

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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Preliminary approach to the concept of social exclusion

1. From a purely linguistic standpoint, the term “social exclusion” implies the existence of two distinct groups: a closed group (the social dimension, society); and a second group that does not exhibit those attributes of belonging membership which are the defining characteristics of the first group. This aspect merits reflection at this point since it prompts a number of questions whose implications will be considered in the later part of this paper.

2. What is the nature of this closed group in orbit around which, due to exclusion, are said to float “lost atoms” which have been placed at risk by their satellite existence? The suffix to the word “exclusion” indicates that it is a process, so what are the mechanisms of this process and who are its agents? Does the use of this term reflect the perspective of those who have been excluded or that of those who have not been excluded? Are there indicators available which would allow us to predict the potential dangers of exclusion? Can these indicators be identified? And can the effects they reflect be slowed or averted? Is the process of exclusion inherently inevitable -- the outcome of a logical progression that we need to identify -- or is it not simply one of the effects of the changes that humanity periodically undergoes and that can be remedied through a refocusing of efforts and through treatment of the causes of exclusion?

3. The starting point for this study is the fact that the most visible signs of exclusion are those to be found in the economic sphere. A member of society is someone who is able to ensure independently his survival, and that of others dependent on him, by using means whose legitimacy has been endorsed by the social order in which he exists; denial of access to wealth generation places him outside the sphere of social intercourse.

4. However, this aspect is not sufficient to cover all situations and the notion of exclusion informing current debates refers to a process which tends to deny normal access, by an increasingly large share of the population, to the modes of integration prevailing in developed societies and, in the case under discussion here, French society. That exclusion is a process needs to be stressed since it covers both the social mechanisms at work and at the recognition of situations created earlier for which no solution has been found. This is what is commonly referred to as the “breakdown”, as opposed to the dynamic nature of progress which had been expected to have nothing but positive effects -- namely the final eradication of poverty and alienation for the entire human race. Weber’s “disaffected” society would seem to be fulfilling his prediction that it would ultimately destroy social cohesion through its failure to replace Durckheim’s “mechanical” solidarity with an “organic” solidarity based on the complementarity

of society's members. This is apparent in the massive, world-wide phenomenon of economic exclusion, of "economic horror" (V. Forrester, 1997), which not only casts individuals into poverty situations but also denies access to most of the supports for living in society that would allow them to organise their resistance to this phenomenon conveniently referred to as the outcome of "market forces".

5. It can be argued from a very general standpoint that poverty levels can only be defined in terms of the economic level that each society considers to be sufficient to permit the continued survival of its members. However, a more refined approach shows that ejection from the economic system either compounds the original situation or creates other forms of exclusion that were either latent or already at work.

6. In the following sections of this paper an attempt will be made to draw up an inventory that, while not comprehensive, will nonetheless help to identify the individual components of the phenomenon widely referred to as "social exclusion". The aim of the paper is to identify some directions in which it might be useful to pursue actions aimed at lessening the impact of the social disintegration which has become apparent within the past few decades of this century.

The social sciences -- A brief overview of their contribution to our understanding of how human beings become social actors

7. The findings of the social sciences, notably cultural anthropology, have demonstrated that one of the enduring features of human history has been the existence of forms of social organisation based on recognition of membership of a larger entity whose function is to ensure, over and above the survival of the individuals within that entity, the continued existence of a corpus of rules, values and beliefs which allow those individuals to maintain the coherence and cohesion of their exchanges.

8. Now "it is the society in which an individual lives which provides the model of what constitutes an individual or a person and the social rules which apply to that individual in accordance with his role within the dynamics of the enlarged social body" (G. Vinsonneau, 1997).

9. Each society thus determines the forms of behaviour it considers to be unacceptable within its bounds and puts in place appropriate retaliatory measures designed to deter or punish those who adopt such behaviour. Thus the punishment for a heretic found guilty of religious or political heterodoxy was a choice between recanting or death at the stake. Sad to say, such practices are still current in some countries.

10. Moreover, Michel Foucault has shown how anti-social behaviour was perceived as a form of madness and punished by imprisonment. Banishment and forced labour in the galleys were used to curb acts deemed by society to be criminal, including minor misdemeanours. Exclusion was therefore an established procedure for preserving a form of organisation, held to be immutable, when it was flouted or threatened by the deviant behaviour of some members of that organisation. Before we examine this issue in greater detail, however, it must first be emphasised that social exclusion in the form it takes in modern societies does not in any way embrace the field of criminality (even though there may be a partial overlap), that it is not an official "cleansing" measure nor the outcome of simple and direct strategies aimed at deliberately eliminating social actors deemed to be undesirable. It is as though the social body simply labelled individuals who failed to live up to its expectations as "maladjusted", not by denying them access to society but by putting in motion processes which keep such individuals away from its vital functions and which in turn debilitate those who subsequently find themselves on the periphery.

11. With Margaret Mead and R. Benedict (1934), psychological anthropology attempted to determine whether each culture was typified by a “common” or “approved” personality. American cultural anthropologists thus uncovered and attempted to identify the patterns governing individual and collective behaviour, thereby making it possible to predict behaviour. This pattern when interiorised by each individual could thus be used as a standard for the adoption of a “social identity”, which would then be structured by imitation -- the educational role model -- and by the interiorising of the values on which behavioural precepts are based.

12. The culture and socialisation determined by this model were held by Morgan and Tylor, at the end of the nineteenth century, to be evolutionary processes in which actors are not passive receivers but elements in the process of change and transformation. This model holds that evolution is a progressive movement towards greater complexity, a view which receives scant if any endorsement in the more recent studies. Thus S. Latouch (1989) considers that the “individualistic mentality leavens the decomposition of the social link (and that) economic and social deterioration is less a harbinger of the new international or even world order than of disorder or chaos”.

13. In its early days, social psychology primarily investigated the gap between the individual and institutions. Its aim was to eliminate this gap in order to modify the behaviour of individuals without interfering with social structures. Social psychology now addresses the interactions between individuals and social institutions with the aim of fostering mutual adjustment and the development of collective responses to the transformations that the rapid changes over the past hundred years have effected in the contextual characteristics of each situation (work, home, geographical mobility, networks of affiliation, etc.). By examining the subjective variables of social causality and modes of informal sociability, i.e. spontaneous social relationships, it is possible to identify and understand the reactive forms produced by individuals to cope with variations in their situation in a given environmental “niche” itself contingent on fluctuations in general social parameters.

14. Intercultural psychology sets out to examine the phenomena arising from by the “interaction of two identities that give meaning to each other through a relationship which is not one of equals and in which the respective value-systems do not coincide” (M. Abdallah-Preteuille, 1986). Since such identities may be individuals, formally or informally constituted groups, or institutions, this definition covers most of the situations in which value and reference systems confront each other, usually in mutual ignorance of the implicit character of their manifestations and the specific legitimacy of each system.

15. “Otherness” lies at the heart of research in the social sciences. The “other”, the one who is different, has always borne the stigma of the non-human, whether it be the Greeks dismissing those who did not speak their language as barbarians, the Conquistadores questioning whether savages had souls or Amerindians interpreting the pale skins of the first Europeans to land in their country to mean that the latter were the wandering ghosts of the unburied dead and thus unaware of the “monstrosity” of their acts. Regardless of whether the aim of the social sciences was to list the differences or identify the universals in different cultures, research in these sciences has nonetheless made it possible to state that all human beings belonged to the same species and that cultures evolved through contact with one another, even though their status at the moment of first contact might differ.

16. C. Camilliéri (1989) notes that “culture may be considered to be a ideal intermediary within a group, ... a mental training (which) only exists inasmuch that common representations circulate between its members, and which overcomes those who divide that group”. He draws a distinction between so-called traditional or holistic cultures and the cultures of industrialised countries. The first are characterised by the value placed on symbols which are prescriptive in all aspects of the relationship with the world and other human beings, and which are based on transcendence. In so-called modern or

industrialised societies, culture is “no longer the total integrating system” but “what remains common to the sub-groups” created by formal constituencies relating specifically to affiliations that have either been instituted or interiorised as the focal points of identity (age, sex, social class, professional category, etc.).

17. Lorreyte (1989) observes that the still relatively recent break between an integrating system, from which the individual derives the components that will structure his identity, and a fragmented system that leaves him subject to the uncertainty of a chaotic construct lacking a unifying model, and under the worrying obligation to construct arguments that will justify his choices, is one of the causes of xenophobia, which is fuelled by nostalgia for the former model “ironically” embodied in the way of life followed by most immigrant peoples. He also emphasises that “in situations where there is cohabitation, deflecting opprobrium onto the foreigner is simply one of the ways in which disqualified groups attempt to ward off the exclusion to which they are subjected.”

18. To this we might add that for an individual placed in a situation where he is cut off from his original culture and immersed in a foreign culture, acculturation becomes part of a process of profit and loss in which there is an attempt to reconcile the ontological function that allows the subject to remain aware of himself with the pragmatic or instrumental function of adaptation to the environment, and the expectations and rules of that environment, through reference to a third datum namely the “ideal self” through which the individual assigns a “value” to himself (C. Camilliéri, 1989).

19. While these definitions apply to the phenomenon of transplantation into a foreign culture, in which the values and coherent systems experienced previously no longer have currency, they may also be applied within the same given social envelope in which a hierarchy of values imposes an order of preference in choices that stigmatises and tends to eradicate beliefs and forms of behaviour differing from those recommended and thus held to be the norm. “It is as though the host society could, if necessary, accept a difference to, or deviance from, normality on one point, at least, but cannot bring itself to accept a series or too great a number of differences” (M. Xibberas, 1994). In other words, what constitutes an excluded individual is the sum of his “deviations” from the norm. “The excluded individual is branded with the opposite sign of the norm he fails to meet” (R. Castel, 1996).

20. Lastly, developmental psychology, has shown that it is within the context of the initial family network that children first start to develop their social skills. According to the ecological approach adopted by Bronfenbrenner (1978), a larger number of systemic variables (family status, stress, scale of social experience outside the family and rank within the family) must be considered in order to understand how styles of behaviour start to emerge.

21. Generally speaking, the mother/child relationship is seen as the primary template that will initialise the attitudes and behavioural modes the child will subsequently adopt in his relations with others. However, according to the school of thought, this approach centred on the dyadic relationship does not adequately account for the individual strategies of each child to infer from his initial experiences how he should modify his behaviour in other relational contexts. Even if the elementary social knowledge of children is rooted in their immediate perceptions of social exchanges, the accumulated social experience leads to more complex abstractions of the rules of convention and social norms that are generally implicit in the temporal co-ordination of group activity. These more abstract representations of the relationship between social exchange and social content require new cognitive operations that will allow the child to anticipate actions more accurately and make strategic adjustments to actions in progress. This allows the child to achieve his social objectives which often extend beyond the immediate context. Furthermore, “while early channelling leads to the gradual construction of culturally appropriate behavioural skills, it also implies a selective loss of the developmental potential of the individual. The adaptation of children

within different ecological contexts implies a gradual reduction in their behavioural flexibility” (Strayer, 1997).

22. In terms of the early prevention of behavioural disorders it is therefore possible to contemplate a multitude of strategies that are not automatically centred on the mother/child relationship but also on the quality of the educational environment encountered by the child outside the family, by offering the child behavioural patterns which differ from those he encounters within the family environment and which will broaden his knowledge of relational forms that can subsequently be used with his peers or other adults.

23. This succinct review of the contribution made by the social sciences in defining the forms taken by the relationship of the individual with the group can provide an insight into a number of particular aspects of the situations of social exclusion, of which an overview is given below.

Social exclusion -- A review of the processes involved

24. In order to examine the situations in which there is a break in linkages we shall make a systematic review of the spheres of belonging that the social actor establishes during his life and the modes of exclusion relating specifically to those spheres. These networks of belonging can be assigned a relative ranking according to the degree to which they integrate individuals and therefore, conversely, the degree to which they exclude individuals.

The family as the initial locus of social relations

25. A distinction is generally drawn between primary sociability, which is developed within a smaller nexus or in other words the family group in the broad sense of the term, and secondary sociability which allows the individual to establish differentiated relational modes in terms of their pragmatic and symbolic value (the professional sphere, membership of groups formed around areas of selective and common interests, recreational clubs, religious communities, etc).

26. “In order to combat the process of exclusion, each individual has a number of resources on which he can draw, the central asset systematically being his relational capital or integration into a primary sociability, whether it be to find a house or a job or, at a more general level, to gain access to information” (C. Martin, 1996). Poverty and job insecurity are usually the corollaries of isolation or loneliness, 70 per cent of those receiving minimum support benefit are “isolated” in that they have no or no longer have family relations or relations outside the family.

27. However, “due to the crisis in the “Nanny State”, other forms of solidarity, notably intergenerational solidarity within the family have been recognised” (M. Segalen, 1991). A “natural and free source of solidarity”, the family plays a socially-assigned pivotal role in ensuring that the members of groups together “conform”. It establishes ties between older and younger generations through a system of rights and duties. Even though the configuration of the formal framework has changed, the contract of assistance remains the same and its explicit and implicit mission is relatively stable. This phenomenon has if anything become more widespread over the past few decades despite the changes that have affected it (decline in the number of marriages, 1 out of every 3 marriages ending in divorce, lone parents accounting for 12-15 per cent of all families, couples with children from earlier marriages, grandparents living on their own and at a distance, place of work located outside the area where the individual lives, etc.).

The family and social control

28. Obviously the State pursues policy in line with a given social discourse. Relations between the family institution and society are regulated by a legal system in which support measures and punitive measures are closely entwined.

29. Support measures are both symbolic (recognition and encouragement of the role of the family) and material (organisation and funding of the family environment, social assistance, fiscal policy, etc.) in nature.

30. Punitive measures are applied when it is considered that the family no longer meets its obligations with regard to the protection of family members (abandonment, physical abuse, negligence); responsibility for education (notably with regard to mandatory schooling); legal requirements (delinquent minors); and conformity with the dominant model, even if the past few decades have seen the emergence of a wider range of models. The State has the right to take the place of the family by taking away the family's responsibility for the children in its care as a result of deficiencies deemed to be unacceptable to the society. This is an exclusionary measure which in extreme cases indicates society's tolerance threshold. However, before reaching the stage where such "exile" is deemed to be warranted, society offers and provides funding for assistance that it feels can help to avert such extreme cases.

31. Society's methods are based on a powerful ideological apparatus whose effectiveness is enhanced by the fact that it has a universal application. All cultures form family groupings, even if the type of family bond plays a very different role from one culture to another. These ideological bases subtend the legal and administrative system which "ensures" that the basic social cell functions properly. This benevolence is obviously justified by the importance attached to the function played by the family institution as a cog in the productive machine generating material and symbolic goods.

32. The child enters into contact with the institutional sphere the moment it is born. The mother and child protection system (PMI) in France is the first obligatory contact for the newly-born infant, its first examination, the point where it first enters society -- even before its birth has been registered. It is at this point that the first checks are made on the conformity of the infant, in this instance in terms of health. For the parents, it is the point where a commitment is made with regard to the quality of care, for which society proposes a model defined by the different forms of childcare that may differ from or contrast with those practised within a given family. The provision of medical care and monitoring of the infant's health during the first year of its life (a mandatory requirement in order to qualify for various allocations relating to the birth of a child) are not a preventative measure aimed at ensuring the physical well-being of the infant but, in accordance with the WHO definition, are also aimed at ensuring its mental and social well-being. This is an examination service that is declared and provided free of charge by the PMI and is for the most part used by the poorest families, other families preferring to use private medical services.

33. The various scientific approaches to childhood stress the importance of the "mothering" environment and consider the absence of a father to be a source of problems, which indeed it is since single-parent families are over-represented (18 per cent) among those receiving minimum income support. In the event of their parents separating, 94 per cent of children under the age of 3 years remain in the care of the mother and this percentage still amounts to 89 per cent by the time they reach their majority. 75 000 children under the age of 6 years live with a divorced parent (INSEE, Children under 6 years of age, 1992).

34. In the event of financial difficulties, the State intervenes by providing allowances. 60 per cent of all families receive a single allowance, primarily the non means-tested allowance for families with more

than two children and, below a certain threshold, for the first child. 28 per cent receive two allowances, 15 per cent three and 3 per cent more than three. Social assistance is provided for 40 000 children under the age of 6 years.

Proportion of low or very low income households according to type of household in 1990 (as a percentage). Source: INSEE, “Fiscal income” surveys for 1984 and 1990.

35. These benefits cover a variety of needs, notably housing, support for educational costs, food or healthcare allowances.

Breakdown of the income of families with children and single-parent families according to a number of current income levels (as a percentage). Source: INSEE “Family budget” survey, 1989.

36. Before benefits can be awarded, checks are carried out to determine whether the beneficiaries are indeed partially or totally destitute. The beneficiaries thus enter into a cycle of categorisation which cannot but have an impact on their feeling of being a member of society. An individual is poor either when he says so himself or when he is designated as poor. Many of the accounts of those excluded from society make mention of this changeover from relative normality -- poverty assumed within the privacy of the family unit -- to open admission of this situation under the gaze of others. This shift is often perceived as “the beginning of the end”. It brings an additional humiliation and places the individual obliged to endure it in the position of an aid recipient who needs to be kept under surveillance.

37. The first exclusion is that of the right to a private space, which has to be abandoned in order to expose oneself to the scrutiny of others. Indeed, the extreme image of the pauper is that of somebody asleep on the pavement in front of all the passers-by. A two-way process is set in march: “society’s view defines the category of deviance. The view of those who have been stigmatised incorporates the label placed upon them by society but nonetheless develops its own outlook” (M. Xibberas, 1994).

38. A child born into a family placed in a situation of exclusion finds itself under threat from the minute it is born, so strongly does the social institution tend to equate financial poverty with parental deficiency in its interpretation of the inner workings of the family. This view, which is still highly prevalent in the minds of those who award social benefits, has very recently been tempered as a result of research into child development which has shown the highly pathogenic nature of separation of a child from its family, thus calling for a cautious approach to be adopted when considering the removal of children into care. That recent legislation recommending that brothers and sisters be kept together when taken into care was originally proposed by the “Children’s Parliament” is by no means an apocryphal story. Society, keen to avoid the cost of separations, is now more circumspect about instituting such actions. However, one of the reasons from the change in society’s approach to these issues is the fact that “we are no longer confronted with a uniform society which, despite containing inequalities, was nonetheless united in its aspirations for continuous progress. There is no longer a residual group of people living on the sidelines of society, but a whole host of individuals who have been cut adrift. A new approach is thus required and it is here that the concept of solidarity, namely the need to maintain social links in a fragmented society, comes into its own. (...) The aim is not so much for social workers to be agents meeting needs” (or, as Donzelot (1977) puts it, playing the role of “family police”) “but rather to be a bridging element in the inter-institutional network” (J. Cadière, 1994).

39. Despite all the precautions that society and its regulating agents might take in performing this incursive function, it is clear that the family unit is unable to play the role that it is “normally” expected to

fulfil. This type of intervention finds its ultimate paradoxical expression in cases when opposition is raised to family practices which are considered to be harmful but which are the expression of strong attachment to particular cultural values that are themselves considered to be unfounded because they do not concur with the dominant values. This is the case, for example, of female circumcision which is proscribed by all cultures that do not practice it, and also of certain customs such as the use of the street as the natural place for socialising by children in African cultures (T. Mekideche, 1994).

Infancy and the first places of social exchange

40. The young child subsequently experiences more or less rapidly immersion into a collective environment such as a nursery school, child-minding service, etc. Access to such modes of care is not evenly distributed and the location of such facilities shows that they are primarily aimed at a well-integrated population (priority is given to families in which both parents work) living in residential areas enjoying the best services and that they charge rates which are often too high for the families most in need of them. There is seldom any attempt to bridge the cultural gap between family modes of living and those “exemplified” in collective practices, owing to the cultural and social uniformity of these areas of collective living whose norms are interiorised by the educational agents present there. The child may thus be at risk of experiencing a painful dichotomy split between these competing but equally legitimate models, based on an implicit premise that is never identified or updated and that has never been negotiated between the agents transmitting that premise. In addition to the possible disparities between forms of address and responses that he will experience, and the impact such disparities may have on his ability to derive rules from his experience that he can then put to use for himself, the child may find himself with divided “loyalties”, the seeds of a possible future conflict between the social norm and the family norm (J. Combes, 1994). We shall see later that it is possible to alleviate such impacts and thus open up to children an area unsuspected to them where they can experiment with social relations without being forced to live under the stigma of their particular position in society.

The role of the school -- To integrate or to exclude?

41. In France, 95 per cent of three-year olds and 98 per cent of children above that age attend free nursery schools, which also cater for a third of all two-year olds. Priority for access to such facilities is usually given to disadvantaged families, notably in zones of education priority (ZEP) that are mainly located in districts containing social housing and characterised by over-representation of immigrant families. This relatively recent measure (in force since 1990) is designed to combat academic failure by offering a stimulating educational environment and early immersion in French for children for whom French is not the mother-tongue. There are many factors involved in achieving the avowed aim of equal access to knowledge which we could examine in detail, but the most obvious one remains the fact that teachers have not been trained in intercultural relations and as a result underestimate the impact of family culture on learning strategies and mould their expectations to an “abstract” and non-relativist concept of performance or failure. The criterion of linguistic ability is accorded too much importance, at the expense of other skills considered to be less fundamental. Despite protestations to the contrary, the main objective of the nursery school remains that of academic success, although in principle it should simply encourage the enhancement of a child’s potential without following a pre-defined operational bias.

42. Nursery school teachers have not been trained in relating to families of differing origins and are not immune to the feelings of xenophobia which course more or less freely through the collective unconscious.

43. In conclusion, while there can be no denying the function performed by the pre-primary school in ensuring the early detection of difficulties or handicaps, this function goes hand in hand with a labelling process which will eventually influence the attitudes adopted towards the child, who, in return, will interiorise at an early stage the fact that his behaviour is inappropriate.

44. The progression to primary school and then secondary school in most cases simply confirms what the nursery school had been able to detect (or instigate).

45. It is significant that repeating an academic year of preparatory classes, for example, is one of the most reliable indicators that a child has entered into the downwards spiral of failure. This determinism says more about the cohesion of the school institution than it does about the dispositions to failure of the children within that institution. A rapid analysis of the impact of the creation of lay schools on the institution of the school over a century after the notorious Jules Ferry Acts is appropriate at this stage. Access to the school system put in place at the end of the nineteenth century had two main goals: to unify the culture and language of a rural country, considered to be backwards, and to forge a national identity based on patriotism, espousal of the values of the Republic and the governments which ensured the continuance of the “single and undivided Nation”. This undertaking based on a rereading, if not falsification, of history (“Eternal France”) has deeply imprinted in the collective imagination the congruence of social being and citizen of France by removing all other components such as religion or social class on the grounds of irrelevance. “It disregarded the cultural dimension in the ethnological sense of the term; the intellectual instruments of this type of approach were alien to the founders of the lay school system. Unencumbered by any problems over the analysis of social and cultural differences between individuals, the lay school sincerely believed itself to be egalitarian and liberating” (S. Citron, 1985) until it is realised, with Bourdieu, that it simply confirmed the “heirs” to the system in their prerogatives. In actual fact, and the situation has been exacerbated by the removal of sectors in the new distribution of schools, the differences between “ghetto” and “elite” establishments reveals if not a conscious then at least an unconscious strategy to segregate the lower classes.

46. “The social and ethnic composition of establishments exerts a determining influence on the academic results of pupils, that is to say that with the same initial educational attainments a pupil from a working-class background has a better chance of making progress in a heterogeneous or “bourgeois” school than in a school in which there is a concentration of disadvantaged social categories, primarily due to the weight of teachers’ expectations and pressure from his peers” (A. Van Zanten, 1996).

47. However, segregation destroys this phenomenon of emulation. It does this through selective entry or retention in a given establishment, which can be based on several different criteria: a requirement by the establishment to reach a certain level, which may be more or less high, of academic performance, which excludes pupils who are less successful; strategic withdrawals by the middle classes, which penalise establishments whose intake includes a large proportion of working-class pupils (a phenomenon that might be compared with “white flight”, the response of the white classes in the United States to the ethnic mixing measures of the school integration policy in the United States); the creation within schools of classes graded by ability, in which the brightest pupils are assigned to one class and those with the greatest difficulties to others; the value placed on branches and study and behaviour that conform to the mainly abstract model perpetuated by school tradition, despite changes in modes of living and modes of wealth production that are threatening to make it obsolescent.

48. The speed of this process has increased since the 1980s as efforts to encourage people to become home-owners has gradually emptied the housing estates, and primarily those containing social housing, of the wealthier strata of the population and as rising unemployment has had a massive and adverse impact on the most vulnerable members of the working class population. The concentration of members of

society exposed to job insecurity and poverty underlines a general but more diffuse phenomenon in more heterogeneous areas.

Youth unemployment -- Surviving the obstacle course (F. Dubet, 1993)

49. The unemployment statistics for young people (23 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men), although higher than the national average, do not alone account for the situation of young people in the labour market. An arsenal of measures, schemes and creation of new worker categories make it possible to keep job-seekers unable to find a permanent job in some form of paid occupation. "Just over 3 per cent of school-leavers find a job by the end of the summer and stay in that job for at least five years. 52 per cent have a salaried job by September and 80 per cent by the following January, but only 12 per cent in September and 16 per cent in January have a permanent contract. 35 per cent of school-leavers have never had a permanent contract after five years of being monitored, while after twenty months 94 per cent of them have been in paid employment" (P. Verquin, 1996). In addition, these figures mask a wide variety of personal situations. For a young university graduate with social relations, unemployment does not have the same psycho-social impact as it does on a young person with no qualifications and no skills.

50. It is worth noting the wide gap between men and women, a gap that is even wider in the case of young people of foreign origin. Three young immigrants out of ten are unemployed and 50 per cent of young Moroccans in the labour force are looking for a job (INSEE, 1992).

Rates of unemployment among 15-29 year olds by qualification from 1975 to 1994. INSEE employment surveys. Monique Méron and Claude Minni, 1995.

51. "Exclusion is experienced as a situation which prompts two kinds of reaction. The first is one of powerlessness and alienation in which the individual interiorises the failure and descends into apathy because he feels that it was pre-ordained by fate. The second, in accordance with Merton's principle of "innovation", is one that on the contrary leads to what is often delinquent behaviour aimed at overturning the barriers to participation and integration. Young people vacillate between the two without it leading to the emergence of a sub-culture of delinquency or withdrawal" (F. Dubet, 1993).

52. Young people inwardly interpret their failure not only as the result of social disorganisation to which their environment bears witness, in contrast with the norm purveyed by the consumer society -- from which they are, moreover, excluded -- but also as the outcome of their own personal problems. Delinquency is rarely identified as an inner mechanism contributing to their problems, but rather as the result of the actions of external agents. It is rarely planned but instead is felt to be a additional pitfall relating to their being part of a pathogenic environment, namely their degraded environment and their degrading living conditions. The feeling of "having nothing to lose" spurs them to acts committed in a state of "rage", a form of behaviour that is self-destructive rather than directed at some socially defined adversary. The aim in most cases is, through illicit means, to adapt resources to interiorised conformist objectives (F. Dubet, 1993).

53. Young people undergoing the "obstacle course" note that their situation places them automatically in a category which is more exposed to social control, suspicion, accusations based on presumed guilt, notably young immigrants (condemned because of the way they look). Protective or support measures are often perceived as a disguised means of keeping segregation in place, which explains why they often fail.

At the other end of the life cycle, the frailty of old age

54. Over the past thirty to forty years, pension systems have freed elderly people from the poverty brought upon them as a result of their inability to produce. Age-related exclusion now affects the two extremes of this category but for different reasons: the rise in long-term unemployment of older wage-earners, to the point where in Europe the over-55s are virtually excluded from the economy, primarily because their skill levels are low. The existence of partial or full compensation schemes has prompted employers to use this category as a control valve for the labour market.

55. At the other end of the spectrum, elderly people are the hapless victims of dependency on care services and the physical dependency resulting from higher life expectancies and medical progress. Here again, the family and relational network plays a determining role. Where such networks are defective or non-existent, provision is made for institutionalised forms of assistance. But apart from the fact that there are major disparities in the quality of the services on offer, the very existence of such services paradoxically has had unwanted effects. Families no longer can or dare to take care of their elderly members and increasingly place them in establishments where the elderly person finds himself cut off from his original relational network. The elderly person is to some extent confined to a position of dependency, placed in a situation where he no longer has any choice or control over his life. Once again, it is mainly women who are affected in this way.

Combating exclusion -- Some avenues for further reflection.

56. Up to this point we have deliberately avoided consideration of the economic issue, although it is obviously central to the problem. There seemed to be little point in recalling that social exclusion is primarily measured in terms of unemployment statistics, minimum income support, the number of homeless people, illegal immigrants or those receiving social aid, etc., particularly in view of the fact that the situation of exclusion, as we have seen above, is the outcome of a number of factors rather than just one. No mention has as yet been made of physical handicaps or AIDS as equal factors in the risk of marginalisation or social death.

57. Our discussion has been aimed more at noting that the increase in social exclusion is also linked to other factors that have more to do with the irretrievable loss of the identity-building processes that have been accumulating in following the path laid down by society where failure is punished by exclusion. There are two directions in which it is possible to explore potential areas in which to investigate the extremely serious impact of economic change and the relative powerlessness of governments to take action in a globalised economy. One is the concept of the “solidarity-based economy” and the other that of the “intercultural society”.

The solidarity-based economy

58. Historically, France experienced a federative movement similar to that in the United States or the United Kingdom in the eighteenth century during the post-revolutionary period when France’s “new” citizens started to organise themselves to solve the problems that the as yet disorganised public authorities had completely neglected. Throughout the changes that would transform a society in which most economic transactions were local, and strongly associated with the home, into a society dominated by world-wide economic trade, forms of social organisation would “spontaneously” arise in order to resist the hegemony of the dominant policies (J-L. Laville, 1993).

59. The individualistic society reaches its limits as a result of a two-fold effect. Disaffection with the world stemming from the rift between the symbolic and practical components of an individual's activity, thus affecting the construction of his identity and the value he places on himself. Cultural relativism fuelled by the human sciences and universal use of communications resources has provided a factual foundation for the concept of solidarity. The term "solidarity" is losing its ecumenical connotation, its function as a charm, in the description of the proven facts of the similarity and interdependence of mankind. This can even be perceived in terms of the economy when the stock exchange booms in Hong Kong or when French workers pay the price of the restructuring of an international group. During the thirty years of growth after the Second World War, the concept of poverty or job insecurity was commonly limited to a small proportion of the population, not that it has disappeared but simply because it only applied to a fringe of the population. Consumer aspirations were more modest and economic prosperity allowed pursuit of a policy of redistribution of wealth while still maintaining the hope of social betterment, a hope that was widely diffused by all the ideological systems of all the parties.

60. One fifth of the population is now estimated to be in need and examples of reclassification now include all social categories (including politicians or heads of companies). It is the scale of this phenomenon that is creating new forms of "re-activity", that is to say activities directed towards resisting the dissolution of social links arising from and generating exclusion. These socio-economic experiences have several characteristics in common. They are moulded around the response to needs that the State or the market are unable to meet. They very loosely cover the third sector known as "social utility", services to individuals in areas that were previously part of the domestic sphere, the "hidden" economy (estimated to amount to three quarters of GDP, A. Insel, 1993). It is not so much from the standpoint of the economy and trade that these activities are expected to be productive, but rather in relational and functional terms. The anticipated benefits are to be found in neighbourhood economies and micro-initiatives with immediate redistribution effects. "Economic activities are governed by social objectives aimed at improving living conditions in such diverse areas as housing, health, home help, child-minding or protection of the unemployed" (J.L. Laville, 1993). These activities combine the merchant economy (sale of services, salaried employees), the redistributive economy (contracts with governmental systems) and a mutual economy based on the involvement of users in production of a service. They are based on the active involvement of users in defining their needs and the responses they would like to make to meeting those needs, on the principle of the citizen's right to make his voice heard in the city. They usually bring together technical skills (professionalisation of this sector which is currently expanding) and bodies responsible for negotiation, consultation and non-professional decision-making that are not covered by the commitment to set up associations. They provide a umbrella for disparate initiatives and thus serve as a focal point for group action with the aim of creating synergies and defending interests, whether it be at a micro or local level (in order to bring together "people of good intent") or to co-ordinate related initiatives at the national level.

61. Examples include moves by parents to set up child-minding facilities whereby parents' associations work with the authorities to set up facilities (nursery schools, child-minding facilities, cultural centres) to meet their needs by spending time working alongside full-time professional employers paid out of budget half of which is funded by the authorities and the other half by parents (based on a daily fee and the amount of time actually spent by the parents in management, support and educational activities). This mode of organisation has made it possible to support the creation, in social housing estates, of facilities characterised by mutual support and tolerance for use by children and parents from different social and cultural origins (J. Combes, 1989, 1994).

62. Neighbourhood schemes whereby local residents associations are used to recruit and train the staff responsible for maintaining public and private open spaces.

63. Mutual know-how exchange networks which provide a link between individuals who in many cases would otherwise be isolated and who have a specific asset they can trade with other people. Each person in the network is first a provider and then user of the skills in the know-how bank, one of the main goals being to give back to each individual a sphere in which he can demonstrate his skills and to encourage sociability through exchanges.

64. Unemployed workers associations which provide a framework for the disparate situations experienced by the unemployed and which are aimed at encouraging a shift from a culture of impotence to one based on reactive inventiveness and dignity despite the connotation of exclusion attached to unemployment.

An intercultural society

65. The statistics show the over-representation in the population of those excluded from society of, firstly, people of foreign origin and, secondly, women, who are doubly exposed if they are foreign or older (when men divorce and remarry younger women, the termination of the marriage contract leads to the impoverishment of women with children who until then had been financially dependent on their husbands). "Cross-correlation of the three variables age, sex and origin identifies the proportion of the foreign population that is worst affected: young women under 25 years of age who are nationals of third countries (outside the European Union), i.e. 46 per cent. The rate of unemployment among foreign nationals of both sexes in this age bracket is 41 per cent" (J. Costa-Lascoux, 1996).

66. A study (Baudelot and Christ, 1993) has shown for equivalent educational level, if not better, girls move into less prestigious careers and take longer to find their first job, which encourages them to fall back within the family sphere. However, as we have seen above, over 10 per cent of these women have children and 18 per cent of the women receiving minimum income support are lone parents. This has a powerful impact on the poverty cycle since it is not only adults who are thus driven to the edges of society, but also their children who will consequently progress along the path outlined above. Moreover, the fact that sociabilisation criteria are primarily focused on access to the job market tends to socially disqualify "those who fail to enter into the new skill-based dynamic (independence, initiative, responsibility) and encourages various forms of social disfranchisement" (Castel, 1991). By combining the stages in the process of non-access to employment (or expulsion from employment) with those in the dissolution of social relations (or the impossibility of building such relations), it is possible to reconstruct the entire process of what has been termed "exclusion", which is never an irreversible fate but rather a series of biographical links in chains related to the structural mechanisms and which always, with varying degrees of probability, have to contend with other chains based on other mechanisms (C. Dubar, 1996).

67. An examination of the various successive stages in the individual's relations with society and its institutions shows that the social and cultural origin of some people pre-determines them to experience such relations in a position which prevents them from gaining access to the resources they need to develop, maintaining them either in a situation of passivity or forcing them to adopt individual "survival" strategies and to form groups of the same generation or with similar affinities which use their energy and intelligence to organise "rackets and scams" that yield immediate results and guaranteed benefits (A. Jazouli, 1994).

Cultural obstacles to communication

68. Society and particularly its institutions are based on the forging of a consensus with regard to a given set of values which subtends national unity and which apparently represents the common and unifying bond for the various values of individuals and the groups within which they live. These values, as well as the associated prejudices and stereotype, constitute a frame of reference and serve to screen and filter exchanges, leading to mistaken interpretations, misunderstandings and inappropriate attitudes on the part of those taking part in exchanges.

69. However, most actors in the social arena, whether they be professionals working with infants, teachers, social workers, police officers or members of the judiciary, are unaware of the influence of their own models on their understanding of an exchange situation, and in most cases are ignorant of the cultural bases underpinning the discourse or behaviour of those they are dealing with. They adopt an attitude that is based on their having erroneously equated their implicit values with those which are “universal” and “natural”. As a result, any forms of behaviour that are alien to them are perceived as strange, illegitimate if not deviant. “These distortions, although exacerbated by cultural differences, may be seen in the approaches adopted by different social categories (the rural world, regional and professional sub-cultures, disadvantaged social classes and the fourth world)” (Cohen-Emerique, 1989). This unconscious ostracism practised by professional workers in the educational and social spheres, mandated by the very institutions that set standards, is all the more powerful in that it is aimed at individuals already stigmatised through exclusion; indeed, it actually exacerbates such exclusion.

70. This phenomenon is particularly apparent at the level of the school, where the flood of selection processes is governed by the dominant values which encourage the conservation and continuation of such values at the expense of diversification and innovation.

71. The stereotypes present at an unconscious level are of course compounded by a hierarchy in terms of culture (Asians are considered to be better integrated/capable of being integrated than Black and North Africans, for example), the role of women and therefore the expectations with regard to girls and their educational performances, the delinquency associated with membership of the youth group (particularly in the suburbs), but also the relative values of certain “prestigious” forms of knowledge compared with others considered to be optional or minor, the fear of contamination by AIDS sufferers or the equating of age with impotence. They preclude any examination of individual situations and administering of appropriate treatment in favour of a generic treatment based on abusive categorisation which sets limits before establishing whether they are relevant.

Training in intercultural communication as a prerequisite for a rational approach to exclusion

72. It is clear that exclusion processes cannot be viewed as exclusively economic or socio-political mechanisms. These processes are also informed by subjective conditions which draw upon what Freud has defined as the struggle between Eros and Thanatos, the desire to live and the desire to die, which feeds on intra-subjective conditions whose origin cannot be attributed to social conditioning alone.

73. In contrast, support for death impulses (not only self-destructive impulses but also those directed towards others) is fuelled by the negative image returned to any individual who fails to conform to the social model prevailing in the society in which he finds himself.

74. At this historical moment of far-reaching socio-economic change, the models and values which presided over social cohesion, and which continue to claim to preserve it, now need to be re-examined,

analysed and modified in order to better adjust to the psycho-social impacts of such change. The issues at stake include the development and distribution of resources and the use to which they are put, the strictly utilitarian value of human activity, the greater value placed on certain spheres of activity considered to be useful (and to whom?), at the expense of others whose qualitative aspects have not been recognised, the identification of economic integration with social legitimacy, the proscription of certain types of behaviour and lifestyle as being deviant whereas they are simply the logical outcome of selective elimination.

75. No society can absorb the cost of the waste of human and financial resources resulting from the exclusion of such a large proportion of its members without running the risk of a breakdown in the social balances that protect it against disintegration, extreme solutions and barbarity.

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