EXCLUSION AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM AND A METHODOLOGICAL ISSUE

Jan Keller

University of Ostrava
Faculty of Social Studies

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Author: Jan Keller

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Reviewers: Jiří Winkler, Miriam Slaná

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FOREWORD

Jan Keller's publication *Exclusion as a Social Problem and a Methodological Issue* was written as one of the outputs of the project *Enlargement and Development of the Research Team at the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0080;* this is why the several following lines is dedicated to the presentation of the project as such.

The project *Enlargement and Development of the Research Team at the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava, CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0080* (http://fss.osu.cz/) is a three-year project carried out at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ostrava from June 1, 2011 to May 31, 2014 (i.e. 36 month), cofinanced by the European Social Fund and the state budget of the Czech Republic. The project was created within Call no. 20 of the Operational Programme Education for Competitiveness, Priority Axis 2 – Tertiary Education, Research and Development, Area of Intervention 2.3 – Human Resources in Research and Development (http://www.msmt.cz/file/17231). The objective of Call no. 20 (year 2010) consisted in the support of creation of quality research and development teams with emphasis on internationalization and multidisciplinarity and allowed to involve key scientists from abroad as a means of strengthening and development of team expertise. It was a continuously topical tasks of improvement of staffing of science and development including improvement of expert training of top researchers of high research potential and managerial experience, i.e. a task corresponding with the objectives of *The National Research, Development and Innovation Policy of the Czech Republic in 2009 – 2015* and *The National Research Programme.*

The objective of the VEDTYM project – *Enlargement and Development of the Research Team at the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0080* was to make good use of the previous experience in scientific-research activities of the current so-called "senior" team of employees of the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava, to support its strengthening (including also invitation of a significant foreign expert with rich experience in managing international research teams), to enlarge the "senior" team with new colleagues from the group of young scientists and Ph.D. students (the so-called "junior" team) and subsequently to keep the recently reached quality of a top expert team

in the field of the issue of social impacts of the modernization processes, new social risks (or social exclusion) in future publication and project opportunities for the faculty employees.

The Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava used its rich international experience gained through its active participation in ERIS – European Research Institute of Social Work) and experience related to the realization of a number of projects of the Czech grant agencies (mainly the Czech Science Foundation). A significant role in the definition and specification of the field of social exclusion (developing the *Mains Directions of the Development of Science and Research at the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava in 2011–2014*) as the VEDTYM project research was played by prof. PhDr. Jan Keller, CSc., Czech leading sociologist, doc. PaedDr. Oldřich Chytil, Ph.D., dean of the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava, and doc. PhDr. Dana Sýkorová, Ph.D., project expert supervisor in 2011–2012.

The publication by J. Keller *Exclusion as a Social Problem and a Methodological Issue* is focused on a theoretical reflection of the issue of exclusion, and thus it can be understood as a theoretical framework of elaborating of the isuue of exclusion in three succeeding publications written by the team members:

- BAUM, D. H., VONDROUŠOVÁ, K., TICHÁ, I. 2014. *Characteristics of Socio-spatial Segregation in Comparison of Two Cities (Halle – Ostrava).* Ostrava: UO. 76 pp. ISBN 978-80-7464-554-9.;

- GOJOVÁ, A., GOJOVÁ, V., ŠPILÁČKOVÁ, M. (Eds.). 2014. *On the Ways of Coping with Poverty from the Perspective of Families – Incentives for Social Work.* Ostrava: UO. 140 pp. ISBN 978-80-7464-555-6.;

- SÝKOROVÁ, D., NYTRA, G., TICHÁ, I. 2014. *Housing in Old Age and Poverty.* Ostrava: UO. 80 pp. ISBN 978-80-7464-556-3.

The publication by J. Keller *Exclusion as a Social Problem and a Methodological Issue* is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the issue of exclusion (including its causes) as a social phenomenon of the period of transition from the industrial society to postindustrial society. The issue of social exclusion is analysed in the context of the theories of society and theories of social structure. Keller gives a classification of various types of exclusion, reflects stages of social exclusion. Attention in the second part is paid to selected methodological aspects of the

process of social exclusion and its understanding from the perspective of several types of social constructionism. These various types allow an original view of social reality but they also bring along numerous risks burdening the approach of social constructionism.

Jelena Petrucijová

project expert supervisor in 2013–2014

INTRODUCTION

The issue of social exclusion is a matter that can be used not only for research on problems of society transitioning from the industrial stage to the postindustrial stage but also for illustrating topical questions of social sciences in the transition from positivism and structuralism to interpretative and constructivist approaches.

This is why our analysis consists of two parts. The first one will deal with exclusion from the viewpoint of the state and developmental tendencies of the contemporary society. It will be mentioned when this term emerged and in what context it started to be used. Then attention will be turned to the search for causes of social exclusion. Subsequently attention will be paid to the internal structure of this phenomenon, i.e. various types and stages of social exclusion. A manifold spectrum of reactions in excluded persons will be observed in this context. The issue of social exclusion will be explored from the perspective of the theories of society on a more abstract level. And finally, some problems related to the search for possible solutions of this pressing social problem will be presented.

The text will be exclusively based on French literature. The reasons are not only the practical ones which call for a way to orientate ourselves in literature that is vast and thus hard to be dealt with. There are also meritorious reasons. It is not coincidental that the term social exclusion has been related to French sociology. It corresponds with the spirit of French sociology that has been emphasizing social integrity on the macrosocial level and the existence of social bond on the level of interpersonal relations since the time of Durkheim. Social exclusion is a threat to both to the same extent.

The second part will be focused on methodological aspects of the mentioned issue. The phenomenon of social exclusion and its extreme manifestation – homelessness – will be used for an analysis of possibilities of social constructionism and for pointing out risks hidden in this approach to social reality. Several types of social constructivism will be distinguished and opportunities hidden in this approach to the research of reality will be pointed; limits built in its various branches and burdening and deforming our view of both social exclusion and social reality in general will also be pointed.

1 EXCLUSION AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

The term social exclusion started to be used under very particular circumstances, and the spread of this phenomenon is closely related to the transition from industrial society to postindustrial society. While the first one developed ways of maintaining and strengthening of social integrity, the latter is forced to face strong centrifugal tendencies due to the logic of its development; these tendencies make the threat to social integrity one of the most serious challenges.

1.1 Naming of the new phenomenon

The first mentions of social exclusion are found in French literature in the first half of the 1960s.

Jules Klanfer (1965), researcher focusing on the position of disadvantaged groups, speaks of exclusion as the fate of those who are the only ones not profiting from the advantages of economic growth. Similarly, the economist and high-ranking civil servant Pierre Massé (1969) uses the term exclusion in order to point out the fact that there are people surviving on the very edge of prosperous society who do not participate in the division of the fruits of the economic progress. Their existence is regarded a relic of the past, and it is not presumed that their number would increase in the future. On the contrary, he believes that this problem will be solved quite soon.

From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s this term was used for the description of an individual life failure, strikingly contrasting with the increasing prosperity of the rest of society. The term is used only sporadically and exclusively as a synonym of poverty and marginality.

Up to the mid1970s exclusion (also called inadaptation at that time what is a term from the medical-social and administrative fields) was considered to be a marginal social problem. It was presumed that persons threatened by social exclusion will gradually be introduced into the functioning society as it was formed in thirty successful post-war years.

Despite the fact that the phenomenon has been named, it is treated very loosely. It is used to describe life failure together with other terms. It is not part of a deeper theoretical reflection at that time; it is not studied in relation to particular processes taking place in society and its economic system; any typology of exclusion is not done, its stages are not studied, nor are the ways in which various groups of people react to social exclusion.

Helplessness related to the phenomenon of social exclusion at that time is well expressed by François Perroux (1972) in his work. He speaks of people "excluded from the system" in contrast to those who participate in the system. The "excluded" have nothing in common with workers; they are individuals who are even deprived of the officially acknowledged subsistence minimum. The category of class used by Marxism cannot adequately analyse this unorganized mass of poor people and their sad faith just in the middle of rich society.

A pioneer but still rather disputable role was played by the work of another high ranked civil servant René Lenoir (1974) in the genesis of the concept of social exclusion. It is still considered the first monograph explicitly dealing with social exclusion. Nevertheless the book has no theoretical ambitions, and the term social exclusion is used more or less accidentally and only at four places, always in the meaning of a "lack of adaptation".[1]

What is symptomatic is the fact that the book was published a year after the first oil shock shaking the upward trajectory of the post-war development and was the first to question the prevailing ideas of the possibilities of the infinite material growth from positions different from the ecological ones.

The book deals with people who are not able to adapt themselves to the conditions of normal society, and this is why they live in poverty. Who rank among the excluded according to Lenoir are physically and mentally handicapped persons and, beside them, two types of the so-called socially misadjusted: asocial persons (delinquents, prostitutes, beggars, alcoholics) and minority persons (members of racial and ethnic minorities). Lenoir almost does not mention the unemployed what is

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[1] René Lenoir originally proposed the title "Different France". The term "exclusion" was introduced into the title thanks to the publisher who considered it more attractive.

understandable with regard to their low number in France of the first half of the 1970s. Despite this fact the total number of the socially excluded in his country is estimated at five million persons.

Lenoir's approach to the phenomenon of social exclusion is rather unclear. He says that it is a phenomenon determined by macrosocial mechanisms; still, he searches for its causes in so specific factors such as precipitous urbanization, the excess of violence on television etc. He states as the very first author that nobody is safe from the threat of exclusion; he still relates this feature to fragility of family, the spread of drugs and the increasing number of drug addicts etc. It is evident that his view of exclusion as a macrosocial problem is intertwined with the concept of exclusion as a manifestation of individual social pathology.[2]

Lenoir uses the term exclusion variously in the meaning of low adaptability, marginality and asociality. This mass is also manifested in his definition when he understands exclusion as "a simple statement that there are persons in the industrial and urbanized society of the end of the 20th century who are not able to fulfil their needs in consequence of their physical or mental weaknesses, in consequence of their behaviour or in consequence of a lack of education and require permanent care, or are a threat to the others or are segregated both through the fault of their own or the fault of the collectivity" (Lenoir, 1974: 130).

The historian and sociologist Jeanine Verdès-Leroux strongly criticized René Lenoir's approach at the end of the 1970s. Her texts were the first to demand strongly the embedding of the analysis of social exclusion into a wider context of economic and social changes of society.

In her following shorter text (Verdès-Leroux, 1978a) the author criticizes Lenoir for arbitrary mixing of diverse categories and criminalizing all of them to various extent. Thus as the author states ironically, the concept of "exclusion" serves for excluding the question about the origin of exclusion.

The same author states in the conclusion of her book on the issue of social work that Lenoir only lists various categories of people who have

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[2] "No family," states Lenoir, "no matter how bourgeois and of how strong religious or laic moral tradition, can fool itself into believing that none of their children can escape from home one day, start to take drugs, become a juvenile delinquent or rebel in a different way" (Lenoir, 1974: 36).

problems. There is a total absence of an analysis of economic causes of their problems. Lenoir only appeals to the others for not forgetting these persons. His suggested solutions are superficial: e.g. he requires a change of office hours in correspondence to their needs, an improvement of foreigners' language training, opening their hearts and being kind to them.

The author finds the cause of exclusion in dualization of worker labour. Less qualified and less educated persons have low incomes and only minimum social security. This leads to degradation of their view of themselves. This attitude is also supported by social workers who – after the fashion of the church – encourage them to acknowledging their fault in the situation that has arisen. Thus social work contributes to the split-up of the working class and the decrease of their solidarity with the least successful people. This reinforces the position of the classes which are dominant in society.

In general, the term exclusion was refused in French sociology in the 1970s. There was a strong influence of the Marxist concept of classes there while the interpretation by means of "exclusion" did not speak of class conflict but rather of those who – similarly to Marx's lumpenproletariat – cannot serve the capital even for exploitation.

Interest in social problems has been increasing since the end of the 1970s, especially in relation to the mass growth of unemployment that shifts poverty away from its marginal position. Still, what is mentioned is precarious (in the meaning of uncertain, fragile) employment not exclusion. The term "new poverty" is preferred to "exclusion" in the mid1980s.

The term "exclusion" took deep roots in French sociology and related disciplines only at the end of the 1980s and completely dominated it in the 1990s. It was already used in the contemporary meaning. It is since the beginning of the 1990s when social exclusion has been discussed in relation to failures of many public policies.

The emphasis is put on the fact that social exclusion means more than just poverty. It includes elements exceeding common inequality. This inequality is so far-reaching that it brings the affected a problem with their own identity. It is inequality interfering and disturbing their contacts with the rest of society and is so intense that the socially excluded are not able to collectively defend their rights.

Exclusion started to be viewed as a phenomenon of universal importance what is well documented by the text by Michel Autès (2000) defining exclusion on three general levels, namely from the viewpoint of anthropology, economy and social work.

Anthropology studies the functions of excluding, i.e. practices present in every kind of society. There is an example of the analyses by René Girard who studies rituals of sacrifice. The institution of scapegoat serves as a way of reinforcing the internal cohesion of a group by means of scarifying those who have been labelled bad, harmful, evil-bearers. This category frequently includes foreigners or those who are different in any way. It is possible to fight against this form of exclusion by means of breaking of stereotypes.

The economic perspective of exclusion in its distinctive form can be found in the ideology of neoliberalism. According to it, competition is hard by its nature, there are dead and wounded in it what is considered natural. The problem of exclusion should be solved by means of market according to this perspective. Still, market treatment moves in a vicious circle: the widening of the market and market logic produces exclusion and inequality. More market logic, less interventions, less regulations are required to solve extreme inequality produced by market logic – and this keeps worsening the entire problem.

Social work views social exclusion through the prism of a series of little individual incidents. Misfortune strikes people who have simply been unlucky. It is necessary to do something for them. Every case is different, every personal history is different, it is not possible to generalize and state something of capital importance about exclusion as a whole.

1.2 Causes of exclusion

The issue of social exclusion merges with the issue of precarity as soon as during the 1920s. It was not precarity of work at that time because the decrease of job opportunities had not broken forth yet in its entire scope; it was insecurity affecting underprivileged families in the period of increasing social insecurity. It is indicated by the work of the sociologist of family Agnès Pitrou (1978). She deals with families with

financial problems and pays also attention to housing troubles besides health problems and a poor quality of family life in relation to this.

Social exclusion becomes an object of mass interest of French literature and politics start to react in order to face this process at the end of the 1980s. It is not a coincidence – significant changes in economy as well as the social field took place during the 1980s.

The unemployment rate as well as the scope of non-standard (precarious) work increases significantly now. An increasingly higher proportion of economically active people find themselves outside a standard employment and related security systems. The increase of the proportion of non-standard employment contracts made part of formerly reliably integrated persons insecure on one hand; on the other hand it allowed approximately a half of the long-term unemployed to find at least some job for a while, albeit they lost it soon. Thus the category of the repeatedly unemployed becomes larger instead of the long-term unemployed.

It is since the end of the 1980s when motives ignored up to then have been mentioned in the analysis of mechanisms and causes of social exclusion in this context.

Main attention is paid to mass unemployment and precarity, i.e. insecure work and non-standard employment not securing the employee sufficiently.

The category of the vulnerable ones emerges as the middle position between reliable integration and total exclusion. This is related to the spread of non-standard forms of work.

Poverty ceases to be perceived as a temporary state. A half of poor households is not poor in the following year; other households fall into poverty oppositely what relates to the solution of unemployment by means of non-standard employment contracts.

The first studies on cumulation of handicaps are written when unemployment is the statistically most visible part of the problems, soon accompanied by other problems, including housing problems at the top.

Contrary to the 1970s, there is not an overwhelming majority of reliably integrated persons opposing only tiny, clearly distinguishable islets of

poverty ten years later. States which are not unambiguously either are spreading. Vulnerability is mentioned in this context.[3]

The term adaptability is revised in relation to all these changes. Low adaptability is not discussed as incapability of individuals with various deficits to adapt themselves to a state to which the others have adapted more or less satisfyingly; it is discussed as incapability of otherwise problem-free people to adapt themselves to quickly changing circumstance and conditions.

One of the first works dealing with the structural causes of exclusion is an extensive study by François Dubet (1987) focusing on young people living on city outskirts. The author studies mainly young people's reactions to social exclusion; attention is also paid to its causes. Unemployment is considered to be the main one; it makes them dependent persons who are always penniless, and it arouses a sense of shame in them. Because they do not have money they do not have a chance to leave their neighbourhood where they are killing their time of which they have abundance. The fact that they were born in this neighbourhood means that they head towards exclusion. The membership of the neighbourhood stigmatizes and arouses suspicion of committing an offence in the others.

Several works are written at the end of the 1980s, studying social exclusion in a broader context. An example can be a work whose author Serge Milano (1988) states that the number of poor people in France is not increasing but poverty of those who rank to this category intensifies significantly. The author appreciates the implementation of measures for helping the poorest ones (RMI); he still points out that this measure will have no effect if it does not lead to long-lasting inclusion of the victims of exclusion into society.[4]

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[3] It was still at the beginning of the 1980s when Henri Mendras (1980) believed that groups of the poor and excluded ones were closing up and clearly marking their boundaries with the rest of society. Nevertheless, different trends had been developing at that time, and the boundaries between the socially excluded and the rest of society were becoming permeable.

[4] A minimum income – Revenu minimum d´insertion (RMI) – for those who were threatened by exclusion was introduced in France in 1988.
Analyses of situation in those who participated in this programme that were part of the evaluation process allowed to capture the process of transition from insecure, precarious work to exclusion, i.e. cumulation of various disadvantages and weakening of social bond.

The concept of "exclusion" absolutely dominated the field at the beginning of the 1990s. The number of people out of work in France exceeded three millions at that time. At the same time the failure of a number of public policies which were supposed to face it starts to manifest itself. As shown by Simon Wuhl among others, this failure was determined especially by a close relation between exclusion and a lack of paid and appreciated work (Wuhl, 1991, 1992).

It is apparent at that time that exclusion is not produced somewhere on the edge of society but directly from the society centre, especially on the level of companies. It is company measures what triggers off the mechanisms leading to exclusion or desaffiliation.

Thus it is not a coincidence that many works pointing out by their titles that exclusion is literally produced, made by society are published in a short time.[5]

The next analytic step in studying the relations between the situation of the labour market and spreading exclusion was taken by Serge Paugam (2000). He analytically distinguished two meanings of precarity.

The first meaning of precarity is related to the quality of employment contract and denotes a lack of protection, absence of insurance that used to be automatically bound to an employment contract. As seen below, this meaning of precarity is dealt with by Robert Castel in his works.

The second meaning of precarity refers to the quality of performed work. Here it means a loss of self-confidence and the feeling of uselessness derived from a low status of performed work. This is the meaning of precarity used by Pierre Bourdieu.

Paugam observed the influence of non-standard work on family, the duration of marriage, relationships between parents and children as well as relationships to more distant relatives.

A broader context of the closing vicious circle of exclusion is captured by Stéphane Baud and Michel Pialoux (2003) in their study of a socially disadvantaged neighbourhood of the town of Montbéliard. The

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[5] Three books pointing out this fact were published in a single year – 1997. Jean Maisondieu named his book Factory of the Excluded; Michel-Louis Rouquette published a book titled Exclusion, Factory and Motors; and the book by Hélène Thomas is titled Production of the Excluded.

following vicious circle occurs in many sensitive neighbourhoods: youth structural unemployment, family break-up, manifestations of vandalism and violence, more and more frequent police interventions, escape from the neighbourhood of those who have means to do it, an excessive load in social workers and the decline of institutions supposed to care for young people, the formation of dangerous places where drug trade is concentrated, carried out by the young unemployed, the formation of youth gangs controlling their territories, more and more frequent clashes with the police, increasing aggression in the youth against all the other community inhabitants, the reinforcement of the police what is perceived as police oppression by the young ones, escalation of destruction that more and more frequently turns to the stage of collective self-destruction (degradation of community facilities: schools, gyms, cultural facilities). The right and extreme right use the problems of these quarters, called lawless areas by the media) for their political objectives; calls for repression to the exclusion of prevention increase (Baud, Pialoux, 2003: 19).

The mentioned study contains also a comprehensive list of factors leading to the development of social exclusion. These include mass unemployment and precarity of work as well as the weakening of mechanisms of collective protection of work, the collapse of workers' political representation, the destabilization of families from lower social classes, the decay of neighbourhoods inhabited by this population and the spread of ethnic-racial residential segregation.

In one word: these are consequences of the decay of the social category of workers.

What has been pointed out since the beginning of the 1980s is the fact that the entire mechanism of exclusion is closing in a hopeless, vicious circle.

Those who have nothing to offer at the labour market find themselves in a situation that does not allow them to participate in the labour market due to their education and state of health (Jean-Daniel Reynaud, Yves Grafmeyer, 1981).[6]

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[6] What authors emphasize twenty years later is the role of housing in the vicious circle of exclusion: "In consequence of unemployment or standard employment housing is lost what prevents obtaining of a new job and keeping at the labour market" (Bihr, Pfefferkorn, 1999: 205).

Exclusion is of a considerably generational character. Possibilities to find a standard employment closed to young poor-educated people in the 1990s. The discovery of economy at the turn of the century meant work for them; it still concerned only its non-standard form very frequently. It was soon followed by frustration over no professional stabilization that would be waiting for young people. The permanently temporary situation in which the young ones find themselves turns them into a new "dangerous class", a class of people without any future (ibid: 26).[7]

It was again Serge Paugam (2005) who placed the process of exclusion in a wider historical context. He distinguished three forms of poverty characteristic of three types of societies.[8]

There was integrated poverty in agricultural society. Nearly everybody was poor; this was why this state did not exclude people from society, it rather was a common norm.

Marginal poverty was characteristic of the conditions of the culminating industrial society. There were only few poor ones who lived on peripheries, they did not present a central problem. They were stigmatized; it was still believed at that time that the problem of poverty and penury would be solved in the course of time. It was the case in thirty years following the World War II.

The start of industrial society did not solve the problem of poverty; on the contrary, it started to worsen it. Here Paugam speaks of disqualifying poverty, and it is not difficult to realize that it is about social exclusion. This form does not refer only to the stable state of poverty but rather to the process which can influence those parts of the population which have been perfectly integrated at the labour market. It influences people facing more and more burdensome precarity in relation to incomes, housing conditions and health as well as the participation in social life. It includes new forms of spatial disqualification. Thus the crisis of

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[7] The term "dangerous class" is taken from the influential work by the historian Louis Chevalier (1958) who pointed out the quite common equation of workers with criminals in the bourgeois Paris of the first half of the 19th century.

[8] Serge Paugam dealt with historical aspects of social exclusion on a long term basis. It was in the foreword to a book as early as in 1996 that contemporary exclusion resembled pauperism of the 19th century in some aspects. At that time the cause was the people's attachment to exhausting and poorly paid work; today it is the exclusion of the least qualified ones from the labour market, their redundancy.

urban social network accompanies the crisis of the labour market and contributes to the increase of economic and social inequalities.[9]

The majority of those stricken with poverty was not poor before. They experience the absence of protection as well as the absence of acknowledgement from the part of the others now, and fear of outclassing is spreading through the entire society.

1.3 Types and stages of exclusion

One of the main reproaches that are brought to the term exclusion is that a large amount of poorly arranged and very different situations is ranked to it. Exclusion has become a term for everything, and it is frequently not very clear what all these diverse cases have in common.[10]

More light can be cast by the endeavour to distinguish various types of exclusion and divide the process of social exclusion into partial and more specific stages.

First of all, it is clear that it is completely different if it concerns the process of social exclusion of individuals affected separately, or of entire numerous groups of inhabitants. Thus, it is possible to speak of individual exclusion and group exclusion. Reactions of the affected are significantly different; the same applies to the dynamics of its course.

What still relates to both the cases is the differentiation provided by Robert Castel (1991), describing the coexistence of two dimensions of

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[9] Paugam states in this context that banks are not willing to grant loans to people with uncertain income and flat owners deny them lodgings, even in social housing.

[10] There are even considerations according to which spatial exclusion of the rich and successful ones in protected areas is a certain type of exclusion. We consider such a perspective misleading, similarly to calling these neighbourhoods ghettos. A very specific type of exclusion can be regarded what Pierre Bourdieu and Patrick Champagne call "internal exclusion". They speak of students in this context who have been expelled from a more ambitious study major to a less demanding one. This is a sort of forced integration into a less valuable environment. As the authors state, something similar can happen to the unemployed, members of ethnic minorities, homeless persons or people with various handicaps (Bourdieu, 1993).

exclusion. Besides disturbances on the level of employment (loss of work or its precarity), disturbances in relationships to the others happen too.

Castel distinguishes integration, vulnerability and disaffiliation in the above work. Ideal integration takes place when people both have stable work and can rely on solid relational support from the side of the others. Vulnerability may mean either uncertain work or fragile relationships to the others or even both. The worst form of disaffiliation is presented by the absence of work and social isolation in addition.

Castel emphasizes that a good score on the relationship axis can compensate a bad score on the axis of relation to work to a certain extent, and the other way around.

The economic dimension is not completely insignificant but it is not absolutely determining.

Castel's differentiation is used by Pierre Bourdieu (1993) in his comprehensive work dealing with various forms of injustice and human poverty. His typology of situation in which the RMI recipients find themselves covers also possible stages of the process of exclusion. The first type is the situation when social bonds are still quite satisfactory but work becomes uncertain and incomes irregular. The second type is represented by people who have been unemployed for a long time but their social bonds remain more or less satisfactory. And finally, the third type is a complete case of exclusion when the affected find themselves out of job as well as without social bonds.[11]

At the same time when Robert Castel distinguished two axes of exclusion significant for the determination of its typology, Serge Paugam (1991) elaborated one of the first analyses of various stages of exclusion. He distinguished them according to the level of social troublesomeness, according to the degree of social disqualification and according to the relation to social services from the side of those threatened by exclusion.

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[11] Two dimensions of exclusion are discussed also by Jérôme Ballet (2001). Nevertheless, he is not inspired by Castel but Serge Paugam. Poverty itself does not exclude necessarily. It is possible to speak of social exclusion only when the loss of job is accompanied by the interruption of social bond. This interruption can affect entire sociability, supportive relationships of the family or the participation in associational life.

Although Paugam emphasizes that these are not the stages of exclusion in the true sense of the word because they are not three subsequent states through which victims of exclusion would go successively, his chart describes hardly questionable logic. It consists of three situations: fragility, dependence, rupture.[12]

Fragility derives from the problem with finding or keeping a permanent job. The first housing problems start to emerge. The affected try to get out of this situation on their own, they frequently refuse help from social workers. They live on their own incomes, especially the younger ones agree at least to irregular assistance.

Dependence starts where   job problems usually connected with lower earnings deepen. These are people who have experienced an unsuccessful search for a job and a series of retraining courses of no effect. Their state of health has frequently deteriorated. They accept help from social workers. They have given up part of their autonomy and live in a sort of in-between world: they do not belong either to the integrated ones or the excluded ones. The share of social benefits in their total incomes significantly increases; they use the help of social assistance.

Rupture means that hope of functioning help of assistance disappears. A cumulation of handicaps occurs: these people are permanently out of the labour market, they have health problems, lose their housing, lose contacts with their families. They have neither any income from a job nor a regular income from benefits. These become only an object of irregular crisis intervention.

Paugam's chart describes three qualitatively different situations through which it is possible to go in the process of social exclusion. At the author points out, these are not subsequent stages through which all victims of social exclusion would go. Some manage to overcome a crisis on the stage of fragility and reintegrate into society. It is possible to reintegrate even from a situation described as dependence. And on the contrary, it

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[12] According to Michel Autès (2000) the same logic is applied also in typologies created by corresponding authorities and social workers themselves. They distinguish clients who have had minor problems but they can cope with it themselves. Further those who cannot get out of their troubles on their own. And finally those who do not even use help offered to them in any way.

is possible to fall in the stage of rupture without experiencing both the previous stages.

Besides it is necessary to point out that Paugman's chart concerns only cases of individual exclusion. It is inapplicable to the mechanism of community exclusion.

Furthermore, the course of exclusion depends not only on the fact whether it concerns an individual, or affects a numerous group. What is also important is whether the people are at the beginning of their work career, or they have worked for tens of years. A role is played also by the stage of family life, the level of qualification, the extent of participation in informal social networks and other factors.

These factors determine not only the course of crisis and the extent of its gravity but also way in which the affected react to the threat of social exclusion.

1.4 Reactions of the excluded

Whether we regard Paugam's chart (fragility, dependence, rupture) as a description of the particular stages of exclusion, or a mere description of three typical states of various gravity in which people can find themselves in various order in the process of social exclusion, it is a fact that the mentioned description has its inner logic. It seems to correspond with social workers' experience with various types of their clients. As stated beforehand, the chart can be applied only to cases of individual not group exclusion.

What can be regarded as the first work dealing with reactions of those who are threatened by exclusion as an entire large group, is the above mentioned study by François Dubet (1987) focusing on the young unemployed who live, or rather survive in suburbs of large cities.

The reaction of the suburb's youth to exclusion is a permanent oscillation between the feeling of helplessness (still, they do not create a subculture of escapism) and rushes of anger and delinquency (still, they do not create an organized delinquent subculture). Many of them tried to find a job but were repeatedly unsuccessful. They adopted the motto it is better not to try than fail again. They feel that they have been ruled out

of the game definitively and that they do not feel like playing anymore. Because they are penniless they cannot leave the neighbourhood and spend their spare time of which they have abundance in a good way there. The membership of the neighbourhood stigmatizes and raises suspicion they had committed an offence.

These people do not believe that it is possible to change society, and they do not believe that there is somebody who could help them in their bad situation. At the same time they hold the middle-class values, including finding of a well-paid job, having a new quality care and arranging for their own housing.[13]

The awareness of impossibility of reaching these goals in their lives leads them to alternating waves of absolute lethargy and irregular bursts of aggression. These bursts are absolutely spontaneous, have no clear target and are everything but an attempt to change their own situation, or even to change social conditions in some way.

In the above mentioned work dealing with the varying level of social exclusion into which a person can fall, Serge Paugam (1991) also discusses the issue of reaction in the handicapped quite in depth.

The basic structure is simple and can be found in other authors too.[14]

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[13] Other authors also emphasize that victims of social exclusion keep the middle-class values. Cyprien Avenel (2005) states that there is a significant tension between living conditions and individual aspirations in inhabitants of socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It is not about "culture of poverty" but the relation to consumption culture. It is about people who are stuck in economic precarity with their feet but in the middle-class cultural universe with their heads. Their life styles and ideas of themselves are shaped by their efforts for personal autonomy despite the fact that they usually do not have economic means that would enable them to do something similar.
Robert Castel (2007) characterizes the value system of social exclusion victims in a similar way. He reacts to mass riots at suburbs of French cities in 2005 in his work. He writes of young people whose fundamental rights are guaranteed but they do not have a chance to find a good job. Thus, they do not live completely outside but not quite inside society. They share the values of the majority population; still they lack means to fulfil them.

[14] E.g. Gaulejac and Léonetti (1994) arrive at the same conclusions in their analysis of reactions in the participants in the RMI project. After the initial stage of resistance when they want to actively solve their problems on their own, they adapt to the role of the assisted and subsequently give up absolutely, or find ways of escapism from the bleak reality.

The initial contact with the threat of exclusion (fragility) is usually related to the belief that the affected can cope with the situation on their own. The effort to use their life experience and help themselves prevails in people of middle and old age; the younger ones are confident for some time that it is only temporary complications when entering their independent life.

According to Paugam there are in fact three reactions in the situation of dependence, and it is possible to speak of subsequent stages in this case. Clients gradually lose their motivation to work, become more and more dependent on social services and elaborates justification of this dependence in the course of them.

They still believe in a quick improvement of their situation and are afraid of permanent dependence on the stage of "postponed assistance". The transition to the stage of "established assistance" means that they rationalize their dependence in various ways; they still stay open to cooperation with social workers. The third stage of "required assistance" means only minimum motivation to work and even greater requirements from the institutions of social assistance.

The extreme stage, called rupture by Paugam, is characterized by victims having no income from work or receive no social benefits. They live on charity, food relief, sporadic illegal work, petty thefts and begging. They cannot keep satisfactory housing because they do not have a stable income.

This stage also has its milder and severer forms. Paugam describes a situation as "warded-off marginality" when the affected still have some will to integrate themselves socially and professionally. They frequently declare that they want to start a new life; still, their situation is such that it is not likely that they would succeed in it. On the stage of "organized marginality" they have lost their will to change; they adopt themselves to life on the very edge of society.[15]

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[15] It is interesting that the seven-item typology outlined by Paugam is rather sceptic about chances of social work. Clients are willing to cooperate with social workers and actively participate in fulfilling set tasks only on the middle stage (established assistance). On the three previous stages clients feel distaste for such cooperation and regard it as dishonesting. On the contrary, honour steps aside and clients demand help without being willing to do something for it themselves.

In his mentioned work Paugam also describes the strategies of compensation of low social status and ways by means of which the affected persons try to keep social distinction, i.e. to show in fact that others are even worse off. Their low status from the viewpoint of work successes is compensated by pointing out that they fulfil their duties in other fields (e.g. care for children). At other times they choose the long-used concept of "the worthy poor ones" and disassociate themselves from those who do not need help and abuse it. Paugam gives efforts of the socially excluded to avoid contacts with the others and their close ones as a strategy of social distinction; further dissociation from those whom the affected regard as worse off than themselves, and finally the effort to shift stigmatization to the others, once more to those who are worse off.

It emerges that a bad social situation in the excluded does not lead to the development of the consciousness of social position and common interests, as was the case of industrial workers, but it keeps dismantling the category of the socially excluded and makes the development of solidarity among them impossible. This is why chances of mobilization for a change of social situations for their benefit in the excluded are virtually none.

Conduct of those affected by social exclusion basically reproduces conduct patterns commonly found in entire society. As Éric Maurin (2004) states, it is not as if the city would be divided into the minority of the excluded and those well integrated. Everybody segregates: further from those underneath, closer to those above. Everybody wants to be among their own kind and avoid those who are worse off. It is a silent war over territory. Everybody tries to join those of a better status and better expectations for the future. Workers escape from unemployed immigrants, high income employees from the middle class, more educated professions from ordinary employees. How to integrate the lower ones, asks Maurin, if everybody wants to be different from those who are underneath?

1.5 Exclusion and the theory of society

French sociology was under a strong influence of Marxism and its theory of classes in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless the process of exclusion was difficult to grasp from this perspective because the socially excluded usually stand aside the process of exploitation which is the central theme of the Marxist concept of class antagonism.

Marxism had been left to a great extent in the 1980s; still, no new theory explaining the nature of social exclusion and its impacts to society as a whole had been created.

It was only in the first half of the 1990s when attempts to theoretically grasp this disturbance or rupture of social integrity emerge.[16]

Alain Touraine (1992) shows a very ambitious attitude when he presents social exclusion as an absolute change of the arrangement of society. Post-industrial society brings along the "overturn of the axis" of social structure. The vertical opposition (the ruling/the ruled), characteristic for industrial society, is replaced by the horizontal opposition (those who are inside versus those who are outside).

This literal concept of the socially excluded as those situated outside society immediately provoked sharp criticism. Even those who are worst off do not live absolutely outside society. In other words: absolute exclusion is unconceivable under the current conditions. This situation is always relative in reference to those who are integrated more fully and reliably.

On the other hand, Tourain's concept obscures the situation inside contemporary society and distorts its character. It gives the idea that the core of society is well integrated in contrast to those who are excluded. Thus it gives the middle class an illusion that they are in the same boat with those on the top. Thus it disguises and makes visible the deterioration of the middle class position.

The author of a significantly different concept of social exclusion is Robert Castel. In his polemic text he criticizes Tourain mainly for

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[16] The first attempts to theoretically grasp the issue of social exclusion are summed up in the works by Martine Xiberass (1994, 1996).

two reasons that are frequently discussed by other authors too (Castel, 1995a).

Castel criticizes Tourain for understanding exclusion as a state, not examining its dynamics and not saying what mechanisms lead to it and to what extent those staying in the core of society are responsible for excluding the others to its edge. He points out the problematic nature outside society at the same time. Exclusion does not mean that people are located outside society, deprived of all their rights and absolutely separated from it. This used to be the case sometimes in the past; today's situation of the socially needful is not comparable with it. Today's exclusion is not about official discrimination but about the process of social destabilization, degradation of work relationships, increasing fragility of sociability. Castel believes that this term may have its sense even today. It is misleading to label it to every situation of imbalance. What applies furthermore is that if someone concentrates on the "struggle against exclusion" they disguise the inability to intervene against its causes.

In the same year Castel (1995b) analyses a number of points which are absolutely key ones from the perspective of the issue of exclusion in his extensive work on changes of the social issue.

He promotes the term "negative individuality" which includes the definition of exclusion as a mere negative of well integrated people or people on the upswing. It is about persons defined only by lack: a lack of acknowledgement, a lack of security, a lack of property and a lack of stable bonds. All they know about freedom is a lack of bonds, and all they know about autonomy is the absence of support from the others.[17]

The sociological transcription of negative individuality is Castel's term "deconversion". Deconversion is about "supernumerary people", i.e. those who have no place in the social structure, in the hitherto organization of work and in the system of distribution of respected positions. Thus deconversion takes place when mobility is deregulated (increased) but at

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[17] Castel stopped using this term later because he concluded that it could have a pejorative meaning. Instead, he distinguishes individuals driven by excess ("individu par excès") and individuals by default ("individu par défaut"). The first ones are members of the middle class, have a feeling of independence from the others and are frequently immersed in themselves up to the extent of narcissism. The latter ones aspire to individuality but they have not resources needed for it (Castel, 2009).

the same time fixedness of structures in which it can be applied persists. A number of people find themselves in an absurd situation then: they have to work under new conditions but they are not able to earn their livings in them. They become victims of lack of such places in the social structure to which social usefulness and public acknowledgement are related. Today it includes elderly people of about fifty years of age, the young ones looking for their first jobs and wandering among internships, the long-term unemployed. They become redundant persons.[18]

The concept of "negative individuality" and "deconversion" allows Castel to outline, among other, a criticism of the position of social work. Opportunities for social work are significantly limited in the given situation. Transition from the policy of integration to the policy of mere insertion is taking place. While the objective of the policy of integration was to ensure access to public services and education, to reduce social inequalities and to distribute chances better, to develop mechanisms of collective protection and to consolidate the position of hired workers; the content of insertion is specific strategies focused only on the most threatened part of the population and the most socially devastated places (inhabitants of sensitive neighbourhoods, pupils with the worst school results, poorly socialized families, unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed etc.). The policy of insertion is enforced by market globalization, efforts for competitiveness at any costs, the triumph of entrepreneurial ideology. In the case of insertion it is not about reduction of inequalities but about a compromise to market logic while preserving control over the most extreme impacts of liberalism. The state does not have means for more.

The policy of insertion tries to bring the standard of these groups to those who are not sufficiently integrated. What if these populations are unintegratable in the current situation, asks Castel. What if individuals and entire groups who are helped are not able to adapt themselves to the dynamics of hired society?

Castel (1995a) points out the significant problems related to the use of this term as soon as in his paper on traps hidden in the concept of

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[18] Jacques Donzelot and Philippe Estèbe (1994) use a similar term with an equally warning undertone at approximately the same time. They speak of the "normal useless" (les normaux inutiles).

exclusion. He repeated and broadened his criticism in his text called How Tune Exclusion (Castel, 2000).

As he agrees with many authors, above all it is a term that has undergone great inflation since the 1990s, and various contents are hidden in it.[19]

Furthermore, this term is used for designation of the final state not of what has led to it. Humans are usually not born excluded; they become excluded. These are largely people who started to be referred to as "new poverty" around 1984. It is poverty that is a degradation in relation to the previous situation because these people have not always been poor.

Castel repeats that the reference to exclusion often functions as a trap. It is the case of Alain Tourain who speaks of people who are inside, and those who are outside society. Still, he does not say in what sense those who are "in" produce those who are "out".[20]

Castel's fundamental objection against the term exclusion consists in the fact that today's situation of the socially needful is not comparable with exclusion as it used to function in the past. Entire communities (the expulsion of the Jews or the Moriscos, killing of the heretics or the obsessed, genocide in the extreme case). Separated spaces (asylums, prisons, ghettos, leper colonies) were built for them some other time.

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[19] This objection was later repeated and specified by Julien Damon (2008). This term is so vague that it is frequently impossible to find out what it concerns. Who is rated among it, are the long-term unemployed, RMI recipients, the handicapped, illegal immigrants, homeless persons. It relates to completely different issues and completely heterogeneous groups. Exclusion understood this broadly does not hide anything more that astonishment at the existence of poverty and collective concern about the threat of unemployment.

[20] As Castel points out, socialist governments glorified competitiveness and described companies as the only source of wealth and employment at the beginning of the 1980s. The vocabulary of exclusion was being developed parallelly. It was as if compassion to the excluded hid the policy accepting hegemony of economic laws and the dictate of financial capital. It is cheaper to care for the excluded that to employ prevention measures in order to prevent falling of these people from society. Care for the excluded requires only technical measures while the prevention of exclusion would require political ones.

The affected were deprived of some rights (the Jews were not allowed to practice some professions, similarly to the Afro-Americans).[21]

Today it is possible to talk about exclusion only through metaphor because it does not show any of three elements of classical exclusion. The socially excluded are not threatened by their physical extermination, expulsion to selected spaces is less probable and concerns only the so-called undesirable persons; so what threatens a certain category of inhabitants is a mere assignment of a special status; nevertheless this can turn into positive discrimination.

In his other important work Robert Castel shifts from the criticism of the term to the criticism of conditions which this term tries to capture (Castel, 2009).[22]

He observes a distinct contradiction of our times: acute shortage of work on one hand and praise of work performance as a source of success and appreciation on the other hand. Everybody is supposed to work; still the amount of meaningful work available is still decreasing.

It was as late as in the 1970s when non-standard forms of work were presented as mere emergency measures which will certainly cease when economic difficulties were over. They have become a "normal" part of the organization of work since then. Precarity is not treated as something temporary, as an excess but as a legitimate tool of solving of economic problems.

Result: people are supposed to work despite the fact that jobs they have a chance to get cannot ensure dignified life for them. The share of uncertain and poorly paid work is growing. If people are to accept it then social benefits have to be even lower so that it pays off to work. The lower social benefits are, the worse work people will be forced to accept.

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[21] Historical surveys by Robert Castel could have been written because French historians paid attention to exclusion a long time before sociologists did. Taking a random example, let's give the work by the important medievalist Jacques Le Goff titled The Marginal and Excluded in History (1979) or the work of the same title by Bernard Vincent published in the same year.

[22] A thorough criticism of the term social exclusion can be found as soon as in a text by Vivianne Châtel and Marc-Henry Soulet (2001). Nevertheless, these authors also conclude in their study that no matter how strident criticism is it does not eliminate gravity of what was intended to be denoted by this term.

It is a way to society of full working activity promoted by the OECD countries.

Castel also points out another contradiction. Social work helped integrate marginal persons into the integrated complex up to the mid1970s. Still, how are they supposed to be integrated today if the complex is getting more and more disintegrated?

Castel proposes that it is better call them the defeated in the battle of higher economic efficiency than to use the term "the excluded". Still the winners are definitely not employees who still keep their jobs. Their situation has deteriorated too. The winner is mainly international financial capital.

Every time the self-adjusting market tries to assert itself, social costs are huge. A telling example is pauperism of the beginning of the 19th century. Over and above, solid rural foundations were persisting, and numerous informal bonds of solidarity surviving. Victory of a pure market would have immense consequences today, warns Robert Castel.

1.6 What obstructs solutions

Social exclusion in today's meaning of the word has been discussed since the end of the 1980s. Not primarily in relation to poverty or the housing issue but as a result of the fact that there was an evident shortage of standard work as early as that time.

Castel's concept of deconversion as absence of jobs related to dignity and social recognition is very telling in this sense. We live in society where social recognition is related to standard, well paid and useful work. Exactly like at the times when there still was sufficiency of such work.

At the same time when desindustrialization results in mass unemployment and precarity of work on a large scale generalization of market relationships in all the areas of life in all the areas of the life of society and exaltation of company and entrepreneurial values as the basic life strategies take place too. The groups of vulnerable or even excluded persons grow wider by those who cannot meet requirements

resulting from generalization of market relationships while standard work is disappearing.[23]

A solution of the problem of exclusion would presume two things logically: giving people a sufficient amount of standard work, or ceasing to connect acknowledgement and success with purely market success.

It is evident in today's situation and under prevailing tendencies that similar hopes are illusory. This is why it is not a surprise that various authors rather merely comment of circumstances preventing an acceptable and technically feasible solution instead of offering of a solution.

A comment of capital importance on these circumstances came from Robert Castel (1995b) again. He asked the fundamental question to what extent market logic is compatible with social cohesion.

Market logic disrupts the linkage that has been set between work and social protection by society. According to Castel, the only solution would be to keep this linkage and share the work providing protection and bringing social appreciation.

Still, such a solution is not possible without certain preconditions: the process of delocalization of job opportunities would have to be brought under control, i.e. their drain to countries with lower price of work and the virtual absence of insurance accompanying lower prices of work. Labour would have to be shifted sufficiently efficiently and smoothly from outdated jobs to new ones. Precarity of work would not have to get so far that it would not be possible to protect the affected persons on at least a minimum level (Castel, 1995b: 713).

It is evident that compliance with Castel's fundamental preconditions for the existence and sustainability of social cohesion is virtually unrealistic under the contemporary trends.

Two completely different tendencies are coming in instead. One of them is pointed out by Pierre Rosanvallon (1995). He states that

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[23] Robert Castel points out another paradox: The more individual society is, the more protection individuals need because they do not have other support (Castel, 2008: 115). He says even more explicitly at another place: An individual is not something given; it is a social construct. And social history shows that the construction of independent modern individual was enabled by generalization of social protection (Castel, 2009: 269).

there has been a discrepancy between social policy (focusing more and more on the support of the socially excluded) and fiscal policy (these measures are more and more paid only by the middle class that cannot expect anything from the state for itself) since the 1980s. In this sense of disruption, social cohesion does harm to those who seemingly remain in the core of society.

The second tendency was noted by e.g. Thierry Godefroy (1996) at about the same time. "Liberal economic policy and more repressive punitive policy assert themselves at the same time. The changeover from the culture of welfare state to the culture of market emphasizes individual responsibility what is accompanied by tightening in the punitive area" (Paugam, 1996: 453). In this sense those who most suffer the consequences of social cohesion are its victims.[24]

According to Michel Autès (2000) contemporary society is arranged in such a way that a number of dichotomies are necessarily faced during discussions over the solution of exclusion: either having a standard job for everybody, or creating society where work will not be central. Either having a strong and centralized state able to secure the people, or giving much greater importance to regions and localities. Either promoting the functioning of today's system of social security, or inventing a new system of security on some different basis.

Thus it is not easy to find a system solution of the problem of exclusion. All the more so that its cause has to be searched for in the core of the system, not on its edge, as Robert Castel states. The primary causes of exclusion are after all rooted in certain decisions of companies or financial capital (Castel 2009: 343). Thus the solution would have to be

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[24] It is not an exception under the described trends that the measures, supposedly implemented on behalf of the socially excluded, can bring greater profit to someone else. One of the examples is given by Noëlle Burgi (2006) in her work appositely titled Exclusion Machine. It shows how the measure for facilitation of the excluded's access to the labour market (the so-called RMA – Revenu minimum d´activité) can work in practice.
The problem is that the amount of living wage (433 euros) is not focused on the unemployed but the company in the form of a state subvention for their wages. The company then pays the rest up to the subsistence wage (SMIC) or its half in the case of a part-time job. The company pays 32 euros in this case. It frequently gets employees for work that would not be done by anyone else for such amount at a cost of this sum.

preventive fight against exclusion – fight against deregulation of society of employment (ibid: 358).

Only one thing is for sure. If such prevention is not done social exclusion will keep spreading.

1.7 Conclusion of the first part

Only small numbers of those who had not managed to move upwards socially were threatened by exclusion in the 1960s and 1970s. The other way round, it was rather sporadic when individuals dropped to them (due to drugs, divorce etc.). Social handicap is understood as something similar to physical or mental handicaps at that time. The world of the integrated and non-integrated is clearly separated; the integrated are secured in many ways not to fall among the excluded (their insurance primarily derived from standard jobs, insurance for the others is guaranteed by welfare state).

In the 1980s and d1990s entire parts of the so-called common people, heading upwards in the previous decades, sink into exclusion due to insecure work (and secondarily due to weakened social bond). These are not individuals omitted by the progress anymore; they are victims of new circumstances. A great deal of these people are those who were better off before. The overwhelming majority of the socially excluded is capable of work but lost it.

Further spreading of exclusion, a growth of its extent and a threat to higher and higher classes by this phenomenon is very probable. A concurrence of two factors leads to it: on one hand there is a decrease of standard work; on the other hand the pressure on generalization of market relations is increasing, i.e. more and more narrow linkage between preservation of dignified living conditions and competence, proved at the labour market, is asserting. itself.

2 EXCLUSION AS A METHODLOGICAL PROBLEM

As indicated in the introduction, the objective of this part is to use the issue of social exclusion, namely its extreme form – homelessness – for an analysis of possibilities of social constructivism and for pointing out risks hidden in this attitude to the interpretation of social reality.[25]

Social constructionism is not a compact and unambiguously defined paradigm. In fact it is a lavishly diversified intellectual stream emphasizing – as one of many other streams – the role of subjects, i.e. individuals in mutual interactions in creation of social reality. The supporters of this stream agree that social relationships and the world comprised of them are the result of human activities while the key role is played by interpretation activities, i.e. explanation of reality.[26]

Of course, such an approach is absolutely legitimate because it refuses to understand knowledge as some neutral product created by mere reflection of reality while the role of the recognizing subject is rather passive. Compared to it, the active role of the recognizing subject is emphasized, and the role of extra-scientific elements participating in determining the course and result of the cognitive process to a great extent is pointed out at the same time.

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[25] The terms constructivism and constructionism are quite frequently confused in relation to construction of reality in literature. Constructionism will be discussed here as ways in which people in mutual relationships create and recreate their ideas of the world. Analysis of these processes is treated by e.g. phenomenological sociology and the theory of social construction of reality, rooted in phenomenological sociology. It is the term corresponding to the English term "to construe" in the sense of to interpret, understand, perceive. The term constructivism will be reserved for analyses of the construction of scientific theories. Contrary to positivism, constructivism states that scientific cognition is not an image of reality but a product of strategies of scientists themselves. It corresponds to the English term "construct" in the sense of to build, contrive.

[26] Construction of reality does not have to necessarily be limited to mere interpretation of reality. It also includes the element of negotiation, usually in cooperation with other people. What is determining for such negotiation is naturally interpretation that can change in the course of the negotiation. Still, it would be naïve to consider this idea to be a kind of innovation. It would be difficult to find one author in history of sociological thinking who would believe that people actively create reality without thinking anything of it beforehand.

Constructionism followers, radical to various extent, quite significantly differ in their opinions on to what extent and in what sense our interpretations and interpretation schemes are conditioned by our positions in society.[27]

Various phenomena, events and facts are presented as social constructs. Sociological literature offers papers on social construction of issues so different as for instance nationalism, panic and the feeling of threat, the way of scientific cognition or the influence of customs and traditions. Fairly frequent topics of the constructionists include the issues of gender or illnesses, especially mental illnesses. Still social constructionism is also used as a tool of analysis of a great number of pressing social problems.

In relation to the study of the process of social exclusion only the last field will be addressed, i.e. the opinion that social problems are a result of constructions, a product of a certain interpretation of the reality to a greater or lesser extent.

Social constructionists can be placed to a smooth and finely graded scale according to radicality of their responses to a series of questions:

First, what is the relationship between our representations, i.e. images of reality we create and share with the others, and reality itself? It is a classic philosophical question whether there is a world outside our fantasy and to what extent it is recognizable.

Second, to what extent is our vision of the world influenced by the time we live in and the culture we belong to. Are there any universal human values and norms, or does every culture and every time create its own norms and values?

And finally there is a question to what extent individual interpretations of reality are conditioned by overindividual pressures, and what the nature of these pressures is. Thus to what extent is every individual really not bound by anything and absolutely free in their interpretation of the

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[27] As the Canadian analytic philosopher Ian Hacking points out, social constructionists also vary in their opinions on whether only some socially relevant phenomena are artificially constructed, or the entire social world surrounding us is a construct (Hacking, 2006: 21).
Nevertheless we believe that this difference is unimportant and less relevant than the differences in the group of social constructionists who will be discussed below.

world, and on the contrary, by what (and to what extent) is this freedom limited.

2.1 Various forms of constructionism

The quite smooth scale of responses to the above questions is located between two extreme positions. The first one of the two poles will be called realist constructionism; the opposite pole will be postmodern constructionism.[28]

Realist constructionism states that every individual or group of people interpret the surrounding world in their own ways; nevertheless they can base this creation only on material at their disposal. This material allows them something, and on the contrary, it limits them in something else. Material for interpretation of the world is provided to people by their life experience. This leads them to certain interpretations while it drives them away from the others. The amount and quality of this applicable experience material are more or less indirectly influenced by the person's position in the society structure, opportunities and limits related to this position and reflected in their vision of the world.

Words of the French sociologist Philipp Corcuff can be fully applied to this group: "Saying that a house is constructed simply means that it is a result of human work and that it has not always been here. It does not mean that it does not exist." (Corcuff, 2011: 18).

Basically, the existence of reality independent of those who interpret it is accepted. Interpreters emphasize something in their images of reality, hide, omit and suppress something else. Such interpretation serves their

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[28] It would be difficult to find a study whose author would consistently apply all the features of what is called postmodern constructionism here. This term is used as a kind of ideal type which would include elements found scattered in a number of works by the so-called postmodern authors. We focus mainly on their tendency to underestimate the importance of social position in individuals' conduct and thinking (e.g. Maffesoli, 1988), to equate a simulation of reality and reality in itself (Baudrillard, 1981) and to articulate the problem of power in a way that can easily transfer attention from material interests of quite particular social groups (Foucault, 2000a, 2000b).

interests and can be used for mutual controlling by power; a group may force their interpretation on the others as binding.[29]

Because values of the person who compares various times and cultures are at stake, the perspective of different times and foreign cultures is always distorted by this value filter. No culture or no historical period has a key which would enable them to view the others impartially, or even to classify them according to a firm gauge.

Realist constructionism admits at the same time that an individual's freedom to construct the world in which they live with the others, can be limited by the fact that a group can force a particular interpretation of reality on the others and use it to control them more easily.

Although nearly every social constructionist refers to the book by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann titled The Social Construction of Reality (1966) this work, a classic today, only corresponds with the viewpoint we have called realist constructionism. Both the authors emphasize the role of people in construction and reconstruction of the world in which they live, still they accept the existence of objective reality that had been here before we were born, will be here after our death and "will not cease to exist no matter how much we wish it" (Berger, Luckmann, 1999: 9).

Above all they take for granted that each individual is born and grows up in a certain place within an objectively given social structure. This position in the existing stratification predestines to a considerable extent how individuals and entire groups will perceive and evaluate particular events and phenomena. E.g. children from lower classes take over their parents' views even though they can adopt various attitudes in

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[29] Realist constructionism is close to the concept of ideology as cognition led by certain out-of-science interests. Still, it does not admit the existence of illusory, false or alienated consciousness because it was presumed that some interpretations of reality can be truer than others. Constructionism in itself does not have a tool enabling to measure various interpretations of reality according to their truthfulness.

dependence on their personality – from satisfaction to resignation, bitter anger or disobedient rebelliousness (Berger, Luckmann, 1999: 131).[30]

The attitude that can be described as postmodern constructionism is located on the opposite end of the scale. Together with Vivien Burr, this position is defined as "a refusal of great narratives and replacement of the search for the truth with a celebration of plurality of (equally valid) perspectives" (Burr, 2003: 204).

This attitude does consistently not take into consideration social reality in the sense of social conditionality, mediated in any way, of those who read or interpret the world in various ways. In comparison to this, it emphasizes the uniqueness of each subject, its absolute autonomy and practically unlimited creativity with which every person interprets and immediately reinterprets their world. Thus any interpretation of the world is still arbitrary and not binding as any other interpretation; all of them are equally ephemeral, elusive, none of them is closer to the truth no matter in what way it is understood.

There is no other reality for postmodern constructionism than our visions incorporated in corresponding discourses. It is pointless to look for something else in it. Even if there is something there we will not understand it. If we have the impression that we have really glimpsed something like the truth we have no right to force this impression on the others.[31]

When constructing such forms of reality which suit us for some reason at the moment we have elements from various times and various cultures at our disposal. These can be quite freely combined and inserted into

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[30] The group of realist constructionism was significantly strengthened by Pierre Bourdieu with his elaborated concept of "structural constructionism". He accepts the existence of objectivized structures independent of the agents' consciousness and volition. These "fields" are where the fight over distribution of resources and reproduction or revision of relationships of power takes place. Pierre Bourdieu applies an element of constructionism also to the so-called habitus, i.e. individual life experience determining the way in what people will perceive the world and in what people will think and act within particular fields (Bourdieu, 1972).

[31] Such a statement can potentially be very dangerous. As the British literary critic Terry Eagleton states: "To deny that there is a significant difference between discourse and reality, between practising of genocide and talks of genocide means, among others, to rationalize it" (Eagleton, 1996: 18).

our own constructions if it suits as at the moment. Once a particular combination has lost its attraction it can be simply replaced by something more interesting for us at the moment.

There is no power or power inequality in the world of postmodern constructionism. They cannot exist because they would limit our freedom of constructing. Everything is of neutral power in this world, nothing is necessary and there is nothing impossible in it either.

What is elaborated to the extreme here is the tendency consisting in the basis of constructionism in general and acceptable at a reasonable extent, or even unexceptionable for everybody who deals with human conduct. It is an opinion that the classifications applied to the interpretation of the world "are not determined by the way in which the world is arranged; they are only a suitable way of representing the world" (Hacking, 2006: 59).

The vast and rugged space between the realist and postmodern wings of constructionism is filled with authors' opinions and concepts that gradually lose contact with reality of socially structured society and agents protecting their personal and group interests but have not stepped completely into the postmodern world where nobody is conditioned by anything and where everybody has the freedom to construct absolutely anything from practically nothing.

What plays an important role in transferring from the real world to the purely virtual world are elements that are undoubtedly true, functional and useful within their disciplines (science of culture, philosophy of language, linguistics etc.); still their uncritical use for interpretation of happening in society leads to extremely problematic outcomes.[32]

What is key in this transfer or turn is the emphasis on ritualization of our behaviour. It can indisputably be beneficial because it focuses attention to extrarational elements playing an indispensable role in human conduct. This element gets to sociological discussions not

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[32] This is similar to the 19th century's effort to apply findings of natural sciences to interpretation of the nature of society. This was how caricatures of the image of society were created under the auspices of mechanical philosophy, energetics, organicism, biologism etc. It led to similar deformations of the use of knowledge from the field of linguistics to the study of culture a hundred years later.

only from culturological studies but also through phenomenological sociology saturating all the branches of constructionism.[33]

What is emphasized due to the concurrence of these influences is the acting human's dependence not on their positions in social structure but on knowledge shared with the others in consequence of the use of a common language and in consequence of socialization into the same culture. It is examined in this context, for example what typifications are regarded natural and undoubtable by the people, what practices are followed and in what way boundaries between US and THEM are set, i.e. between those who take the knowledge for granted and those who doubt it.

Thus we move step by step to the world created and maintained ritually, primarily through language rituals. Emphasis is put on the statement that discourses that we animate (or rather, that animate us) are put together in a different way and driven by a logic different from the one which (maybe) structures the outer reality. This reality is outer not in the sense that it would determine us in any way but on the contrary in the sense that it is in fact irrelevant to our conduct. The system we find ourselves in is self-referential just due to ritualized practices: every element can be defined only by other elements of the same system, absolutely arbitrarily set rules of the "game", no matter whether language or another one.

The ritual aspect of human activity is doubtlessly highly significant. Nevertheless, if it is turned into the basic model for explanation of the functioning of entire society it has serious side impacts. E.g. it leads to a belief that the issue of illusoriness or truthfulness of interpretation of reality is more or less irrelevant. There is no sense in speculating about

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[33] Various elements of phenomenological sociology is in the background of the entire range of constructionism. Realistic constructionism, illustrated by the example of Berger and Luckmann's concept here, was strongly inspired by Alfred Schutz. As Stanislav Hubík states: "in this sense, *Social Construction of Reality* is a moderate, systematic interpretation of Schutz' ideas, variously scattered in his studies and manuscripts. Nevertheless it is an interpretation on the background of the best of what sociology of knowledge has brought" (Hubík, 1999: 177). The opposite pole called postmodern constructionism uses e.g. Schutz's element of personal biography as a contact point where the interpretation of the world is interconnected with experience of this world. This experience is phenomenologically purged of any contact with the issue of social stratification or inequality of power. Similarly, the categories US and THEM, playing an important role in the middle positions of constructionism, is one of the main axes of Schutz's analysis of natural attitude.

truthfulness of rituals. Those who believe in them simply carry them out. Those who do not believe in them carry out different rituals which are not more or less valuable in any way.

It takes only a step from here to the viewpoint of postmodern constructionism. It refuses the question of truthfulness or on the contrary illusoriness of our interpretation of reality as completely irrelevant. Because there is no other social reality except our constructions, it is not, by definition, possible for any construction to be out of reality.

The concept of power changes with the shift toward ritualized practices too. Its existence does not have to be denied completely nevertheless it is absolutely impossible that it would create any inequality of power. Every participant has the same opportunity in common microsituations to mobilize their own resources (including those of power) as every other participant. On the macrolevel power acts as an overindividual power pervading every individual as some kind of radiation without being its solid attribute.

This concept of power derived from ritual practices corresponds especially with Foucault's concept. There is no particular power holder in it; power is always scattered and omnipresent, its lines of force pervade all the participants with various intensity. It is a kind of impersonal and anonymous medium, is rather practiced than owned, enters and goes through people. Exactly because it understands power as something pervading the entire community similarly to archaic rituals and controlling even those who master power Foucault can write: "This should say that these relations descend deep into the core of society, that they are not located between the state and citizens or on the border of classes and that they do not settle for reproducing – on the level of individuals, bodies, gestures, conduct – general forms of law or government…" (Foucault, 2000b: 62).[34]

Postmodern constructionism still goes a step further. It completely crosses out not only power inequality but the entire category of power.

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[34] In their detailed analysis of Foucault's concept of power Best and Kellner state that this philosopher refuses all the modern theories dealing with power holders and their interests; and in his late stage when he studies the techniques of self-control he totally abstracts away from the factor of power and dominance (Best, Kellner, 1991: 69).

It does not consider some people's ability to force their constructions on the others and to benefit from it.[35]

Berger and Luckmann admitted that valid interpretations of reality are established in mutual competition when the economic and political powers still decide on the result after all: "Who has a bigger stick has a greater chance of asserting their definitions of reality." (Berger, Luckmann,1999: 109).

The turn of constructionism toward ritualized conduct leads to the emphasis on the statement that every period and every culture has its own "truth" generated by the rules according to which all the members of the particular period or culture play. Thus the question whether someone can benefit from it at the expense of the others by means of power is completely left out from this viewpoint.[36]

Postmodern constructionism is not at all interested in the role of power interventions in the constitution of the view of the world. The truth is so uninteresting that it would surely not be worth forcing it upon the others. Let's tolerate the others and not demand searching for it from them. We do not do it either after all.

Together with the increasing disinterest in the issues of power, the disinterest in the circumstances of the social position of those who

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[35] Those constructionists who refuse to consider the power dimension of social constructions convict themselves of misunderstanding of Max Weber's theory of authority. Here Weber shows what is the significance of a particular interpretation of the world for reproduction of power inequality.

[36] This turn toward ignoring links of power is absolutely absurd if taken into consideration that one of the most distinct impulses of social constructionism arose from critical psychology disagreeing with how the knowledge of positivist psychology was used for manipulation of people. Critical psychology showed how the concepts such as "mental illness", "intelligence", "aggression" or "sexuality" hide power inequality. What is called postmodern constructionism here serves for making power inequalities invisible again.

What deserves a special study is Foucault's concept of power. This French philosopher interconnects the concept of discourse with the dimension of power. Still, he disconnects the dimension of power from the issues of economic reproduction. He views power as scattered all over society and believes that anybody – including marginal and the most wretched ones – can use it efficiently by means of a suitable discourse. Unfortunately, he only copies the 1960s and 1970s illusions in this respect; their origin as well as impacts are reported in detail by Jean-Pierre Le Goff (1998).

interpret the world in various ways in the direction form realist constructionism to postmodern constructionism.

Berger and Luckmann still take into account the significance of one's own existence in society for the character of created social constructions. According to them, the existence of social hierarchy is an objective matter, and interpretations of the world not developing into an action make a lot of the existing inequality.

As constructionism turns to ritualized practices the membership of US against THEM becomes more and more important than any hierarchy of positions in the group or entire society. It is admitted that some social inequality can exist within the whole; still, it does not play any role for the feeling of one's own identity or in creating and maintaining of borders against non-members.[37]

Postmodern constructionism does not want to know anything about hierarchy at all. There is no inequality, there is only infinite diversity and incommensurable variety.

It is known that the absence of analysis in the categories of power and power inequality is characteristic of interpretations serving for the legitimation of the existing power situation. It is striking in this relation that the swift upswing of constructionism has been taking place exactly since the 1980s, i.e. since when the process of social exclusion started to get more intensive and massive, when new social movements stagnated and declined and when neoliberalism became the mainstream ideology. The boom of the constructionist approaches happens just when competition fight increases on all levels and economic pressures determine quite directively what space will be left for profit-unusable assignation of meanings. It is necessary to become a professional constructionist on the postmodern stage in order to delute oneself into

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[37] This is where the position of the American psychologist Kenneth Gergen, a significant promoter of social constructionism, can be situated. He emphasizes that that the approach to the world considerably depends on social relationships in which we participate; still he understands these relationships in line with symbolic interactionism, does not connect them to participation in power, wealth and prestige at all. The significance of these constructions consists in their social usability according to him (Gergen, 2009: 9). He does not problematize the concept of usability at all; e.g. he does not deal with the fact that what can be convenient for someone it may not be useful for the others at all.

believing that the question of winners and losers in this economic fight is a matter of merely each participant's own ideas.

Such a seemingly academic approach has nevertheless quite practical impacts. "How could our political preferences be justified if there is no way of finding out that certain groups of people are really oppressed by others and even if it is not possible to prove that people are members of some groups at all? Ideas of groups and some oppression become only one of many possible ways of constructing reality." (Burr, 2003: 81).

Internal discrepancies of constructionism include the one that despite the emphasis on ritualization of human conduct, its supporters stress conducting subjects' activity and creativity as well as autonomy.

Still, realistic constructionism admits that individuals' chances to interpret their world and the freedom to acts in it are conditioned by the position in its structure to a certain extent. Bricks for the construction are formed by personal experience the character of which is determined by the particular human or entire group's social membership.

As the emphasis on the importance of ritualized practices grows, social conditionality of our conduct is replaced by cultural conditionality. Our activity can be started only within passed habits, shared stereotypes and typifications grounded in language. This significantly limits our creativity; it still enables us to speak to the other people and act together with them at all.

A wide plain of postmodern constructing opens in this world of strict (especially language) rituals, equally binding for everybody, during the further movement to the jungle of constructionism. Here it is possible to construct without any limitations of both social and cultural character. It is completely up to everybody what and from what it will be built.

All the constructionists accept that the image of reality that we create has an enormous backward influence on our conduct, direct it and determines its form. It means in the case of realistic constructionism that our conduct is indirectly a manifestation of our social conditionality; another forms of constructionism emphasize cultural conditionality. The postmodern wing gets to a vicious circle – people are a creation of their own products that they created more or less arbitrarily and virtually from nothing. Postmodern constructionists do not think much about that air can be used only for building castles in the air.

Berger and Luckmann also presumed that construction of reality is a matter that must be of interest to sociology of knowledge; still, it would be quite wrong to expand from this partial discipline to the entire science on society. "Nothing is further from our intentions than the suggestion that a sociology-of-knowledge 'angle' ought somehow to be injected into all such analyses. In many cases this would be unnecessary for the cognitive goal at which these studies aim." (Berger, Luckmann, 1999: 182).

Still the wave of constructionism ignored this wise caution and quite systematically abstracts existences of those sharing the same symbolic reality away from wider context. There is a move from realistic constructionism acknowledging, similarly to sociology of knowledge, that our consciousness is socially conditioned to postmodern constructionism not accepting, contrary to sociology of knowledge, any outside-science reality that would conditioned knowledge socially. It is as if the main task of constructionism would be to present everything from the real world of modernity to the virtual world of postmodern. It serves as a ferryman from reality to fiction across no man's vast territory.

Still this at first sight radical turn in fact helps reinforce the order that only seemingly decays. Constructionism in its postmodern course thus can be regarded a special type of the process of exclusion. It is the process of gradual exclusion of reason from debates about social reality. Reason leaves an excessively tight home of modernity in order to relax in the arms of postmodern homelessness after the transfer across the no-man's land.

Really consistent constructionism, far beyond Berger and Luckmann, arouses more questions than answers. Let's mention at least some of them: Is it possible to distinguish some autonomous construction of reality from mere adoption of stereotypes created by media, advertisement and politics by means of tools of constructionism as such? Do these stereotypes actually include the idea that people freely and actively construct their own existence? Did it happen at the same time that this stereotype created outside the area of science and serving completely pragmatic goals takes over the methodology of social sciences without reflection and makes it a seemingly objective and serious paradigm?

When trying to answer these questions we will test social constructionism on a phenomenon the existence of which is difficult to doubt, namely on the extreme form of social exclusion which is homelessness.

2.2 Constructionism and homelessness

Authors of ethnographic studies on the homeless' life agree on that what is typical of these people living on the very edge of society are two types of moods that alternate and sometimes even spread through one another despite their difference. One of them is absolute apathy, a turn away from reality that they hate, brutal destruction of the rest of their own personalities, heading towards non-existence. A homeless person in this mood resigns from any effort, is completely hopeless, "organizes their own desertification" (Declerck, 2001: 294).

This mental state takes turns with another, less anxious one. Homeless persons dream of a world and life different from the current ones. It is a world where nothing is impossible, every need finds its immediate satisfaction there, a person is not frustrated and hurt by anything. There is no coercion and no worries in this timeless world. It is a world freed of all stress, a kind of lost paradise, frequently placed in the past or exotic regions in their hallucinogenic dreams and to where they will return, as they believe, and will live there in an endless delightful nirvana.

The Canadian research Pauline Marie Rosenau (1992) distinguishes two streams of postmodernism – sceptical and affirmative ones.

The first one speaks of definitive termination. From this perspective man is subject to omnipresent fragmentation and disintegration. Emphasis is put on the presence of death, discussed is the end of the subject that is affected by insignificance similarly to the author, or the truth. Nothing new is possible, the present state is mere waiting for a catastrophe.

Affirmative postmodernism agrees with many things of the diagnosis of the situation provided by the sceptics; it still believes that the story will have a happy ending. A new subject will be born from the crisis situation of today's late modernity. It will be able to construct pleasant reality filled with positive feelings and emotions. It will not be bothered by search for the truth that is unattainable. It will still abound with

fantasy, it will be filled with spontaneous desire that will be immediately satisfied. Cultivation of its inner world will become its basic need. It will float on waves of desire. It will experience its inner life to the full and will let the others live in the same way. It will be able to live in many realities at the same time. It will be able to live simultaneously on many levels not interconnected at all. This new subject will be fascinated by both the monumental past as well as everything exotic, sacral and unusual.

Two significantly different but still complementary postmodern constructions of the subject quite exactly correspond with two opposite but also complementary states of homeless people and people threatened with social decline as such. Dreaming of their return to society sharply contrasts with states of complete resignation. Both the states not only alternate but can mingle and pervade one another too.

Probably without awareness, postmodern constructionism accurately copies both the fundamental states of homeless people's mentality. On somewhat more abstract level, it imitates the way in what homeless people construct their inner world. Nothing more can be expected from it.

Realistic constructionism should also be able to provide something more. It could attempt to explain why homeless people (and postmodern thinkers) construct the world in this very way and not in a different one. It should make clear what latent functions are fulfilled by manifest discourses.

Reality is constructed in the case of homeless people in a particular way because they refuse the reality in which they have fallen to the very bottom. They either try to destroy themselves so that the unfriendly world would cease to exist for them; or they create dreamy visions of a friendly world. The extremely unfavourable reality is the real offender of how they have ended in their lives. The transfer of guilt to the unjust world serves for keeping the last pieces of personality identity.

Elderly and neglected long-term homeless people examined by a French psychiatrist have a quite simple interpretation of their own lives. Their constructions are an indictment against this world. They describe themselves as innocent victims of extremely unfavourable external circumstances. There are two variants prevailing in their life stories. According to one of them everything started with a loss of job, and thus becoming poorer, followed by leaving of their wives or partners, so all

that was left for them was alcohol. According to the second version it all started with a woman's treachery which they tried to forget by means alcohol with the result of a loss of job. It is very rare to give alcohol as the cause despite the fact that it frequently started with alcohol (Declerck, 2001: 296).

Long-term homeless people reconstruct their tragic life failure in a way enabling them to prove their normality to the others as well as themselves, and thus keep their identity or, at least, what has been left of it.

The massive commencement of postmodernism just from the 1980s is not accidental. It is possible to formulate a hypothesis that postmodern thinkers react with their constructions to failure, the feeling of uselessness and ruin. It does not always have to be a personal failure. Everything can be caused by disillusionment with the development of new social movements pinned with so much hope in the 1970s as well as certain exhaustion of social sciences, and finally also a considerable status descent of academics and a decrease of prestige of education, especially in humanities. All this turns postmodern thinkers into a kind of status homeless people. They do not suffer from a lack of material resources but a lack of appreciation.

Because they do not miss anything important from the material resources postmodern thinkers from the circles of university professors do not consider the existing economic and social problems interesting. Although they maybe live in the last stage of the era of prosperity, they take for granted that scarceness has been eliminated in the areas essential for life for good, and what becomes a problem is freedom within mechanically functioning organized modernity with its bureaucratized public sector and with welfare state and its control ambitions. This is why they are interested in human rights not social rights; this is why they profess unrestrained individualism, and view everything organized and collective with deep distrust.

They worry about a lack of appreciation. The classic paradigms of social sciences got exhausted in the 1980s. Utter theoretical stillness holds rule; it is only slightly ruffled by the birth of various neo- directions trying to revive their patterns of thoughts, predecessors and models. Maybe this is the origin of the postmodern emphasis on the idea that a copy is more interesting and precious than the original.

It is as if postmodernism praised its own origin and its own qualities by means of its emphasizing of pastiche, i.e. a mix of everything with everything containing unprecedented contrasts and contradicting viewpoints. It was born as a weird miscellany where it is not difficult to distinguish elements of Romanticism (emphasis on imagination, feelings, emotions, exoticism, the sacred, unusual, even deviant), hermeneutics (criticism of rationalism, empiricism, mechanical causality), anarchism (protest against authorities), populism (aversion to intellectualism, tendency to idealize masses).

This is accompanied by influences of Friedrich Nietzsche (scepticism about the possibility to learn the truth, relativism of the categories of good and evil), nihilism (capability to change anything), phenomenology (everyday knowledge, refusal of logocentrism), symbolic interactionism (interactive construct of reality), ethnomethodology (dependence of a meaning on its context), structuralism (denial of the subject and making the author unimportant) but also critical theories (distrust towards instrumental reason, modern technologies and media) and neomarxism (totalitarian tendencies to Enlightenment, the service function of science).[38]

Postmodern thinkers offer this heterogeneous mix in such a way as if they wanted to punish the reality and take revenge on it for trickiness of the position of themselves as well as social sciences in society that threatens more and more that it will reward only quantifiable outputs.[39]

Postmodernism is a way in which those who go through the process of questioning of their status take revenge on the successful and well-off ones. They criticize everything what was supposed to help them as a professional group to a certain social status and respect but it did not work: tools of science, method as a way to find the truth, right to truthfulness as such, exceptional (avant-garde) position of scientists in society, originality of ideas and authorship of inventions. Postmodernism thus can be read as an expression of frustration from unfulfilled ambitions.

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[38] This diversity of the roots of postmodernism is analysed in detail by Pauline Rosenau (1992).

[39] A sharp criticism of the diversion of knowledge from deeper humanist positions and its focus on knowledge bringing immediate profit, is contained in the well-known studies by Jean-François Lyotard (1993). In Slovakia this issue was analysed by Ondrej Kaščák and Branislav Pupala (2012) in a wider context most recently.

Because the effort devoted to professional growth is less and less worth it in average in the period of massification of education, because the future of projects is more and more unsure they criticize any effort as a manifestation of the harmful cult of performance and any projects as totalizing plans. Because they are not really original but rather just combine resources freely which sometimes contradict each other in their views of the world, they emphasize eclecticism as a manifestation of freedom and exuberance of spirit. They point out genealogy, thus the concept of history emphasizing discontinuity and disorderliness in order to justify that it is right not to continue in anything themselves and not to develop anything thoroughly and with a clear perspective.

Postmodern constructionism as such does not reveal anything of it. It equates the reality and constructions of reality, i.e. it acts exactly as real homeless people. On the more advanced stage they also sink into living in their phantasmagorical fantasies which are the only reality for them. Nobody can blame them for not being able to analyse why they see the world in the way they do. This inability can still be held against postmodern thinkers. Contrary to them, homeless people do not take any money for their hallucinogenic fantasies. They fantasize quite for free.

Not even realist constructionism, with all its positives, can surpass itself. At the very most the reality coincides right with the reference to latent functions of the manifest discourses. It will derive the entire existence from knowledge of this existence as if various forms of knowledge and consciousness were emerging from social vacuum to occupy the very last place. Constructionism is not equipped for finding or at least speculating and theorizing which factors of non-individual character caused that individuals and entire groups live exactly in the way they do – some of them in their half-forgotten university offices, some in even worse conditions, right in the street.

2.3 Social construction – but whose?

The Canadian analytic philosopher Ian Hacking is the author of the book titled Social Construction of What? (Hacking, 2003). His question is quite possibly not best formulated. Nearly anything can be the object of

constructionism. All that matters is the amount of courage and fantasy of the reality interpreter concerned.

It may be better to formulate the starting question for discovering the possibilities and limits of social constructionism in a different way. Not to ask what is constructed but to ask who the author of the construction is. At the same this question will open the way to an analysis of what is included in the poorly arranged and confusing category of "social construction".

Basically, there are three categories of constructors in the case of social problems, e.g. exactly homelessness. First, the phenomenon of homelessness is constructed by researchers studying this social problem for the purposes of their analyses. Besides this, homelessness is constructed by other social agents, this time without scientific ambitions. These include media, politicians as well as agencies dealing with the problem from the practical perspective and trying to help homeless people. And finally, homelessness is also interpreted by homeless people as such.

These three categories of constructing subjects have distinctly different knowledge and interests, find themselves in completely incomparable living conditions and pursue different goals. Despite this all the ideas of homelessness they produce are categorized into the same file labelled "social constructions". This results in the fact that the label "construction of reality" covers absolutely incommensurable mental operations.[40]

What is included in social construction from the field of research and scientific activities are the definition of the examined phenomenon as such, ways of measuring it, or various typologies aimed at classifying the examined phenomenon in a deeper analytic way. These are basically procedures which are also used in disciplines different from the constructivist ones. They are common part of doing science and are definitely closer to positivism than constructivism.

It is obvious that the definition of homelessness is a very complicated matter. The proverbial tip of the iceberg of those who sleep in the streets even in a freeze hides multiply greater numbers of people who survive in spaces not determined for housing, who are temporarily tolerated

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[40] The following parts were inspired by analyses published in the work by the English researchers Susan Hutson and Mark Liddiard (1994).

at their friends and relatives' places, who live in caravans or temporary lodging houses not resembling home with the least intimation. What matters is which of latent homeless persons will get included into this category – and statistics of homelessness will differ significantly.[41]

Despite all the troubles with measuring on this level, homelessness is a phenomenon the objective existence and gravity of which are indisputable. There is also a touch of "construction" present only as accompaniment of our incapability to give more detailed definition and develop technically feasible methods of measurement.

Significantly different mental operations enrich the spectrum of constructing in relation to other agents who comment on homelessness, i.e. media, politicians or organizations taking care of homeless people. And again each of these constructors has special motives, goals and means of construction. Their summary can be called a "language game" of the particular constructor. There are specific rules of each game which make sense only within the particular game; their relationship to the outer world is usually very loose. According to these rules, some parts of the reality are emphasized and pointed out in an adequate way; others are suppressed and made unimportant.

The entire game played by the media is about the audience's attention, number of copies and marketability. All the rules are subordinated to these imperatives. Homelessness is usually presented by the media in relation to other moments attractive for readers and spectators, such as sex and prostitution, drugs, alcohol and violence. What is better than definitions and statistics that are usually not so exciting is the use of a story, a life story what is easier to attract the reader or spectators' attention. The really attractive group are homeless people surviving in the streets; this is why this category is exceedingly presented in the media.

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[41] Thus the problem of definition can be significantly reduced by a suitable typology. The usual classification of homeless persons is into obvious ones (those sleeping in the streets), hidden ones (they sleep outside sporadically) and potential ones (they have problems keeping their housing). The number of obviously homeless people is by far the lowest one. Numbers of potential homeless persons in Europe were estimated as the entire tenth of the population by the Hradeckýs as soon as in the mid1990s. (Hradecká, Hradecký, 1996: 37–41).

Different rules apply to the game of politicians. These are dictated by both the ideology of the particular political party and the fact whether the particular party is in power, or in opposition. The right-wing parties will put homelessness down to those who have become its victims. They are guilty of little effort, small responsibility for their own conduct and relying on help from the state. The left-wing parties will point out the structural causes of homelessness, such as failures of the labour market, problems with access to housing and a low rate of help to particularly vulnerable segments of population. The participation in power, or on the contrary the failure of the opposition enrich the political parties' game with other elements. The ruling parties will emphasize the complexity of the problem and the long period required for its solution that significantly exceeds their terms of office. They will speak for a careful monitoring of the problem what will enable purposeful, and thus economical investments in its future solution. On the contrary, the opposition parties will point out the governing parties' inability to face the problem and the ruling elite's disinterest in human suffering. The roles will change after elections while the game will go on.

The problem of homelessness will be constructed in a different way by agencies dealing with care for homeless people. In their case, the rules of the game are set so that they enable the agencies function and provide their care. In their typologies, homeless people are categorized e.g. according to whether care for them would harm the caring institution or not. The ideal client from this point of view is an individual who cannot break out from homelessness without help but is not devastated to such a degree that care for them could not bring an apparent improvement.[42]

Care for people who are not fully affected by homelessness would mean wasting of the corresponding institutions' resources that are always scarce. On the contrary if help concentrated only on the most desperate ones they could not show many successes, and thus convincingly claim grants and financial support for the following calendar period.

Behaviour of media, manners of politicians as well as activities of agencies trying to help homeless people show clear elements of ritualized conduct. Meticulous compliance of the rules is considered

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[42] Authors of a monograph on young English homeless people speak of homeless persons of low and high risk in this context (Hutson, Liddiard, 1994: 189).

a guarantee of success in all these cases. This is why the media reports on homeless look always the same regardless of the year when they were taken. The same applies to politicians' speeches on the issue of solving the problems of social exclusion, regardless of who delivered them. And this is why the institutions trying to help homeless people waste a great deal of their energy to proving their "successfulness", a precondition for obtaining further financial means.

The third group participating in social construction of homelessness are homeless people as such. Their tools of reality construction are not in the form of definitions and measurements as in the case of researchers nor the form of a game with meanings according to one's own needs as in the case of media, politicians or institutions helping homeless people. They come in the form of fantasy worlds, retrograde reactions and other ways of escaping from the unbearable reality in an effort to keep the rests of identity and human dignity.

Similarly to postmodern constructionists, when interpreting their own situation homeless people do not take into account structural factors such as objective changes of the labour market, complications in access to housing as results of changes of the housing policy or reduction of social rights of entire categories of population as part of the so-called modernization of welfare state.

When abstracting from these factors of overindividual character they have no choice but explain their fall to the very edge of society as a special case of unfavourable personal story, or even deny the fact of homelessness and denote their situation in a different way.

In the first case they interpret extreme marginalization as a concurrence of unpredictable circumstances and unfavourable coincidence while they admit their partial fault to various extent. Long-term homeless people in Paris, studied by Patrick Declerck, explain their fall into alcoholism by (real) problems in their childhood and (real again) experienced psychological and physical traumas. Young English homeless people, studied by Hutson and Liddiard, perceive their situation as a consequence of conflicts with their parents, frequently accompanied by sexual abuse.

Young homeless people in Great Britain think in utterly postmodern way even in situations when they do not have much choice: they present their leaving home as a result of their purely individual choice and emphasize the feeling of freedom that accompanied them at least at the

first days. Contrary to the institutions that often point out helplessness of lonely people in order to support their need, young homeless people frequently do not admit their helplessness. On the contrary, they often overestimate the degree to what they claim that they have events following their leaving home under control.[43]

Viennese homeless people, studied by Roland Girtler, regard not working as a manifestation of their freedom. It lifts them above the mass of common people in captivity of work rhythm in their own eyes. They share the privilege of idleness with the richest ones. As one of them, regularly visiting the job office to warm up, confessed to the author: "I'm not interested in working. I know of the offer of available jobs and I'm sympathetic to the people struggling for them. I enjoy the look at them" (Girtler, 1980: 54).[44]

There is no point in emphasizing that questioning of the world of performance and performance thinking by homeless people can serve as a strategy of protection of the remaining self-respect. They frequently suffer from health problems so that employers are not interested in them. They are usually not capable of physically demanding work and do not have qualification necessary for another job.

Approximately a third of young homeless people studied by the above mentioned British authors reconstructs the reality in an even more radical way – they deny being homeless at all. Some do not feel like homeless because they still have parents and siblings somewhere; others have become accustomed to a temporary housing at a lodging house or anywhere: "Look at this" – a homeless man points to a car wretch covered with tarred paper – "it's not much but it's my home. It's a home I've chosen myself. It was my own decision to live in such a way. And this is why I'm not homeless", one of the young homeless people in his interview with the researchers (Hutson, Liddiard, 1994: 141).

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[43] When explaining this circumstance the authors apply the concept of "creative redefinition". The point is that the situation in which the subjects find themselves involuntarily is interpreted from their viewpoint in a way that is to give the illusion that they got there by their own choice (Hutson, Liddiard, 1994: 137).

[44] The Austrian sociologist believes that it is this homeless people's attitude which causes the greatest distaste to the homeless people in the middle class. It disturbs their view of the world based on the principle that you have to deserve everything (Girtler, 1980: 115).

After the fashion of homeless people, postmodern constructivists find a simple way of cancelling homelessness. It is sufficient to start to talk of "homefree" than "homeless", of people who are free not only of home but also family bonds and neighbourly as well as all other commitments. These people have gained freedom to make a living by drug dealing, prostitution or petty thefts. No disciplining discourse can deprive them of this freedom anymore.

2.4 Summary of the second part

A wide range of approaches can be found within constructionism; these quite significantly differ in many aspects. Realist constructionism is able to reflect a number of problematic points related to the effort to analyse social reality in general and pressing social problems in particular. It shows e.g. to what extent an initial definition of a particular phenomenon influences the statistics of its occurrence. Realist constructionism can also point some latent objectives hidden beyond the manifest interpretation of the image of the world or its parts. It can point out the interest conditionality of various reality interpretations.

Even these beneficial forms of constructionism are not able to reflect processes standing in the background of many social problems but not coming through consciousness of those affected by them or dealing with them in various contexts. These wider contexts regularly escape from attention of postmodern constructionists. Virtually no form of social constructionism is able to follow the observed phenomena in their social conditionality and historical development. It is a consequence of that the approach to social reality fully justified on the level of sociology of knowledge is spread without a good reason and wants to become a universal interpretation scheme which does not in fact allow a real alternative perspective.

SUMMARY

The presented study consists of two parts. The first one deals with social exclusion from the viewpoint of the development of the contemporary society in transition from an industrial to a postindustrial society. The author examines when this term emerged and in what context it started to be used. It focuses especially on search for causes of social exclusion. Attention is paid also to various types and stages of social exclusion. It deals with the issue of social exclusion from the viewpoint of theories of society and theories of social structure at a more general level.

The study is based exclusively on French literature. The reason is that the term "social exclusion" is closely related to French sociology. It corresponds with the spirit of the discipline emphasizing social integrity at the macrosocial level and the existence of social bond at the level of interpersonal relations since the time of Durkheim. Social exclusion is a threat to both to the same extent.

Attention is paid to some methodological aspects of the process of social exclusion and its concept in the second part. The phenomenon of social exclusion and its extreme manifestation – homelessness – is used for an analysis of the possibilities and limits of social constructivism. It is pointed out to what extent these various types allow an original view on social reality as well as numerous risks burdening the approach of social constructivism.

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EXCLUSION AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM AND A METHODOLOGICAL ISSUE.