigm will emphasise policies which help individuals to access markets. In the end, it is important to remember that Silver's paradigms are heuristic devices: ways of looking at reality, rather than reality itself.

More seriously perhaps, there are risks in using one term, 'social exclusion', to cover a wide diversity of ideas. The ILS project on social exclusion in developing countries exemplifies the problem. Is social inclusion an end in itself or a means to poverty reduction? And is it a state (of multiple deprivation) or a process (by which deprivation occurs)? In the studies summarised by de Haan, the term is used in all these ways. In the articles here, many authors struggle with the same problem. Is participation an

end or a means (Gaventa)? Is a job an end or a means (Robinson)? Is health an end or a means (Wilkinson)? And does it matter if it is both?

Evans argues forcibly for clarity in the use of definitions:

it is wrong to extrapolate ... to a position where [social exclusion] can mean anything to anyone. 'Social exclusion' must include a definition of at least the group and the reason for or the process of their exclusion. In the wider sense, it must refer to a group of people with different profiles of exclusion, which must be made explicit.

Quite so, but as yet there is no consensus around a single definition. Perhaps the most we can ask is that definitions be made explicit. For us, the definition at the beginning of this section will stand, giving particular emphasis to process issues. Beyond that, we believe that we need to be eclectic and include the various dimensions and processes of exclusion: for practical purposes, Silver's three paradigms are not mutually exclusive.

To be specific, the key arenas for exclusion will be those referred to by Evans (citing Commins 1993): democratic and legal systems; markets, particularly

the labour market; welfare state provision; and family and community. In Table 1, we present these under the headings of rights, resources, and relationships. The main dimensions of social exclusion will be different in each society. For example, one of the central issues in former communist countries, as well as welfare states, is exclusion from state provision. In India, by contrast, exclusion from markets for labour, land or credit is a much more important dimension of social exclusion. In fast-growing economies of East Asia, exclusion from civic and democratic rights – including trade union organisations as in South Korea – may be more salient aspects.

In practice, of course, exclusion in different arenas will overlap. Thus, the poor in India are likely to be denied essential rights, such as access to courts; they will have less access to labour and product markets; and they will also suffer from lack of family support and wider networks. All these aspects of multiple deprivation are bound up with the actions of élites, such as dominant landlords that control voting, or class justice in courts. Exclusion from markets is often related to geographical location, but also to discrimination on grounds of gender, caste and/or ethnicity. Similarly, gendered values may determine the exclusion of poor women from family support.

**Table 1: Arenas and elements of social exclusion**

Key arenas	Elements
Rights	human legal/civic democratic
Resources	human and social capital labour markets product markets state provision common property resources
Relationships	family networks wider support networks voluntary organisations

Source: de Haan

### 3 Is There Value-Added?<sup>4</sup>

An important question for students of poverty in developing countries remains whether 'social exclusion' adds anything to the debate? The answer to this question is not straightforward, because 'poverty' itself is a contested term, subject to many different definitions and interpretations. As Baulch noted, in an earlier **IDS Bulletin** on the subject, poverty is 'a portmanteau term which has different meanings to different people' (Baulch 1996: 2).

For some, 'poverty' is simply about levels of income; to others, it is about much wider concepts, like security, autonomy and self-esteem (Baulch 1996, Shaffer 1996). The term 'well-being' is often used by those in the latter camp (Chambers 1997).

The different possible components of 'poverty' have been summarised in the pyramid in Figure 1, which enlarges the definition in successive stages from private consumption (PC) at one extreme, to a multi-component definition at the other, which includes private consumption, but also access to common property resources (CPR), state-provided commodities (SPC), the ownership of assets to protect against destitution, dignity, and autonomy. Some would want to add participation to this list.

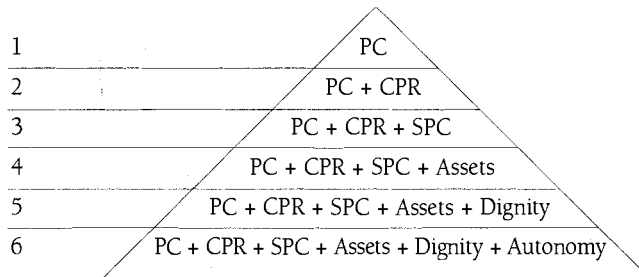
A caricature would be to say that the World Bank has adopted a definition of poverty which is close to the top of the pyramid, and that UNDP, particularly through its work on human development (e.g. UNDP 1997), has adopted a definition close to the bottom. 'Poverty' versus 'human development' is a

nice polemic and provides a good basis for product differentiation (Askwith 1994). However, it is an over-simplification. Certainly, even economists primarily concerned with income and consumption would recognise the importance of consumption derived from common property resources or provided by the state (line 3 in the pyramid). Most would also acknowledge the contribution of the other factors listed.

In any case, the World Bank does not consist only of economists. A recent review of World Bank poverty assessments in Africa (Hanmer et al. 1996: 2.4ff) makes the point that a narrow income definition is provided in the World Bank operational directive on poverty, but goes on to identify the many poverty assessments in which the multi-dimensional nature of poverty is emphasised. In the poverty assessment for Benin, for example, poverty is described as 'a multi-dimensional phenomenon which cannot easily be reduced to a few quantitative indicators' (*ibid*). Similar comments are made in the poverty assessments for Mali, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Cameroon. As suggested by de Haan in this volume, the 'poverty profiles' or analysis of 'correlates of poverty' found in World Bank poverty assessments are different only in emphasis from a human development or social exclusion approach.

There is thus close to an intellectual consensus that narrow income and consumption measures of poverty are inadequate, and that a wider vision is needed. For example, the DAC statement on

Figure 1: Dimensions of Poverty



Source: Baulch (1996): 2

<sup>4</sup> This section draws largely from Maxwell (1997).

'Shaping the 21st Century: the Contribution of Development Cooperation' states that 'we agree with the 1995 G7 Summit at Halifax that a higher quality of life for all people is the goal of sustainable development. A higher quality of life means that people will attain *increased power over their own future*' (DAC 1996: 8, emphasis added).

The new consensus has taken hold thanks to the wide dissemination of documents like UNDP's Human Development Report, and of the work on human capabilities (Sen 1985) on which it is partly based. The new consensus also draws on participatory research with poor people themselves, who forcefully express their own desires for security, social participation and autonomy (Chambers 1997). The fact that the poor themselves think and act in this way provides the strongest justification for adopting the new poverty thinking.

On this evidence, social exclusion and the new poverty thinking overlap almost completely when it comes to describing poverty. A different question is whether they overlap in terms of explanation.

As Maxwell remarks in his article, the theoretical space which deals with this question in development studies is 'already full, and getting fuller', with theories ranging across history, from the classical political economy of Smith and Ricardo, to the recent concern with the development 'impasse' and a post-impasse development theory (Schuurman 1993). In this rich brew, we can find explanations of poverty which include the psychological, environmental, social, economic and political. Many would argue that the central processes of social and institutional exclusion are already present in existing development theory. Maxwell argues as much in making the case for a development studies that crosses North-South boundaries. It would be brave indeed to argue that development studies has not been centrally concerned with market access, social capital, and the other exclusion processes listed in Table 1.

So why, then, do we need the concept of social exclusion? Our existing concepts of poverty are broad enough to encompass the multi-dimensional concerns of the social exclusion school; and our explanations of poverty certainly cover much of the same territory. Where is the value-added? We have three answers to the question.

First, some weight must be given to the argument of ILS (1996), that social exclusion paradigms offer an integrating framework, which puts institutional processes at the heart of the poverty debate. As argued by Rodgers, the initiator of work on social exclusion at ILS (in Gore and Figueiredo 1997), the framework helps to focus on the institutions and actors involved in the processes that cause deprivation. It thus has immediate implications for policy.

Second, the 're-discovery' of poverty in the North offers new opportunities to put traditional concerns onto the international agenda. Thus, at a recent meeting at ILO, it was argued that a social exclusion notion that embodies social justice could be a very useful instrument for rejuvenating the organisation's central concerns (Figueiredo and de Haan (eds) forthcoming).

Third, and most important, we see enormous potential in the opportunity for a new dialogue between North and South. The 'discovery' of social exclusion in the North opens new opportunities for analysis of what Maxwell describes as 'comparisons, convergence and connections' between North and South.

#### **4 Social Exclusion in the North**

Many researchers on the South are reluctant to make comparisons with the North, and for good reason. Despite growing heterogeneity among developing countries and some signs of convergence between the North and parts of the South (Maxwell), the particularities of place and history remain important, so that lessons can rarely be transferred directly. Nevertheless, it would be foolish to deny the possibility of learning across geographical boundaries, and the articles here show just how fruitful and stimulating the exercise can be. We have brought together papers from the North on poverty, participation and social assistance, and on food, and health and labour markets; as well as work on poverty, especially child poverty, in the former Soviet Union. There are some remarkable findings, in five main areas.

First, the articles provide convincing evidence that poverty, in its wider sense, is a serious and growing problem in OECD countries. Maxwell provides

summary data, showing that relative poverty increased in eight out of ten countries in the European Union in the 1980s, and that in 1991–92, child poverty in the United Kingdom affected one child in three. Jarvis and Jenkins provide much more detailed data on the UK, showing that 31 per cent of the population experienced at least one spell of poverty between 1990 and 1994. Lest any should think that relative poverty is somehow unimportant, Dowler provides evidence for the UK of nutrient deficiencies among low income households, those with more than three children, or headed by a lone parent. She concludes that those living on income support are seriously at risk: claimants cannot live adequately, healthily, on state benefits for long periods, and neither can their children.

Outside Europe, similar findings are cited. For the former Soviet Union, Harwin and Fajth find that mortality rates had increased in 15 out of 18 countries, and that child poverty rates had increased at one and a half times the aggregate rate. Perhaps this was not surprising during a period of decline. Even for the United States, however, Gaventa talks of the 'South within the North': 'areas within inner cities and vast rural areas where levels of poverty, unemployment, relatively poor education, illiteracy, lack of health care, provide similarities to certain parts of the South'.

A second set of findings is that income poverty in the North is associated strongly with multiple deprivation and, particularly, with lack of participation. Dowler makes the point about social disadvantage especially strongly:

Those who cannot afford to eat in ways acceptable to society; who find food shopping a stressful or potentially humiliating experience because they might have insufficient money; whose children cannot have a packed lunch similar to their friends'; who do not call on others to avoid having to accommodate return calls – these are people excluded from the 'minimum acceptable way of life'. Food is an expression of who a person is and what they are worth, and of their ability to provide their family's basic needs; it is also a focus for social exchange. Food is, of course, a major contributor to health and well-being. But it is not just health that is compromised in food-poor households: social behaviour is also at risk.

Gaventa is on a similar track. He makes the point that participation is an 'essential vehicle to enable the excluded to act more effectively to address the problems which they face – yet finds that, in the USA, the level of participation is strongly and negatively correlated with socio-economic status. Growing inequality in the USA has undermined political participation, and raised doubts about the health of civil society (Putnam 1995).

Third, there is evidence in these papers which closely mirrors the findings of development studies about the importance of transient poverty. The French discussion has discovered *précarité* (Paugam 1995), a concept closely allied to the concept of *vulnerability* much used in development studies (Chambers 1989). In the UK, Jarvis and Jenkins, in particular, have careful statistical analysis to show that large numbers of people move in and out of poverty. Over four waves of a national household panel survey, only 4 per cent of people were persistently poor, but nearly a third of the sample was touched by low income at least once. In fact, the figures underestimate the extent of transient poverty, since interviews were annual and there could be periods of poverty for some households between interviews. In the UK context, unemployment is a key determinant of poverty. Jarvis and Jenkins conclude that policies to increase the tenure and quality of labour market attachment are necessary to secure permanent escape from poverty – where quality presumably means both length of job and wage level.

A fourth point, and among the most surprising, is that, independent of the level of income, inequality is important. It prejudices participation as we have seen. It has a major negative impact on health; and it also appears to militate against growth. Wilkinson summarises the evidence and shows that a sharp mortality gradient between rich and poor

arises less from the direct effects of differences in people's material circumstances than it does from the psychosocial effects of those differences ... having control over one's work and domestic circumstances, job security, ... the absence of long-term difficulties and threatening life events, the quality of parenting and lack of family conflict early in life.

Wilkinson argues that chronic stress is probably the key to understanding the psychosocial causality between inequality and poor health, and finds support for this in animal studies. He goes on to demonstrate that inequality in industrial societies is also bad for growth, citing evidence that egalitarian societies have faster growth, and claiming to identify a 'new economic orthodoxy which says that equity is good for growth'.

Finally, the policy implications of these findings resonate often, though not always, with debates in developing countries. In some areas, we are entitled to be sceptical. For example, Wilkinson himself admits that his findings cannot be transferred directly to developing countries, where infectious diseases are the main cause of death and the epidemiological transition has yet to take place – though this does not mean that chronic stress is not a problem for the poor in the South. Similarly, the preoccupation with formal sector jobs that runs through several of the articles would not fit well in countries with large informal and subsistence sectors. Nevertheless, in other areas, there are important connections to make. Robinson, for example, draws our attention to the potentials and pitfalls of 'active labour market policies', designed to help people find work. Gaventa discusses the value of local economic initiatives, emphasising the role of participation. Evans illustrates alternative routes to reform of social welfare. Dowler shows the value of food security analysis applied to an industrial country.

In all these cases, there are stimulating comparisons to be made with developing countries. This is not to say that the lessons can be transferred directly, because circumstances vary. For example, Maxwell argues for public works as a form of relief in developing countries, whereas Robinson rather scoffs at the idea in the North. It turns out that their difference lies in whether or not relief works are 'useful', in terms of creating assets and jobs for the future: Maxwell, in the South, says they are, Robinson, in the North, says not. Both could be right, but the comparison is fruitful. In the end, there has to be a careful analysis of what lessons can be transferred. Gaventa is one who attempts this, drawing eight important lessons from the US experience for participation policy in the South. Outside this volume, IILS have also explored policy issues, focusing on rights, markets and civil society (IILS 1996).

It should also be noted that lessons can be transferred both ways. Traditionally, exchanges were mainly in the North–South direction: for example, India's social policies were framed along British traditions. But we now also witness attempts to replicate policies and programmes from the South to the North, most notably with attempts to introduce Grameen-type credit programmes for the poor in Europe and the USA. We believe that much more of this should be attempted. What, for example, can we learn in the North from the successes with employment guarantee schemes in India or Botswana? Or what can we learn from the East Asian experience with its 'social question': the way it prepared the whole population, including the poor, for an internationally competitive market?

There is obviously more to learn about the social exclusion debate. In particular, our contributions do little to explore processes of exclusion. Many contributions focus on one aspect of exclusion, without exploring causality, for example: Dowler on food, and Jarvis and Jenkins on income. Evans, however, concentrates on welfare state entitlements, and helps us to begin to understand how different states – in France and in Britain – include and exclude people.

Harwin and Fajth focus on the different welfare outcomes following restructuring of education, health and social security in former communist states, and again illuminate exclusion processes. The Caucasian economies have experienced the worst economic decline, but indicators of 'social cohesion' (including rates of divorce and suicide) have not followed. On the other hand, the Western Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltic regions did not experience a similar crisis, but the incidence of divorce, suicide, sexually transmitted diseases, and child abandonment increased much more rapidly. Poverty, in their view, cannot fully explain the different responses in transition, and the responses have been mediated by social norms such as the greater importance of family networks and distrust of the state in the Caucasian economies. This framework could very well be extended with empirical research on how communities in these different countries respond to, for example, the cutting of welfare entitlements.

There is also more work to do on the connections between North and South, perhaps particularly in the context of globalisation: Maxwell does no more than scratch the surface here.

A final issue is the operationalisation of social exclusion concepts. This responds to Evans's plea for unambiguous profiles as well as Lipton's (1997) call for more concrete measurement. If social exclusion is defined in terms of multiple deprivation, then measurement clearly has to cover health, housing, family status, and all the other components of human development. Indicators have to be specified, and, more difficult, procedures have to be specified for aggregation. UNDP have struggled with the problem in preparing various forms of the human development and human deprivation index, using data available internationally (UNDP 1997); others (e.g. London Research Centre 1996, CESIS 1997) have developed locally-specific indicators, especially of a non-monetary kind.

When social exclusion is defined in terms of process, the factors listed in Table 1 come into play. De Haan (forthcoming) is one who has worked on this, turning a taxonomy of processes into a checklist of indicators. The indicators are likely to be location-specific, but there is no reason in principle why the concept of social exclusion cannot be made operational.

## 5 What Next?

Concepts travel quickly. A good example is the notion of social capital that was popularised by Putnam (1993) in his work on differences between Northern and Southern Italy. Only a few years later, it was introduced in the study of poverty in Tanzania (Narayan and Pritchett 1997) and subsequently in the 1997 **World Development Report**. Something similar is happening with the concept of social exclusion.

A question follows about unifying frameworks. There is discussion in the articles of the scope for 'mono-economics', about whether a single frame of analysis can be applied to North and South, and about whether 'social exclusion' is a strong enough vehicle to drive across the North–South boundary. For now, we think this is not the issue. There is great scope for collaboration, but these are still early days. Poverty and social exclusion debates each have distinguished pedigrees in North and South, and each deal with tremendously important particularities of history, culture, politics and institutions. Collaboration cannot be imposed, but must be built, inductively, from the bottom up.

But this is an exciting agenda. There need to be joint projects, we think, on specific themes: small-scale credit, participation and participatory methods, social policy, food policy, and public works; and, indeed, on the meaning and measurement of poverty and social exclusion. Perhaps we do not need **IDS Bulletins** with an entirely Northern focus; but nor should we expect to find many in the future which focus entirely on the South.



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