

Fighting social exclusion in rural areas



LIAISON ENTRE ACTIONS
DE DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE L'ÉCONOMIE RURALE

LINKS BETWEEN ACTIONS
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE RURAL ECONOMY



COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE
DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE
DE L'AGRICULTURE

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
AGRICULTURE



Fighting social exclusion in rural areas

“RURAL INNOVATION”

DOSSIER No. 8

LEADER EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY

JULY 2000

*This dossier is the result of the work done at the LEADER seminar “**Finding answers to situations of exclusion in rural areas**” organised from 30 September to 4 October 1998 in Castlebar (Ireland) with the collaboration of the South & West Mayo LEADER group (E-mail: leader@smayo.iol.ie).*

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Introduction

Although the fight against social exclusion was not explicitly considered part of the LEADER II intervention measures, in most cases the local action groups (LAGs), in their effort to use all the local potential of rural areas, had to take account of problems of exclusion, unemployment and isolation. Thus, a certain awareness of the subject arose as the Initiative was implemented. The LAGs gradually confirmed the importance of the local level in interventions concerning social cohesion. In some countries, for example, in Ireland, these interventions became a key aspect of the strategies implemented. The new Community Initiative for rural development, LEADER+, asserts the need to go further and to deepen the intervention methods with emphasis on equal opportunity and job creation actions.

Furthermore, how can the future LEADER+ LAGs operating in concrete territories not take into account one of the aspects of the European agenda that urgently requires the search for new approaches and solutions¹?

This report is divided into four chapters:

Chapter I - Social exclusion, a multidimensional phenomenon

Chapter II - Diagnosis and strategies to fight social exclusion in rural areas

Chapter III - Taking action against social exclusion in rural areas: what methods? what tools?

Chapter IV - Consolidating the fight against social exclusion by including it in an area-based approach

Seven case studies used at the seminar ***"Finding answers to situations of exclusion in rural areas"*** are analysed in detail in chapter III:

Country	Region	Area	Title
France	Brittany	Central West Brittany	The rural inclusion plan of the Cornouaille morbihannaise
France	Auvergne	Forez et Plaine de la Loire	Recreating social links for the inclusion of farmers in difficulty in the Loire
Finland	Oulu	Utajärvi	Helping the elderly remain independent
Italy	Trento	Valle di Non	Social cooperative: disability awareness group ("Gruppo sensibilizzazione handicap")
United Kingdom	Scotland	Angus	Angus transport forum: a solution to rural transport problems
Ireland	Ireland	the whole	RRI (Rural Resettlement Ireland) Helping city families faced with exclusion move to the country
Italy	Emilia-Romagna	Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna	The "Time Bank"

[1] 1 Readers interested in knowing more about Community social exclusion policies can consult the European Commission Communications COM(2000)78 and COM(2000)79 and the Web site http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/soc-prot/soc-incl/index_en.htm

Chapter I

Social exclusion, a multidimensional phenomenon

Social exclusion, a multidimensional phenomenon

Over the past decade, poverty and social exclusion have been growing at an alarming rate in urban and rural areas in a large number of countries of the European Union. The trend is to a great extent the result of increased unemployment, but unemployment, poverty and exclusion are not necessarily directly linked. For this reason, a closer look at the interlinking mechanisms is necessary.

Chapter one will therefore attempt to highlight the relationship that exists between unemployment, poverty and social exclusion and to determine the characteristics of this phenomenon in the European Union today, and in rural areas in particular.

In this respect, it is worth noting that social exclusion in rural areas is a problem that is relatively little known and seldom studied. More widespread and less visible in the countryside, social exclusion tends to be perceived as an essentially urban phenomenon. Yet, it is a reality that also affects rural areas. Often these areas are faced with the difficult task of restructuring agriculture, lack jobs and have high unemployment. There is a growing trend to cut back on welfare services, isolation is on the rise and there is no place for people to meet and participate in social activities. What is more, housing for new families is in short supply.

Thus, for example, England's Rural Development Programme (2000-2006) shows that:

- > a high proportion of parishes are lacking key services. Since 1991, the supply of services does not appear to be declining, except postal services. However, some services are sorely wanting: 70% of the parishes no longer have a general store and 75% no longer have a weekly bus service, for example²;
- > it is more difficult to come up with statistics on social exclusion problems in rural areas because of the presence of well-off families and disadvantaged families in the same area;

- > low wages and the growing number of pensioners moving to the countryside are the main causes of poverty in rural areas. However, poverty is not a phenomenon of remote areas; it is also present in wealthier and more accessible areas;
- > a survey³ of 5 000 households indicated that 30% of the people in rural areas had experienced poverty in the past ten years compared with 40% in urban areas. Other studies done in 1979⁴ and 1990⁵ revealed that 25% of Britain's rural households were living in a state of poverty or near poverty;
- > farmers have the highest suicide rate of all professions, an indication of the high level of stress affecting this social group. Given the isolation of farmers, the suicide rate can also be perceived as an indicator of social exclusion in the countryside.

1.1 What is meant by "social exclusion"?

The various groups working on the problem do not entirely agree on a definition of social exclusion.

EUROSTAT, the statistics agency of the European Commission, considers social exclusion a multidimensional phenomenon that prevents individuals from fully participating in society⁶.

[2] Rural Development Commission, *Survey of Rural Services* 1997.

[3] P. Chapman et al (1998), *Poverty and exclusion in rural Britain*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, McLaughlin & Bradley (1980).

[4] *idem*

[5] P. Cloke et al (1994), *Lifestyles in rural England*, Rural Development Commission.

[6] EUROSTAT, *Statistics in brief, Population and social conditions*, no. 1/2000: *Social exclusion in the Member States of the EU*.

In the report *“Combating exclusion in Ireland 1990-94”*, Patrick Commins sees social exclusion as the result of the failing of one of the four following components:

- > the juridico-legal democratic system, supposed to ensure the social integration or inclusion of all citizens;
- > the labour market, supposed to ensure economic inclusion;
- > the Welfare State, supposed to ensure social inclusion;
- > the family and close friends, supposed to ensure interpersonal inclusion.

In the United Kingdom, for example, the current debate on the policies to be implemented has highlighted three different approaches⁷:

- > an **“integrationist”** approach, which considers employment the key element of social integration, because it affects income, identity, self-esteem and access to information networks and contacts;
- > a **“poverty”** approach, which sees the causes of exclusion in low income and insufficient material resources;
- > a **“marginality” (underclass)** approach, which considers the excluded to be individuals who do not live by the standards commonly accepted by society. They are therefore part of a “poverty culture” or “dependence culture”. In this approach, the excluded are themselves responsible for their state of poverty which is handed down from generation to generation.

In spite of these differences in approach and definition, a distinction needs to be made between unemployment, poverty and social exclusion:

- > Unemployment is the state of anyone who is deprived of paid work at a given moment in his/her working life. If the period of unemployment is too long and if the family or the other personal networks do not step in to provide support, it becomes a source of poverty and social exclusion (long-term unemployment).
- > Poverty is insufficient resources. It translates into non-access to certain basic services and concerns the entire family unit.
- > Social exclusion is a more complex phenomenon involving not only a lack of access to certain services but also socio-demographic factors, socio-cultural status and quality of life standards.

These three social situations overlap, although there is not necessarily a cumulative effect.

1.2 How does the structural trend of employment in Europe generate poverty?

In other words, to what extent does the mismatch between labour supply and demand in Europe, the cause of unemployment, create poverty?

Between 1945 and 1975, Western Europe witnessed economic growth essentially based on the concentration of businesses. The considerable gains in productivity that resulted from this provided more or less full employment in the industrialised countries. But for the past twenty years or so, technological progress, the globalisation of the economy and, more recently, of information have called into question this situation. After agriculture and the primary sector as a whole, the major firms in the secondary sector have stopped creating jobs.

Today, the only sector that has the potential to create jobs is the service sector, in addition to the precision instrument manufacturing industry⁸.

Consequently, the labour market has become much more demanding in terms of training and professional experience. For unskilled people, the prospect of being hired (in the past, agriculture or industry supplied work) continues to dwindle. As for skilled young people who have no professional experience, finding work is difficult.

Therefore, unemployment tends to affect the same people and the same social categories, which is why long-term unemployment is so high. People who have been without a job for one year or more account for about 5% of the working population of the European Union and up to 12% in Spain, 8% in Italy, and 7% in Ireland. According to EUROSTAT, nearly half those unemployed were without work in 1996 and 30% had been jobless for more than two years. The social categories most affected by long-term unemployment are generally:

- > **young people** – unemployment is twice as high among young people as in older age groups (up to four times in France and Greece), although these past few years there has been a decline in the number of young people without work and a rise in unemployment among older people⁹;

[7] Schucksmith Mark: *Social Exclusion and Economic Development in Rural Areas*, Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, and University of Aberdeen. Report presented at the UKLEADERnetwork seminar, Isle of Skye, 8-9 September 1999, p. 1

[8] European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, *Employment in Europe, 1997*, p.55-58

[9] Idem, Part 1, section 1, *Recent employment and unemployment trends*, pp. 27-41

> **women** – the relatively sharp increase in employment of women between 1995 and 1998 did not prevent the average rate of unemployment among women in the Union from remaining high during this period, on average 3% above the rate for men.

To what extent is long-term unemployment a factor of poverty?

From solidarity among family members to State assistance, various welfare mechanisms help cushion the effects of long-term unemployment. But quite often it is the entire family that is affected by long-term unemployment. In 1996, the proportion of households with children where neither parent worked varied from 8% in Italy to nearly 20%, or one family out of five, in the United Kingdom¹⁰. Single-parent homes (the parent usually being a woman) also constitute the highest proportion of low-income people in most Member States¹¹.

As for State assistance or welfare and unemployment benefits, there are limits. For example, unemployment benefits stop after a year in most countries of the Union, leading those who are still without work at the end of this period to take any kind of work or to live on income support in countries where that exists.

Sometimes contradictory trends emerge from the comparison between social indicators and unemployment trends. Thus, in the United Kingdom, a country whose unemployment rate has substantially declined these past few years (8.2% in 1996 compared with 10.5% in 1993; respectively 6.5% and 8.1% for women), the income indicator shows that in 1995-96, a quarter of the population and 34% of the children were living below the poverty level¹².

Several reasons explain this paradox:

1) **the income indicator measures the inequalities more so than poverty** – when higher-than-average incomes increase as a result of economic growth, the median income increases from a statistical point of view. However, this does not prevent an increase in the poverty level, for the real income of the disadvantaged social categories remains unchanged. More than the spread of poverty, it is therefore the phenomenon of social “polarisation” that is the problem. Thus, these past few years, absolute poverty in Europe has declined, among other reasons because of a certain growth in employment, and relative poverty has steadily increased;

2) **the rise in poverty distorts unemployment-lowering mechanisms** – among the disadvantaged classes, the demand for jobs has gone down because unskilled workers become discouraged over time and end up no longer applying for jobs. This alters the unemployment rate but does not affect the social indicators of poverty/exclusion;

3) **finding a job is no longer enough to climb out of poverty** – job creation currently consists often in an increase in underpaid jobs with no prospect of a career and unsteady and short-term jobs.

Therefore, the question that arises is the following: is it possible to get out of the spiral fuelled by “low wages – unsteady employment – job stagnation” which is plunging a growing number of individuals and families into poverty? In other words, what institutional support measures are relevant today when we talk about integration or inclusion, given the inadequate anti-poverty mechanisms whose only method is to put people back to work?

1.3 From “poverty” to “social exclusion”

The notion of “social exclusion” which is different from that of “poverty” emerged at the end of the 1980s with the appearance of new forms of social distress against a backdrop of European economic growth and improved competitiveness.

These new forms of social distress are the result of socio-economic processes which for the hardest hit mean not only long-term unemployment or the impossibility of finding their first job but also a diminished sense of belonging. They are left without social links, points of reference and status.

[10] *The Economist*, September 25th-October 1st. 1999, p 50

[11] See EUROSTAT, *Statistics in brief*, op. cit.

[12] *The Economist*, September 25th-October 1st. 1999, pp. 49-50

Exclusion implies deprivation of a kind different from poverty. The excluded are deprived of an opinion and political weight while society becomes more tolerant of inequalities.

Social exclusion is also and above all not having access to basic services, beginning with those which, like housing and food, are necessary for survival and human dignity. Need we be reminded that today in the European Union about 1.1 million citizens (and even 1.8 million at certain times of the year) everyday rely on services for the homeless? In Germany, the United Kingdom and France¹³ in particular, their number is considerable.

So what are the determining factors of social exclusion? The loss of a job (or for young people the inability to find a job) is generally the element that triggers the exclusion process. The reason can be economic redundancy, the end of a contract of specified duration, short-time working, early retirement or any other form of interruption of employment. Of course, losing a job does not automatically set into motion the exclusion process, but prolonged unemployment together with little qualification is enough to activate this process.

However, the loss of a job is not the only element triggering the exclusion process. Other factors, which may accompany the loss of work, play the same role. Certain elements are specific to certain particularly vulnerable age categories. Adolescents in particular can see their lives destroyed. Events often related to poverty or the marginalisation of families, such as failure at school or abandonment by the family, can occur and lead to a series of exclusions. Elderly people are also particularly vulnerable. According to EUROSTAT, in 1995 the proportion of households composed of one person 65 years or older was 3 to 4 times greater in the low-income groups in certain countries like Ireland, Portugal, Denmark, or Greece.

More generally, social exclusion is also the result of a change in the social welfare mechanisms and a shift in today's dominant values.

In the aftermath of World War II, the virtual eradication of absolute poverty was accompanied in the industrialised European societies by income security and redistribution measures. These were ensured by the Welfare State and presented as the guarantee of the well-being of all citizens. In those days, it also looked like growth and full employment were going to last.

With the crisis in the 1970s and the first major industrial restructurings, the decline in the purchasing power of families affected by unemployment revealed a "new poverty". Since then, residual poverty is no longer the issue. Unemployment has become a lasting phenomenon, leading to forms of marginalisation that are now called "exclusion".

Thus, a society where poverty looked set to disappear has been replaced by a society where social exclusion appears as an intrinsic, or even inevitable, phenomenon. What is more, the conditions to access forms of social protection are becoming tougher, and employment incentive measures (increased "employability", development of the spirit of enterprise, encouragement of company and employee flexibility, funding of equal opportunity policies)¹⁴ are on the rise against a backdrop of chronic unemployment.

1.4 How can poverty and social exclusion be measured?

Confronted with the magnitude of the phenomenon of exclusion and with the impossibility of reducing unemployment and the social havoc it causes, a lot of governments are beginning to worry and to consider other forms of treatment¹⁵.

Therefore, the problem now is first to determine how many Europeans are living in conditions of poverty or social exclusion. To answer this, a conventional indicator of poverty is usually used, ie. the percentage of households or individuals with less than half the median income. Although for some social categories suffering from exclusion (ethnic minorities, elderly people, people living alone) this indicator is not always relevant, statistics show that single parents, single-parent families, elderly people living alone and the unemployed account for the majority of low-income people.

[13] Committee of the Regions, *The Homeless and housing question*, Draft opinion, Brussels, 23 March 1999, p.9

[14] This approach to the problem is developed in the Commission report "Modernising and improving social protection in the European Union" (COM (97)102) and in the "Guidelines on employment" approved by the Council (OJC30, 28 January 1998)

[15] Thus in March 1999, the British government set itself the objective of eradicating poverty among children. To this end, the social security services implemented 49 key initiatives and 40 poverty indicators to measure the impact of their interventions – the number of indicators itself being an indication of the complexity of the phenomenon and the difficulty of the public authorities of grasping the whole problem and providing standardised answers.

Social exclusion can also be found in certain geographical locations like the neglected outskirts of certain cities, urban ghettos, remote rural areas, or peripheral areas. When a large number of poor people or people suffering from the same forms of exclusion are concentrated in these same areas, exclusion becomes visible. However, many of those excluded are scattered and therefore “invisible” for society¹⁶.

The concentration of the excluded, in other words visible exclusion, remains a mostly urban phenomenon. It is found particularly in neighbourhoods where there is a high concentration of immigrants or minorities, where the ethnic identity plays a major role in mutual recognition while itself being a factor of exclusion. On the other hand, in rural areas exclusion is less visible, because it is more spread out or even sometimes hidden. That is why in spite of the similarity of the problems, a distinction has to be made between city and country, both in terms of the approach and the policies to fight social exclusion.

1.5 Social exclusion in rural areas: a challenge for sustainable development

What forms do poverty and social exclusion take in the countryside? How are they different from the forms that are seen in the city?

a) An old phenomenon with new contours

First of all it is worth recalling that social exclusion in rural areas is not something new. The changes that have marked the rural world for more than a century (rural exodus, mechanisation then industrialisation of agriculture) have in fact caused radical social transformations, forcing four farmers out of five, and often more, to leave the land, in sometimes dramatic conditions.

Often when they lost their work, farming families, in addition to having to cope with a whole series of debts, also lost their identity and their social links, not to mention an ancestral family estate. However, in the post World War II boom period in the industrialised countries, this process of exclusion took on less tragic forms than the situation created in urban areas by large-scale redundancies. In this respect, the rural exodus acted as an outlet for destitute farmers who had no problem finding unskilled work, particularly in the then fast expanding secondary sector.

But farmers are still having to leave their land today in much tougher conditions. Unskilled people are feeling the full brunt of unemployment, and the industrial labour pools set up in rural areas are being affected by corporate restructuring and relocation. Also, the possibilities farmers in difficulty had in the past of supplementing their farm income by working other stable or seasonal jobs (pluriactivity) are dwindling. What is more, the problem of overproduction that the agricultural sector has encountered in crisis proportions, a sector that has considerably downsized its workforce, has increased and accelerated the impoverishment of farmers.

In addition, young people who left the country to find work in the city are returning after being made redundant or after a prolonged period of unemployment in the hope of finding security and more humane living conditions. “Economic refugees” are also flowing out of cities and looking to the country for a place to live or survive that rural areas are not always capable of providing. This results in rural unemployment affecting all the segments of the population.

b) The specifically rural factors of social exclusion

A characteristic of these major trends is the fact that in addition to the factors of exclusion common to urban and rural areas are factors specific to the countryside, such as the weight of tradition and the scattering of communities and activities.

The weight of tradition

The persistence of traditions inherited from ancestral rural societies and the cultural gap with forms of integration in modern society are factors of exclusion in rural areas. For example, the fact that employment was traditionally supplied in the framework of protected family environments has meant that rural people are often ill prepared to enter anonymous labour markets. More generally speaking, rural youth whose “traditional/rural” identity is permanently confronted with the “modern/urban” identity feel out of place. Because the rural context often does not facilitate risk-taking and innovation, young people interested in launching new economic initiatives have difficulty finding support.

[16] Paul Henderson, *Social Inclusion & Citizenship in Europe, The contribution of community development, 1997, OPBOWCAHIER 5.*

This gap between tradition and modernity particularly affects women. In the past, their integration in the rural world almost always depended on activities that were complementary to the farm. The know-how they had to have for this is today in little demand, particularly in certain non-industrial production sectors. Today women are having difficulty finding work, especially in areas where agri-tourism or other new business activities run by women have not yet emerged to take up the slack.

The scattering of communities and activities

The low population density that is characteristic of many rural areas and that the rural exodus has done nothing but amplify poses all kinds of problems, starting with difficult access to basic services. Providing children with a primary education, for example, is becoming more difficult with the closure of village schools, especially when the families have to ensure the transport. And when a series of other services disappear (shops, childcare, post office, petrol station, train station, etc.), the sense of isolation is greater and the threat of social exclusion increases.

For people already suffering from specific difficulties, this problem is that much more acute. The lack of mass transport, for example, is even harder to cope with in the case of disabled or elderly people. There are fewer social services for the disabled, for the integration of minorities, or for the homeless, women or abused children. And job placement agencies capable of organising training based on job descriptions are increasingly rare.

More generally, the scattering of communities combined with the gradual disappearance of places of social interaction (pubs and other places where people can meet) lead to isolation.

Often even building family ties becomes difficult. Thus, because of the demographic imbalance between the sexes and women's disinterest in agriculture, many farmers are finding it difficult to find a wife. A lot of heirless farmers or small business owners also suffer from isolation and a lack of prospects.

The low population density also has consequences in terms of political choices. Because rural areas do not carry much electoral weight, macro-economic and macro-political decisions are increasing the trend towards concentration, be that for community services or occupational training. The current job training and hiring policies, for example, aim to encourage specialisation. However, this is not very compatible with the fact that people have to hold various jobs (pluriactivity) in rural areas to cope with unsteady employment (very seasonal work in agriculture, tourism or other sectors).

Other specific factors

In rural areas, social exclusion also stems from problems of a legislative, cultural, or political nature. In the case of housing, for example, laws and regulations encouraging the use of land for farming often forbid the building of homes. For new families or people moving from the city this is a handicap.

c) From social exclusion to territorial exclusion

In rural areas, the notion of exclusion can apply not only to individuals and families but also sometimes to whole areas or certain "pockets" or certain villages within a given area. These places have problems gaining access to economic, cultural or other opportunities.

Thus, some areas are considered "naturally" isolated in the best of cases, and politicians see them as environments to be protected. However, any area can support social activities, provided that local development is the road chosen. This implies the adoption of measures to keep areas alive, with appropriate policies to provide services, organise cultural activities and offer training that keeps pace with the evolving job scene.

1.6 The fight against social exclusion and rural development

Social exclusion is a complex phenomenon that has to be dealt with by taking account of the changing job market, the area's demographic and geographical data, the references, social links and income level of the groups concerned and the evolving institutional responses. Because of its magnitude and its recent characteristics, the phenomenon is now extremely important.

More than a social, cultural and political preoccupation, the fight against social exclusion has become an essential and inevitable component of economic development. It is playing a key role in the revitalisation of the countryside in particular.

In rural areas, the fight against social exclusion is the prerequisite to take full advantage of human resources.

Given the handicap created by the scattering of communities and the lack of jobs, the fight against social exclusion is especially important for the overall development of rural areas.

In Bazois (Burgundy, France), a "multiservice" association enables unemployed people to offer local services. This activity is complemented by an action to recruit the long-term unemployed. They are offered work in maintaining the environment or developing tourist sites. In parallel, a training centre meets individualised needs and offers job training that will lead to stable employment (development of rural facilities, maintenance of waterways).

The fight against social exclusion creates the conditions for social dialogue

- > It leads to consensus and collective actions, often essential in launching new activities or capturing new markets.
- > It reduces the social cleavages, has a direct impact on the area's image and on rural tourism and quality products.

In the southern Iberian peninsula (Alentejo in Portugal and Andalusia in Spain), because of the very high unemployment rate in these regions (at 15%, Andalusia had one of the highest rates in Europe in 1999), the LEADER groups ended up giving top priority to actions to fight social exclusion. These actions were complementary to the LEADER actions and were specially oriented towards disadvantaged people.

In rural areas, the fight against social exclusion creates new development opportunities.

Although initially factors of social exclusion, certain handicaps specific to the rural world can be turned into development possibilities and factors of social inclusion.

This is the case of the weight of traditions, presented above as a factor of exclusion, and of women and young people in particular, which can on the contrary serve as the basis for new opportunities.

In the Sousa valley, a rural area near Porto in Portugal, women have been doing embroidery work for centuries. It is a supplementary source of income, and for those who live alone it is even the main source of income. This very poorly paid and disparaged work (EUR 150 per month for a full-time job) keeps the women who do it as a living in a state of particularly severe poverty and social exclusion. An association created at the initiative of the LEADER group worked to professionalise the sector by reviving traditional embroidery motifs, by improving the quality, by training the women and by helping them capture upscale markets. This freed the women from the grip of the traditional tradesmen. In addition to increasing their income, it was the entire question of the women's human dignity that was at stake.

How do we measure the challenges of the fight against social exclusion in a rural areas? How do we assess the margins of manoeuvre available for this purpose? These are questions that we will attempt to answer in chapter II before examining in the following chapters the question of tools, methods, prospects for action to fight social exclusion and how this fight can be included in a wider territorial approach.

Chapter II

Diagnosis and strategies to fight social exclusion in rural areas

Diagnosis and strategies to fight social exclusion in rural areas

How do we determine how severe the social exclusion in a given area is and on the basis of that decide what strategic elements need to be taken into account in a more general approach to development?

To answer this question, three elements have to be examined:

- > **the unfulfilled needs** leading to social exclusion – the social exclusion has to be analysed in the rural area concerned;
- > **what is already being done** to fight social exclusion. A list has to be drawn up of the public and private institutions involved in the fight against social exclusion, and the results of the measures and actions carried out have to be examined;
- > the **difference between the unfulfilled needs and what is already being done**. Here, it is important to understand for the area concerned what new approaches can be taken to narrow this gap and what types of strategy should be taken into account to fight social exclusion.

2.1 Analysing the needs: diagnosing social exclusion in a rural area

In rural areas, social exclusion often assumes much more complex forms than might first be expected. The few clearly identified social groups (the unemployed, disabled, elderly and isolated, nomads, etc.) and the problems (of access to employment, education, services, etc.) that usually come to mind are in fact just the tip of the iceberg. A closer look will probably reveal that other unexpected social categories are affected and that the invisible aspects of exclusion often play a much more decisive role than the visible aspects.

In order to identify and thoroughly understand all the aspects of social exclusion in a given rural area, an in-depth analysis is necessary. The reason is that the immediately visible part of exclusion or the part for which information is available can only serve as a start-

ing point. Therefore, it is important to proceed step by step, beginning with the most simple element and moving on to the more complex. More quantitative, standardised information first has to be analysed before turning to more qualitative, hard-to-standardise and therefore less accessible information.

This procedure can be divided into five steps:

- > initial identification of the individuals or social groups concerned;
- > comparison of the information on the victims and on the areas of exclusion;
- > identification of the least visible aspects of exclusion;
- > analysis of the road that led to social exclusion;
- > examination of the context.

These steps are of course only an indication of how to proceed. For each case, this outline will have to be adapted, added to or revised depending on the context of the area. The procedure is also not linear, meaning it does not follow a straight line. Backtracking is necessary between the steps. That is why it is more appropriate to talk about five “entry points” rather than “steps” in the social exclusion analysis.

2.1.1 Initial identification of the individuals and social groups concerned

Which individuals or social groups in the area are actual or potential victims of social exclusion? The first social groups that come to mind are of course the “risk” groups, meaning groups with a “social handicap” that can lead to exclusion. Illiterate and unskilled people are more likely to be unemployed than other groups. People who are geographically isolated and without any means of transport have a greater chance of not having access to services. Business owners in remote areas may find it hard to obtain useful information about their potential customers.

A systematic review of these persons will be a first step in unravelling the problem.

The sources of information that can be used to identify those people prone to social exclusion are many and complementary:

- > government agencies have various kinds of information about certain categories of the population (beneficiaries of income support, unemployed people, the disabled, etc.);
- > Some organisations or associations working with people in difficulty have databases and qualitative information based on their direct contact with the excluded and their work on the ground.

Databases exist in some areas or structures on elderly people with small farms or businesses but no heir (e.g. in France, the “RELANCE” association was created by the chambers of commerce and industry and the LEADER group of Espace Cévennes in Languedoc-Roussillon with the purpose of helping young people take over business activities in this part of the Massif Central and therefore become members of the working population).

The direct observation that goes with working in a local development network, for example, is another important source of information.

2.1.2 Comparing the information about the victims and the areas of exclusion

Identifying the social groups affected by social exclusion logically highlights the areas where the exclusion occurs. The most visible areas of exclusion are the job market, housing, education, means of production and credit. The absence of social or family links is another factor of exclusion, more difficult to perceive. Once these areas of exclusion have been catalogued, they can be compared with the groups that are victims of exclusion to obtain a double entry table.

However, because the reality is always more complex and the areas of exclusion more numerous than what a table can contain, it is useful to list a certain number of indicators in order to systematise the identification of situations of exclusion. These indicators can be listed under one of the following categories: actual or potential victims of social exclusion, areas of exclusion, or area where the excluded live.

EXAMPLE OF A COMPARISON BETWEEN VICTIMS AND FACTORS OF EXCLUSION

Factors of exclusion	Social groups victims of exclusion						
	<i>by sex Women</i>	<i>by age Young people Elderly people</i>	<i>by qualification Work with know-how that is not renewed</i>	<i>by distance or isolation elderly people, single-parent families</i>	<i>by handicap physically disabled</i>	<i>by economic discrimination economic refugees of cities</i>	<i>by ethnic discrimination Nomads, victims of conflicts</i>
Employment	X	X	X		X	X	X
Access to basic services (health, transport)				X	X	X	X
Access to institutional support				X	X	X	X
Access to credit and mechanisms to support risk-taking	X	X	X			X	
Access to means of production		X				X	
Access to adequate housing		X		X		X	X
Absence of mechanisms to take account of cultural differences (language, identity)							X
Social and family links				X		X	X
Access to training, information and retraining		X	X			X	X

EXAMPLE OF INDICATORS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION¹⁷

Income

1. Difference between middle and low income
2. Categories with few resources (less than 50% of the average income)
3. Percentage of low income people (less than 40% of the median income)
4. Recipients of income support or unemployment benefits (working population)
5. Beneficiaries of long-term welfare support (all ages combined)
6. Localisation (geographical spread) of low income people
7. *Localisation (geographical spread) of families with unemployed members*

Children

8. Children living in homes affected by unemployment
9. Children living in low-income homes (less than 50% of the median income)
10. Children not integrated in the basic educational cycle
11. Children definitively excluded from school

Young people

12. Young unemployed people (16-24 years old)
13. Recipients of income support or low-wage earners (16-24 years old)
14. Young school drop-outs, without work and not in any training programme (16-18 years old)
15. Young people not part of a youth organisation, a cultural centre, a sports club or a group activity (15-24 years old)
16. Young people affected by drugs (15-24 years old)
17. Young people without any minimum qualification (19 years old)
18. *Young people without access to financial aid or credit (18-24 years old)*

Active adults

19. Adults in search of salaried work
20. Homes with adults unemployed for more than two years
21. Low-paid wage earners (*poorly paid manual labour*)
22. Workers without a steady job (*self-employed, cyclical or intermittent work*)
23. Adults without access to training or retraining
24. *Single-parent families*
25. *Overindebted adults*

Elderly people

26. Pensioners without other sources of income
27. *Elderly people living alone*
28. Percentage of basic products in expenditure
29. Beneficiaries of assistance in the home (%)
30. *Persons without a vehicle, telephone or assistance*

Area/village

31. Absence of community, cultural, sports activities.
32. Polarisation of labour (percentage of families with at least one adult unemployed)
33. High transport costs
34. *Absence of shops, bars or meeting places*
35. Lack of home, business, crop insurance
36. Feeling of dissatisfaction with the area or village (%)
37. *Social intervention initiatives (public or private)*
38. *Difficult access to housing*

Source: "The New Policy Institute", Howarth Catherine et al., *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1999.
http://www.jrf.org.uk/social_policy/D29.htm. The indicators more specifically related to rural areas were added by the LEADER European Observatory.
They appear in italics in the table.

[17] For more information on this example consult: http://www.jrf.org.uk/social_policy/D29.htm.

The indicators can be used not only when identifying situations of exclusion but also when monitoring trends (improvement, worsening, status quo) over a period of one year or more.

At the national or regional level, indicators like these are often used to monitor trends or assess the impact of interventions. Good knowledge of the trends in an area can help to adjust the state intervention to the local situation and to tailor aid to each individual case.

In addition to monitoring trends over time, the indicators can be used to make comparisons between areas or between labour pools in the same areas. This way, interventions can be adjusted and, for example, concentrated in certain “pockets” of exclusion, instead of indiscriminately covering a whole area.

The series of indicators proposed are only an indication of what is possible. Each area must be able to develop its own series according to the context. In an area where there is severe social polarisation, for example, the comparison between low income and middle income groups may be of little relevance when determining the gap between the wealthiest and poorest segments of the population. Comparisons of access are also sometimes necessary, especially in rural areas far from any cities.

2.1.3 Identifying the least visible aspects of exclusion

Although essential for the identification of situations of exclusion, the series of indicators is not enough to paint the entire complex picture.

Thus, the exclusion indicators measure the negative consequences of the phenomenon but do not shed light on the skills, know-how and ideas of the people who are victims of exclusion. However, these indicators are essential levers when attempting to reverse the trend by triggering a process of active integration.

Furthermore, the indicators reveal the most objective aspects of exclusion and the easiest to identify. With tools like these, the more personal, more subjective dimensions of exclusion are impossible to grasp. And yet the profound essence of social exclusion has to do above all with relationships. By observing the reality of the social and identity links, it is possible to determine the degree of isolation and see how fragile the points of reference and feeling of belonging are. This is also a way of identifying the networks that can be called upon to find a solution.

Noticing that young unemployed people were not receiving individual help, the Stirling LEADER group (Scotland, United Kingdom) decided to put emphasis on reestablishing networks of relationships (family, school, friends, colleagues, church, clubs, etc.). The idea was to help the young unemployed find needed support from the people around them, especially when setting up a business and taking risks. Steps were also taken to make sure that this help continued at least during the initial start-up phase.

By focusing on the social dimension (the links between people), it is possible to detect situations of distress, be they due to long-term unemployment or loneliness (problems of single farmers, difficulties specific to single-parent families, isolation of elderly people living alone, etc.). Individual and social depreciation is a much more serious source of exclusion than not having access to certain services, because it undermines people's human dignity, makes their life less meaningful and diminishes their ability to react.

In the case of ethnic minorities or nomad groups (eg. “travellers” in the Irish countryside), it is particularly important to take into account the social and identity links. Indeed very often it is the prejudices of their community with its traditional habits that paralyse the young people and prevent them from building a different future.

The Irish LEADER groups which work with travellers are confronted with such problems as teenage marriages, alcoholism among young people and unfinished studies. The South Mayo group chose to work on the artistic capacities of the young nomad women. The works of art that the LAG encouraged them to make enabled these women to regain self-esteem and to establish contact with other social groups at exhibitions and workshop visits.

This in-depth knowledge of the situations of social exclusion can be put to use to detect the least visible aspects. It is much more important than what can be learned from the gathering of existing information or from the use of formalised indicators. But it implies direct contact with the persons concerned and is difficult to obtain without working with them on a daily basis. Two essential conclusions can be drawn from this for the fight against exclusion:

> The job of identifying situations of exclusion and then analysing them is difficult to separate from the action, for it is during this action to fight exclusion that a real picture of the situation emerges, whereupon the objectives and methods of the action can be more clearly defined. In other words, the fight

against social exclusion is not compatible with a pre-established procedure where different people and institutions have different responsibilities and elaborate the action plan at different points in time.

- > An in-depth knowledge of the situations of social exclusion is only possible at the local level, because it is only here that the situations can be analysed in an objective manner and at the same time understood in a more subjective way. By working on these two aspects in parallel, it will be possible to grasp the essence of the problem and to mobilise the capacities and expressions of solidarity needed to reverse the trend.

2.1.4 Analysing the roads leading to exclusion

Social exclusion is not a static phenomenon. Periods of work can be followed by periods of hardship and vice versa. Therefore inclusion becomes sporadic, especially if the individual or family income depends on cyclical or temporary jobs.

The “WISE Group”¹⁸ for the return to work of the long-term unemployed in the United Kingdom considers long-term inclusion to be the most difficult to achieve in the fight against social exclusion. Finding work is not enough. This accomplishment has to be consolidated by training, social links and forms of communication. The group also believes it essential that the support structures identify the growth markets and adapt training programmes to the new needs of the markets.

A diagnosis of social exclusion covering a very limited period of time can therefore be misleading. The diagnosis may focus on the case of one family or individual whose situation is catastrophic but whose channels of information and links of solidarity or whose resilience are such that the family or individual has less difficulty dealing with the problem than others whose situation appears less dramatic.

That is why the real indicators of social exclusion are the **roads leading to exclusion** rather than the actual *situations* of exclusion. In other words, **social exclusion is more a process than a de facto state**. Therefore a mere picture of the situation at a given time is not enough to diagnose the social exclusion. This diagnosis also implies going back over the road leading to exclusion and highlighting the triggering factors. Repeated complications and “vicious circles” in particular are at the heart of the problems of social exclusion.

The United Kingdom has seen the proportion of homes where all the adults are unemployed increase from 6% in 1975 to 18% in 1999. In the meantime, the proportion of homes where all the adults work has risen from 56% to 63%. Therefore, we are witnessing a situation of polarisation where exclusion spawns exclusion, marginalising entire families.

It is also important to take into account and assess the risk factors, because they can play a determining role and contradict appearances.

The “economic refugees” who have sought to escape their situation of exclusion in the city by moving to the country can look like they have regained a certain balance. However, the possibility of exclusion remains, for there are still risk factors like isolation, absence of local support, or a lack of preparation for life in the country. That is why they are extremely vulnerable and why the slightest unfavourable event such as loss of income, loss of capital, or illness can at any time upset the process of integration.

More than the descriptive analysis of the roads leading to exclusion which highlights the major trends, it is the search for risk factors that provides the best picture of real and potential situations of exclusion.

2.1.5 Taking account of the context

The triggering of exclusion and the vicious circles that are created do not occur by accident. A series of elements defining the context make gradual marginalisation possible and amplify the process. Some of these elements are of an economic nature, others are more of a social or cultural nature. Rather than examining these elements in detail at the European or national level, we will attempt to show here how they are expressed at the local level in rural areas.

[18] The WISE Group 72 Charlotte Street, UK Glasgow G1 5DW;
E-mail: feedback@thewisegroup; WEB www.thewisegroup.co.uk

a) The economic context

The first element that comes to mind is of course the weight of unemployment. Unemployment occurs when the supply of jobs does not meet the demand for jobs. This can be both a problem of quantity (the number of job vacancies is less than the number of job applicants) and a problem of quality (lack of salaried jobs for people of a certain age, women, unskilled young people, etc.). This latter form is the most direct cause of long-term unemployment and the main factor of social exclusion. Let us now see what this translates into in rural areas.

With the drastic cuts in farm labour, the family is gradually losing the reassuring role that it had in the past when it provided work and an income to all its members on the family farm. What is more, some traditional jobs or functions are today rejected, mostly by women and young people, when they do not disappear under the effect of modern technologies. Immediate vocational retraining is not available, given the tremendous competition that reigns on the markets.

The women of the Jerte valley (Extremadura, Spain) were traditionally responsible for manually sorting cherries, the main local crop, but today they refuse to do this tedious routine work. Because of competition, industrial sorting techniques now have to be introduced. Given their isolation and the tremendous competition that reigns in their sector, it is not easy to retrain these women, and the efforts to do so by the local LEADER group are not enough to keep the most skilled young women in the area.

The economic environment downstream from production (situation of the market and prices) also plays a major role in the social exclusion process. Farmers and small craftsmen are particularly affected. Competition, falling prices and the disappearance of certain outlets are having a chain reaction and steadily eroding their income.

In Algarve (Portugal), the small-scale producers of arbutus berry brandy for the past twenty years saw their market shrink and the value of their product plunge in the face of competition from certain imported alcohol. To improve profits, they cut their production costs by eliminating certain technical operations, but this affected the quality. As a result, sales fell even further and the knock-on process of income erosion began. Until the LEADER group's intervention, these producers remained isolated, not benefiting from any technical support to find alternative solutions to improve the quality and to recapture certain markets.

Sometimes the economic environment upstream from production (supply of services or facilities) also plays a determining role in the process of exclusion. Often, small farmers with economic difficulties fall prey to retailers of farm equipment who, knowing that they cannot obtain credit, manage to impose unacceptable conditions on them, especially if they are ill prepared to bargain. In this case, the knock-on process of decline begins.

b) The social and cultural context

The social and cultural context also plays a decisive role. The links of solidarity and mutual aid in particular are essential in avoiding any process of decline. In traditional societies, these links often acted as "shock absorbers" against social exclusion. Mutual aid between families or savings, for example, prevented isolation and made it easier to get through difficult periods and help young people get started.

In modern societies, these links have more often than not disappeared, replaced by a more systematic search for competitiveness. Nonetheless, other forms of solidarity are appearing.

Therefore, examining the situation of social exclusion in an area also means taking account of these changes and asking questions like: What forms of solidarity and mutual aid were there in the past? What remains of them today? Have other forms of solidarity and other social links brought relief? Answers also need to be found to questions about changes in mentalities and information channels: What happens when an individual or family needs help? To what extent do families and individuals live in isolation? What means does the local society have to identify and react to situations of exclusion? Are there forms of rejection or latent conflicts that might make these situations worse?

Behind the question of mentalities is the question of values: What is the situation with the local society's values of solidarity? Through what channels are these values expressed? Are these values threatened?

The way in which the relationship between generations has evolved also are to be taken into account. The way in which farms are passed on to the younger generation should be studied, for example, because there are cases where young people become overburdened with debt to buy the farm from their parents or from the persons with whom they share the inheritance. This is precisely the kind of problem that Community measures in favour of early retirement and young farmers are trying to avoid.

c) The democratic context and citizen expression

Whereas in the past the problem of poverty was exclusively a problem of income distribution, today the phenomenon of exclusion in the city and in the countryside also has to do with problems of participation in social life. In other words, the question of the status of citizens and the exercising of power must also be raised. Here, we are talking about the actual practice of democracy but also about the way in which individual and collective capacities are called upon and taken into account.

The current changes in society have had a profound effect on the social status and resource distribution mechanisms. Three mechanisms are currently playing a role in the way in which citizens are assigned resources or a status: the market (labour-derived income) which tends to amplify inequalities, the state and social protection systems which tend to reduce them by granting various benefits and allowances, and solidarity networks. However, in the case of these networks of solidarity, a transfer of responsibilities is under way. The non-governmental, family or community networks are playing an increasingly important role in the transfer of resources but also in the assignment of status, in the rebuilding of social links and in the regaining of a sense of belonging.

The phenomena of social inclusion and social exclusion need to be analysed according to the characteristics of these mechanisms. Poverty may no longer be treated as a simple problem of income, and given the complexity of the mechanisms involved in social exclusion, individual treatment is no longer possible. Social or collective compensations need to be found for the shortcomings of the systems generating social exclusion¹⁹.

In rural areas where social links are generally strong, the processes of exclusion created and the diminished role of the Welfare state can be offset by various types of community support, networking and local forms of solidarity.

Analysts and conceptualisers of social policies agree on the importance of the “community” or “local” approach and on the fact that local social links can provide tailored solutions to the problem of social exclusion. By contrast, in cases where social and identity-based links are weak, finding a solution is more difficult.

Although the local approach is important, some questions remain: is local social action possible without a

clear definition and guarantee of the roles of the different levels (state, municipalities, etc.)? How can what are sometimes contradictory effects be avoided when intervening in the area with public funds?

2.2 Analysing what is being done: taking stock of practices to fight social exclusion

Once the magnitude of the problem of social exclusion has been determined and its peculiar features in an area understood, the available remedies can be examined. These remedies are the forms of intervention introduced by the state and government agencies and the interventions of private bodies such as charity and humanitarian organisations, associations, mutual benefit societies or social cooperatives.

2.2.1 state interventions

The state intervenes at several levels in the fight against social exclusion.

- > Specific measures have been adopted in the fight against unemployment. It is the state (with the increasing help of the local authorities) which registers the unemployed and grants them assistance (unemployment benefits) and which manages systems to help them find jobs and obtain vocational training. But the state also intervenes by directly creating jobs (“jobs for young people” in France, “public jobs” in Italy, Spain, etc.). In most countries, specific agencies are responsible for coordinating this.
- > Specific measures have also been adopted to fight poverty and have different forms depending on the country. The United Kingdom, for example, has introduced the “Working Families Tax Credit” while other countries provide income support.
- > Already for many years now there have been specific measures for the more traditional forms of exclusion, like those suffered by disabled people in the area of health, services or training.

[19] Schucksmith Mark, *op.cit.*, p.2; Philip Lorna & Schucksmith Mark: *Conceptualising Social Exclusion*, Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research and University of Aberdeen. Paper presented at: European Society for Rural Sociology XVIII Congress, Sweden, 24-28 August 1999.

Generally, state interventions to fight social exclusion have the following characteristics:

- > they are relatively sectorial and are for a target group defined by a specific handicap (young unemployed, long-term unemployed, single-parent families, disabled, etc.);
- > there is centralised decision-making for the entire national or regional area, which sometimes makes the transfers invisible for the local authorities;
- > they are of an administrative nature and the human relationship is often absent or greatly dependent on the goodwill of the officials concerned;
- > there is no continuation in the long-term – there are more and more mechanisms, elaborated case by case depending on the urgency and available funds;
- > the interventions do not involve the communities concerned in the search for solutions and do not clearly state what local impact the mechanism is expected to have;
- > the interventions are more a response to pre-established standards than to objectives defined on the ground.

In short, state interventions should take greater account of the context and local potential. However, it is true that a willingness to decentralise public interventions exists. The municipalities in particular are involved in the elaboration of so-called “community” programmes whose main aim is to create social or public jobs. The idea of “territorial pacts” where all the local partners have a say is a move in this direction to redistribute skills and to achieve coherence in the intervention mechanisms.

A certain change is also perceptible in the willingness to involve local partners in the local application of national anti-exclusion measures.

Furthermore, the social state is being entirely restructured in Europe, and an attempt is being made to substitute “active” policies of inclusion for “passive” policies”. But because the inclusion and anti-exclusion measures are often designed to complement social protection systems, exclusion is becoming institutionalised. The mechanisms set up have created a specific sector, the sector of the excluded, which we are seeing today is difficult to get out of²⁰. By only treating the symptoms of exclusion and not dealing with the mechanisms that are generating it, there is a great risk that the weakest groups will be marginalised and assigned an exception status and be barred entry back to the mainstream of social life.

What is more, some of the characteristics of inclusion policies sometimes make interventions on the ground difficult:

- > the policies lack continuity and are confined to temporary selective mechanisms which depending on available funds are introduced without any overall coherence;
- > these policies make little if any use of the capacities of individuals to improve their situation, creating and maintaining forms of dependence on social services;
- > there are no or too few impact assessments.

2.2.2 Private interventions

In addition to the state interventions, there are many private interventions in rural areas.

- > A lot of these interventions are in the form of charity or assistance and are the work of solidarity bodies, associations, humanitarian organisations, churches, etc.;
- > others are of a mutualist nature, making them similar to state interventions. The mutual farm insurance systems which many farmers in France belong to guarantee them a whole range of social services;
- > yet others, particularly in Italy, are initiated by social cooperatives and come from the desire to entrust the private sector with services until then provided by the local authorities;
- > lastly, here and there networks of solidarity and mutual assistance are appearing to give the unemployed and the excluded access to goods and services that they would otherwise not have.

These initiatives are targeted at social groups and are an answer to clearly defined problems, although usually they are not interconnected.

However, there are exceptions:

- > the Italian social cooperatives have developed a systemic approach, adhering to a movement generating reflection, methods and the capacity to negotiate;
- > the “systèmes d’échanges locaux”/“local trade systems” (SEL) which originated in Canada have also gradually elaborated a transferable approach. Today in France, for example, over 270 groups have been set up locally and each has between 10 000 and 15 000 members, 40% to 60% of whom are disadvantaged people living on income support. Based on bartering, these SEL groups are not aimed at inclusion through

[20] Amouroux, *op.cit.* pp.18-19

employment or through the dominant systems of trade but seek to organise reciprocal trade through the management of social links while asserting that there is no possible substitution for social protection systems and paid work, the only guarantees of national solidarity²¹.

These systems or others exist in the “cracks” in state social policies, and in some cases pick up where these policies left off. Most receive public grants, usually on a sporadic basis, and operate on the principle of voluntary work.

In many cases, these systems have received support from the LEADER groups which have helped to organise new training programmes, to improve the quality, to develop or expand certain interventions.

In Ireland²², several LEADER groups have intervened in this way:

- > *in the Barrow-Nore-Suir area, investment aid for equipment was granted to the Clogh Family Resource Centre so that it could enlarge the activities organised for disabled children and adults;*
- > *in the Ballyhoura area, the Rural Community Care Network received assistance to develop a pilot programme to create services for the elderly, to organise the distribution of hot meals to people in need, to provide home maintenance services for the elderly and the disabled and to explore the possibility of creating jobs in the social economy sector;*
- > *in Donegal, an audit of local needs convinced the LEADER group to lend a hand with a feasibility study for a multipurpose centre to help the unemployed, the elderly, women, children in difficulty and social groups without access to training and educational material;*
- > *in Leitrim/North Roscommon, the LEADER group part-financed the training of 30 unemployed women so that they could work in a cooperative offering a range of services such as social welfare, family management and childcare.*

2.3 Determining and narrowing the gap between needs and available help

Diagnosing social exclusion (determining the needs) and taking stock of existing interventions (available help) in the area in question show the gap that exists between unsatisfied social needs and the help offered by the state or private bodies.

This gap is not easy to assess when there are many different interventions and when one way or another the state guarantees a certain level of assistance. For example, families in most cases receive income support if they are eligible, and families or people in difficulty rarely escape the watchful eye of social welfare services.

It is by observing the local processes of exclusion with a view to devising a coherent inclusion strategy that gaps, generally relating to quality, appear. To clearly determine how wide these gaps are, it is important first to have a good diagnosis of the existing needs and services, taking full account of the human and social factors, the most difficult to identify. A diagnosis that has been properly done shows how to rethink the approaches, attitudes, forms of intervention adopted, and even the way in which the fight against social exclusion is designed.

2.3.1 Rethinking attitudes and forms of intervention

It is first of all in the attitudes and forms of intervention of the people and institutions involved in the fight against exclusion that the gap appears between real needs and the actual actions of the corresponding services. Below are a few examples.

- > **More flexibility and a certain adaptability are needed to counter the rigidity, multiplication and discontinuity of programmes, laws, functions and specialisations.**

If a strictly administrative logic is applied for granting them, unemployment benefits, income support and other forms of financial assistance can have detrimental effects by inhibiting the initiative. The race for subsidies, maintained by the discontinuity of funding and the absence of one single agent, forces the ben-

[21] “Un peu de SEL dans le tissu social”, *Alternatives économiques*, March 1998, n° 157; see also: <http://altern.com/sel>

[22] Department of Agriculture and Food, *Impact on Social Exclusion, LEADER II. Description of samples supported by approved LEADER groups which impact on issues relating to social inclusion*, Dublin, August 1998.

eficiaries to “navigate” within complex administrative systems, which does not encourage the elaboration of projects. The interventions then have to be departitioned at the local level and the local partners have to be persuaded to negotiate the allocation and use of part of the public subsidies for projects²³.

- > *Standardised processing has to be offset by **more personalised forms of processing for data and applications**.*

state unemployment agencies often just process job applications and vacancies in a standardised manner. Yet a personalised service is essential, especially in the case of the long-term unemployed.

In the province of Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain), some municipalities have introduced personalised services for the long-term unemployed, and particularly for skilled workers over 50 years old whom they help regain confidence by finding new ways to use their untapped capacities.

- > *To counterbalance the coldness of certain government agencies, **more humane contacts** need to be established with the beneficiaries to **develop social links and partnerships**.*

The administrative surveys used to identify people in difficulty, for example, are often extremely impersonal and only emphasise the negative aspects of the situation of the targeted groups.

However, forms of collective animation can instead be used to create an environment favourable to the expression of the capacities of people in difficulty. This gives a better idea of what these people can do and at the same time encourages the development of forms of solidarity and renewed self-confidence. This can also lead to forms of representation enabling the beneficiaries to participate in negotiations within the bodies where anti-exclusion policies are decided. In other words, attitudes have to be developed that encourage new social links and equal partnerships.

2.3.2 Reviewing the way in which the fight against social exclusion is conceived

From handouts to real assistance

When it comes to attitudes and forms of intervention, it is often the very way in which the fight against social exclusion is conceived that is in question. Instead of receiving charity, people can benefit from genuine support that makes use of know-how and favours the emergence of new social actors.

The fight against exclusion can no longer remain the exclusive domain of specialised services where people in difficulty have to meet with someone different for each problem they have (housing, employment, etc.) and where there is a different regulatory framework for each field. Other forms of assistance are needed where the person's whole identity is taken into consideration. To achieve the stabilisation being sought, the assistance must also be organised in a collective manner, combining the many forms of know-how, be they institutional or part of the participatory action.

In County Tipperary (Ireland), the LEADER group helped the Centre for Independent Living of Thurles with a training project for travellers (people accustomed to living in a closed and in a so to speak protected environment) to enable them to find salaried work. To help these people become stabilised, the group supported the setting up of the Tipperary Community Workshop by facilitating the creation of a joint venture between several structures, practices and know-how that would make the intervention effective.

From a curative approach to a preventive approach

Forward-looking, preventive approaches often appear more appropriate than curative approaches which implement standardised responses.

When there is chronic unemployment, treating the problem with anonymous systems to help people find work, for example, is no longer sufficient. Other forward-looking or preventive steps have to be taken such as the creation of jobs, vocational retraining or job sharing. These approaches imply new capacities, and in particular:

- > the capacity to look for new sources of employment, including in sectors normally considered not very dynamic (the WISE Group noticed, for example, that in English-speaking countries, the demand for home aerobic instructors rose sharply in 1999). Helping unemployed people retrain for potential jobs requires a certain psychological knowledge and an excellent capacity to establish personalised human relations.
- > a collective capacity to look for business activities to create, which implies the development of collective strategies to start up businesses.

[23] Amouroux, op. cit., p. 77.

> the capacity to encourage and to help young people with the creation of businesses, which implies the organisation of local networks and the adaptation of institutional assistance to the situation on the ground. A good example of this is the system of “loans on trust” in Italy which helps young people start up businesses and which has had a great ratchet effect.

Other preventive approaches also exist at an earlier stage, the aim being to identify those people at risk likely to enter a process of social exclusion and to help them create the conditions that will avoid the triggering of this process.

2.4 Conclusion

The new ways in which the fight against social exclusion needs to be conceived are not very compatible with centralised and standardised approaches.

On the contrary, these new conceptions imply that the area's resources and the social links still there are immediately put to use. It is on the basis of the proximity and direct knowledge of the social realities that new behaviour and new ways of thinking can be developed. These changes are essential if the fight against exclusion is to really be effective.

A large number of the actions launched in rural areas these past ten years have been in this direction. Seeking to take advantage of local resources, these actions open new prospects for a territorial approach to the fight against social exclusion that takes account of all the needs and resources present in the area. Methods and tools have been developed for this and will be examined in the following chapter.

Chapter III

Taking action against social exclusion in rural areas: what methods? what tools?

Taking action against social exclusion in rural areas: what methods? what tools?

After highlighting the reasons why globally speaking the fight against social exclusion is today a major challenge for rural development (chapter I) and examining a few methodological ways to determine the problem in a rural area and consequently to devise strategies (chapter II), we are now going to look at the possible means of intervention.

To do so we will refer to past or ongoing experiences of fighting social exclusion which take advantage of local resources and use innovative approaches. In fact Europe has a large number of actions of this kind, but usually they are not part of LEADER.

3.1 Targeted local actions, the start of a more comprehensive territorial approach

The examples used for this analysis are varied enough that comparisons can be made and relatively solid general and transversal lessons can be drawn. Seven actions to fight social exclusion have been selected for this first exercise. A detailed description of these actions can be found in the directory published by the LEADER European Observatory *“Innovative Actions of Rural Development”*²⁴. They are:

- > The creation in Cornouaille morbihannaise and in Pays Pourbet (Brittany, France) of an enterprise to help the long-term unemployed find work in the building sector with the support of the LEADER group of Centre-Ouest Bretagne (Central West Brittany). What makes this action special is that it combines different local development interventions aimed at the fight against social exclusion such as the return to work of unemployed people, the renovation of empty village houses and the creation of a social rental housing stock for homeless families.
- > The work done by the “CILDEA” association in the Loire (Auvergne, France) for farmers in difficulty living on income support (RMI). The association has set up a system where very successful farmers, including

farmers who have local responsibilities (presidents of cooperatives, former mayors, etc.), give assistance and guidance to farmers in difficulty.

- > The social cooperative of Valle di Non (province of Trento, Italy), created for the disabled people of the area, which after operating for many years in a conventional way (organisation of specific services for the disabled such as housing, education, and recreational activities) decided in 1997 to begin a form of “community development” involving families in order to develop personalised links and services that enable the disabled to become better integrated socially.
- > The “time bank” created in Sant’Arcangelo di Romagna (Emilia-Romagna, Italy) to satisfy the demand for services that could be provided by people of the region. The “time exchange” system set up for this purpose enables a great flow of contacts between those in search of services and the service providers.
- > The creation of an alternative system of transport in County Angus (Scotland, United Kingdom) to satisfy the needs of geographically isolated people without any personal means of transport. The privatisation of public transport worsened what was already not a good situation and in fact led the LEADER group to launch a system where the different forms of transport in existence (school transport, mail delivery, milk collection, door-to-door salesmen, etc.) could be used by isolated people.

[24] 24 Given the limited number of examples, only basic, partial conclusions can be drawn. Each LEADER group, and each national or regional network may, on the basis of its own experience, confirm these examples, disputes them, adds to them or refines them. Therefore, the examples may only serve as a starting point, or as a common reference for a wider debate which may spread to the level of the European network once detailed and definitive conclusions have been reached. It is also worth noting that the current ideas on new approaches to fighting social exclusion in rural areas are based on earlier debates, studies and publications which reveal new courses of action and present results that must be taken into account in the exercise proposed here. A good example is the work done in France by Mairie Conseil, rue de l’Université, 106, F-75007 Paris, Tel: +33 140 49 20 40, Fax: +33 140 49 20 55.

- > The resettlement in rural areas of urban families threatened with exclusion, a movement organised by the Irish association RRI (Rural Resettlement Ireland).
- > The experiment carried out in Utajärvi Oulu (Finland) to combine assistance for elderly people with childminding. In addition to cutting down on personnel, this system enables the formation of a very enriching social link between children and isolated elderly people.

These different actions and the many others not mentioned here were created to solve specific problems of social exclusion in rural areas. They were the work of local associations, municipalities and in some cases even individuals aware of these problems and in a position to explore new forms of intervention.

The inspiration for some of these actions comes from solutions already attempted elsewhere, making them part of a networking logic. This is particularly the case of the Italian actions (social cooperatives and time banks). Others have sought to put into practice new concepts of social management and have gradually had them adopted by the local institutions, particularly by the municipalities and the bodies helping the unemployed.

Many coexist with the institutional interventions, offering new answers to the institutions present in the area which find the phenomenon too difficult to understand or which lack the appropriate instruments to cope with complex challenges (example of CILDEA in France). Other are simply a response to new needs and to the recent appearance of exclusion (case of Angus Transport Forum in Scotland).

Most of the local actions are targeted at a specific group or designed to solve a specific problem. Because they make up for the shortcomings of the actions already in place, they are often pioneering. In this sense, they serve as a demonstration. However, their inclusion in a comprehensive territorial approach to fight exclusion depends to a great extent on whether wider partnerships can be formed in the area.

3.2 Making up for the insufficient aid of public services

The first characteristic of targeted local actions is that they aim to complement public aid by intervening in fields where the public aid is insufficient. This particularly concerns:

a) insufficient social coverage due to legal provisions

The action in Central West Brittany is motivated by the very precarious situation of the long-term unemployed who lose their right to unemployment benefits after one year. However, a large number of people in the region are chronically unemployed. Those particularly affected are unskilled young people who have housing and transport problems, but there are also sometimes older people who often suffer from illiteracy or alcoholism.

b) the absence of certain specific services

In Ireland, like in a lot of other countries, there was no service until recently to help needy people living in the city who wanted to move to the country. The RRI association is meeting this demand.

c) The existence of problems that have not been identified by the public authorities or that cannot be standardised

In Emilia-Romagna (Italy), there are sector-based social policies which generally work very well when the problems are recurrent and the solution is therefore easy to standardise (eg. create a public transport route to open up an isolated area) or when serious cases are easy to identify (eg. provide home care service for a seriously ill elderly person). But these policies are not enough to break the isolation of people faced with less cyclical or less acute problems which may nonetheless be a heavy burden in the person's life. The time bank of Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna is an original response to this situation because it creates a supply of services based on the skills and availability of the people concerned.

d) cost constraints

The State's inability to deal with non-identifiable or non-standardisable problems is related to the problem of the cost of public services:

- > in County Angus, the too great scattering of people needing a public or private form of mass transport poses cost constraints that prevent any standardised solution;
- > the idea of combining care for the elderly and for children, as is the case in Utajärvi Oulu (Finland) was first a way of solving the problem of the cost of these two services.

e) a widespread problem: insufficient social links

Assistance in the form of services or financial aid does not in itself solve the main problem of social exclusion, meaning the lack of social links. In this field, the State administrative services are usually powerless, and the goodwill of the officials is not enough. And the often remarkable work done by social workers in lending moral and human support falls far short of satisfying the real needs.

The targeted local actions in rural areas are aimed above all at solving this problem, considered of the utmost importance, and include actions like the creation of links between unemployed people and professionals in Brittany, between farmers in difficulty and guidance farmers in the Loire, between the disabled and able-bodied families in the Valle di Non, between children and elderly people in Utajärvi Oulu in Finland, and between people exchanging services through the time bank in Emilia-Romagna.

3.3 Bringing together initiators, beneficiaries, human and financial resources

Generally, the second characteristic of anti-exclusion actions in rural areas is the involvement of four types of actors:

- > the initiators and managers of the action;
- > the beneficiaries of the action;
- > the resource persons and/or institutions involved in the action;
- > the holders of financial resources.

a) The initiators

Who are they?

The initiators and managers of the action are people or institutions who are already aware of the problem of exclusion or who can take advantage of a practice in the field. They look at what has been lacking in past actions and examine possible solutions. They may be:

- > activists of the non-governmental sector – eg. the CILDEA association arose out of an earlier intervention by activists in the region;
- > officials of the local or central social services – the time bank in Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna was the result of an initiative of an equal opportunity board composed of women town councillors of the municipality; in Utajärvi Oulu in Finland, the state social services promoted the action;
- > a LEADER Local Action Group, like the one of Central West Brittany.

How do they mobilise?

The mobilisation of the initiators is always the result of a more or less long history that began in a specific context which triggered the motivations, the initiatives, the establishment of contacts and the search for solutions.

The initiators generally chose to adopt an institutional, non-governmental or cooperative framework specific to the planned action. For example, there was the creation of: the Rural Plan for Economic Integration association in Brittany, the CILDEA association in the Loire, the social cooperative in Trento, the August Transport Forum in Scotland, the association for the management of the time bank in Emilia-Romagna, the RRI association in Ireland, etc.

b) The beneficiaries

Who are they?

The beneficiaries are the target group of excluded people at whom the action is aimed, because each action has a clearly defined target group: long-term unemployed (Centre-Ouest Bretagne), farmers in difficulty (Loire), the disabled (Valle di Non), the elderly (Utajärvi Oulu), geographically isolated persons (Angus), “economic refugees” (Ireland)...

How are they contacted?

The beneficiaries are identified and contacted in a whole variety of ways. Often the initiators' network of personal acquaintances is sufficient. That is generally the case in the Italian social cooperatives whose network tends to grow as the action progresses and the initiator becomes acquainted with the beneficiaries.

However, sometimes systematic identification is necessary. Several solutions are then possible:

- > using the databases or the files of the State administrative services when this is also possible. The CILDEA association, for example, contacts the income support service to find farmers in difficulty;
- > using relays – in County Angus, the beneficiaries are contacted via local groups of volunteers. They are the ones who present the service, provide feedback on the needs, locally organise travel, etc.
- > using broadcasting tools like the radio. RRI, for example, presents its action on radio programmes where interested persons can call in.

Whatever the situation, nothing is imposed on the potential beneficiaries who must remain free to choose. In fact the dialogue that is established with them is part of the inclusion work and essential if the action is to be a success. In the Loire, it takes a lot of talking to the farmers in difficulty before they are willing to become beneficiaries and accept the principle of counselling and guidance.

What part do they play in conducting the action?

In general the relationship between initiators and beneficiaries is not a simple relationship of assistance. The fact that the beneficiaries are involved in the action's management is an essential condition for its success and sustainability. However, this is not always easy to do, given the often precarious situation of the beneficiaries. In such case, specific methods of training, involvement and dialogue have to be found that imply a lot of listening and guidance. Several methods have been tested depending on the groups concerned:

- > the establishment of long-term dialogue by holding regular meetings to review and compare results – *every year, the CILDEA association organises a general meeting with the farmer beneficiaries and their counsellors to take stock of the past year, to assess the methods used, to see what kind of improvements can be made, and so on.*

- > the direct involvement of the beneficiaries in the action's management by making them active members of the association promoting the action – *the beneficiaries of the time bank of Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna are members of the association which they operate, dividing the work among five working groups (management of secretariat, management of computer system, organisation of courses and cultural and recreational activities, relations with the public institutions, promotion of the bank in the area).*
- > the use of contracts or other forms of formal commitment – *The CILDEA association has all the beneficiaries sign (in accordance with the rules imposed for the granting of income support) a contract of inclusion which is approved by a local board of inclusion. This contract reiterates the pledges made by both sides and the rights and obligations of the beneficiary.*

c) The resource persons and/or institutions Who are they?

These are the people and/or institutions who help the beneficiaries find a way out of their state of exclusion. They can help establish a social link by lending a sympathetic ear, developing a human relationship, or offering advice, or they can provide services, organise vocational training or even offer a job (case of the retraining enterprise).

It may occur that the target groups also act as resource persons, like in the example of the elderly people in Finland or the members of the time bank in Italy.

How are they identified and contacted?

Finding the potential resource persons and/or institutions is a matter of observation and contacts. Here, the personal acquaintances of the initiators plays an essential role.

The CILDEA association uses the "word-of-mouth" method to find farmer counsellors. Its former job as a teacher in a rural area helped the development worker find the farmers most open to the action proposed and made it easier to mobilise them.

How are they prepared to assume their role?

The resource persons and/or institutions play a key role in the action's progression at the local level. It is essential that they make the project and action their own, otherwise there is a great risk of failure. This is important because they are often required to listen and relate to the beneficiaries, which implies a considerable amount of psychological, human, social and cultural preparation.

The CILDEA association prepares the counsellors by organising regular training sessions with psychologists, social workers and development workers.

For city families moving to the country with the help of RRI, the inhabitants of the host villages are the resource persons. However, there have been cases where people have moved to villages without sufficient consultation and preparation of the local people. This resulted in reactions of rejection, particularly when the newly arrived families include "problem" teenagers (juvenile delinquency, drugs, etc.).

What part do they play in conducting the action?

There are several levels of involvement of the resource persons and/or institutions in the action's management:

- > The involvement may be in the form of informal and voluntary commitment.

In the Valle di Non social cooperative in Italy, the resource families make a voluntary commitment that is later formalised as and when the need arises.

- > Sometimes, even when voluntary, a more formal commitment has to be made where the general context of participation in the action is clearly established.

For the counselling of farmers in the Loire, the counsellors have to make a formal commitment to abide by a certain number of clearly defined practices: time and forms of assistance, relationship with the association, etc.

- > The commitment of the resource persons and/or institutions may even go as far as participation in the local partnership created for the action, membership in the association responsible for the action or inclusion in the group of initiators of the action.

The CILDEA association and the social cooperative of the Valle di Non had a number of cases like this.

d) the holders of financial resources

The actions to fight social exclusion would have difficulty existing without specific funding. Despite the constant reliance upon very low-cost resources (voluntary work, local means, etc.), there are operating costs that an association itself cannot easily finance. Although there are exceptions, like in the case of the time bank of Sant'Archangelo di Romagna where the initiator is a public institution which already has a specific budget.

Who are they?

The funding for anti-exclusion actions can be public or private and come from a variety of sources: local, regional, national or European authority or body.

At the local level, public funds are most often solicited from the municipalities. But funding can also be sought from other regional authorities like the French General Councils, the British County Councils or the German Länder. At the national level, the specialised government agencies remain a potential source of funding.

Since 1990, the action begun by CILDEA has been funded by the General Council of the Loire and by the department's Labour and Employment Services. Given the good results obtained in a few cantons, this funding has been extended to all the rural sectors of the department. This has made it possible to reach nearly 100 farmers on income support, or two thirds of those in the department.

Some private firms will also fund actions to fight social exclusion.

To launch their training enterprise for jobs in the construction sector, the LEADER group of Centre-Ouest Bretagne solicited and obtained financial support from the region's major industrial firms connected with the sector (cement, electricity, etc.).

Finally, it is important to remember that by mobilising local funds, public or private, it is possible to apply for European funding, from the European Social Fund (ESF) in particular.

How is a relationship of trust established and how can the funding be sustained?

The relationship with the institutions funding the actions is often problematic, because their expectations do not necessarily correspond to the reality of the anti-exclusion work. Often they want visible and quantifiable results in the short term. But inclusion is for the most part only achieved over the long term and involves the building of a social link that is not immediately perceptible.

The CILDEA association was faced with a problem of this kind. The General Council which was funding the action underestimated the amount of work that had to be done to rebuild a social link and thought that it could judge the results according to the number of farmers no longer on income support. In some cases, it even went so far as to question the validity of the system of counselling and guidance. The problem was in part overcome by establishing direct contact between the officials of the services concerned and some of the farmers being counselled and by systematically writing up individual progress reports for each case. In addition, the officials of the administrative service were systematically invited to the joint review meetings organised with the beneficiaries and their counsellors. This enabled them to understand the method and to accept the principle of a long-term action.

3.4 The tools

How is the link established between beneficiaries and resource persons/institutions, in other words between those needing help and those with the potential to offer the help? By using certain specific tools, something that can be seen in all the examples mentioned, it is possible to overcome the obstacles which may arise and which are of a social, cultural, institutional or quite simply material nature.

These tools are of several kinds: conceptual, interface, institutional, contractual or legislative.

a) The conceptual tools

When promoting a new idea or encouraging change in collective practices, it can be useful to adopt a new concept. The definition work is educational. It is a way of creating a common reference for the various players and enables them to take a position and to become involved.

To encourage families to become directly involved in helping disabled people, the Valle di Non social cooperative launched the concept of community development. This concept serves as a catalyst here and plays an important role within the cooperative but also in the cooperative's relationship with the area's other players.

b) The interface tools

When the needs and resources are numerous, diverse and scattered and there has to be rapid and flexible matching of the two, an interface tool becomes necessary. This tool may be in the form of, for example, a database, a data processing system, or an accounting system to keep track of exchanges of services.

The time bank of Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna where the unit of measurement is time is a good example of this accounting system.

The system of alternative means of transport of Angus (Angus Transport Forum) is based on a data processing system that matches the transport supply and demand.

c) The institutional tools

The institutional tools are particularly useful when the resources to be mobilised and to be pooled for the action are diversified, because they help formalise the relationships and commitments between actors or institutions.

To implement the action of the Centre-Ouest Bretagne group, two entities had to be set up: the training enterprise itself and an estate agent's office – the estate agent takes over dilapidated houses bought up by the municipality with which it signs a 34-year lease, finances the restoration work and manages the renovated dwellings on the social rental market for the duration of the lease. Both of these entities were set up with the support of partners of the sector concerned: the Confederation of Craftsmen and Small Construction Businesses and certain industrial firms intervened for the training enterprise while the banks and the HLM company (low-rental housing firm) helped create the estate agent's office.

d) The contractual tools

By formalising the commitments in contracts or agreements, the established links are more clearly defined.

The counselling and guidance service offered to farmers in need in the Loire is covered in a contract of commitment and the content is discussed at regular intervals with the farmer.

e) The legislative tools

Legislation sometimes has to be changed so that the link can be established between beneficiaries and the resource persons/institutions. This change can be what initiated the action or vice versa.

The initiative taken in Utajärvi Oulu was prompted by a decision of the Finnish government to try out a system called "VARPU" where an already long-established childminding service was extended to elderly people in their homes.

Italian legislation on social cooperatives was the result of ten years of experiments on the ground by these cooperatives. It gave them a new dimension.

3.5 Consequences of targeted actions and prospects

In addition to their primary objective of improving the living conditions of the target group, these actions help increase the area's social cohesion, and this on several levels.

- > They recreate a social link between the victims of exclusion and the area's actors.

The choice of community development in the Valle di Non made it possible to establish local links between the disabled and certain external families. Until then, the disabled only had links with their own families, and the tremendous pressure under which these families lived created tensions that further marginalised the disabled people. Sharing the burden with other substitute families helped to improve the relationship within the real families.

In the Loire, the system of guidance and counselling created a social link between the farmers on income support and the economically successful farmers, something unimaginable in the beginning.

- > More generally speaking, the actions create social relationships of local solidarity within the area.

The time bank, like any form of local resource management (eg. the local bartering system in Canada), generates links of solidarity between people living in the same place who often do not know one another. In the Finnish case, it is between the elderly and the children that links have been created.

- > The actions make individuals as well as the local businesses and institutions want to help the people in need living in the area return to the mainstream of society.

In Central West Brittany, the action to retrain unemployed people prompted the local craftsmen to become interested in the vocational training of the unemployed and to move beyond a strictly economic way of thinking.

In County Angus in Scotland, the creation of alternative forms of transport broke down barriers, introducing practices until then unthinkable. The postman, the milkman, and the door-to-door salesman began to offer rides in their vehicles, the school buses made room for adults, and so on.

- > The actions help set up partnership structures likely to serve in the fight against social exclusion in the long term.

The initiative in Angus helped create an association consisting of representatives of voluntary organisations, municipal councils, bus and taxi companies as well as groups concerned with the problem of mass transport.

- > More generally speaking, the actions introduce new approaches and practices that are a break with traditional practices.

In Central West Brittany, the action to help the unemployed return to work broke with the "bureaucratic logic of compartmentalisation" in favour of a "project logic", particularly in the government agencies responsible for the fight against social exclusion.

- > The combination of these different impacts has a multiplier effect that makes it possible to transfer the action and apply it to other groups, activities or sectors.

The counselling and guidance experiment in the Loire with farmers in need was extended to other social groups on income support in other sectors.

The Brittany experience of the training enterprise to renovate abandoned houses and the building heritage was extended to "green work sites" involving environmental clean-up and restoration. An identical project is also going to be launched in southern France (Hérault, Languedoc-Roussillon) by the initiator of the Brittany action.

In Ireland, the RRI action has been taken on board by similar associations, set up locally in rural areas, which enables more concerted actions with the local people. The action in Utajärvi Oulu in Finland has played a pilot role, and its transfer to other regions in the country is now being contemplated.

- > Lastly, these actions can have significant economic benefits for an area.

In Central West Brittany, the retraining enterprise has not only helped long-term unemployed people return to work but has also enabled the restoration of houses and the local heritage. In the first three years of the project, 164 people in difficulty were signed on, 30 small heritage restoration jobs were completed and 30 rental dwellings were created.

3.6 Conclusion

These locally targeted actions are opening up new prospects which are likely to be consolidated in a wider area-based approach. However, certain conditions are necessary for this, and they can only be obtained gradually by widening the action.

The CILDEA association wants to move from a curative approach to a preventive approach, and this implies creating a more solid partnership that covers the entire area so that the association's concerns are more largely shared. This process is currently under way.

However, before arriving at an area-based approach to fight social exclusion, a number of difficulties along the road still have to be overcome. Under what conditions is the move towards this approach possible? What has to be done to make the fight against social exclusion a common practice integrated in the territorial approaches? These are questions that will be examined in chapter IV.

Chapter IV

Consolidating the fight against social exclusion by including it in an area-based approach

Consolidating the fight against social exclusion by including it in an area-based approach

How can an action targeted at a specific social group be transformed into a territorial approach to fight social exclusion? In what conditions is this possible and what are the challenges of such a procedure? Here we are entering a mostly unexplored field where everything remains to be done. However, some work has already been accomplished and can be used to open new vistas for debate, to draw the first lessons and to formulate some assumptions as to what a territorial approach to the fight against exclusion might be.

Three questions are raised in this chapter:

- > Why is it important to include the fight against social exclusion in an area-based approach, what are the challenges of such a procedure?
- > For the implementation of this approach, what has been accomplished with earlier experiences and what problems still remain unsolved?
- > How can the LEADER method contribute to this approach? What are its limits and what more is needed?

4.1 The challenges of the area-based approach: from the fight against exclusion to social cohesion

Taking account of the general context (chapter I), then analysing the needs and possible strategies in rural areas, highlights (chapter II) the importance of a fight against social exclusion that goes beyond the framework of one off actions by specialised services and that is part of an overall rural development approach. Designed to meet the specific needs of certain segments of the population, the social policies implemented these past thirty years are proving insufficient now that the fight against social exclusion has become a challenge for the revitalisation and development of rural areas.

The innovative actions that have been emerging for the past decade are so to speak trailblazing, since they are not like the traditional approaches of charity and hand-outs and are often part of a vaster concept of territorial rural development. They provide some lessons about the conditions of an area-based approach to the fight against social exclusion:

- > the fight against social exclusion must not be considered an end in itself but seen as **part of a whole** which takes the form of a local development strategy;
- > there has to be community awareness so that the fight against social exclusion is no longer the work of a few individuals or institutions aware of the problem or the work of specialised services but a **normal practice shared by all** the actors of the area (local authorities, businesses, farmers, community associations, individuals).

In a context of social polarisation, local development actions should each time include among the objectives a certain rebalancing of available opportunities and the consolidation of social links.

Some even claim that the area-based approach should no longer focus on the idea of fighting social exclusion but on the idea of “social inclusion/cohesion”²⁵. On the one hand, this breaks with the practice of putting individuals in categories and focuses on the community’s capacities to use all the human resources and skills in the area. On the other hand, this implies shared mobilisation around strategies where everyone participates and where the specific features and differences are put to use. From this perspective, ethnic differences, sex, age, training, or character, for example, are no longer sources of exclusion but of enrichment.

[25] Henderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

Whereas the fight against social exclusion appears as an additional, corrective practice to make up for poor governance, social inclusion is seen as a daily practice that is shared and present in each initiative, playing a preventive role against social exclusion.

By working from the perspective of social inclusion, the local territorial approach takes on another dimension:

- > it more effectively uses the financial resources made available for the inclusion work, thanks in particular to the forms of prevention that it can promote and whose financial, human and social cost is much less than the cost of the curative actions;
- > it guarantees the long-term continuation and relevance of the inclusion mechanisms and ensures social cohesion, thus being part of a broader concept of socially sustainable development.

4.2 Achievements that can be used to elaborate a territorial inclusion approach

The local experiences of fighting social exclusion have left a certain number of achievements and have shown new ways of thinking to elaborate an area-based approach. The analysis presented in the previous chapter on the basis of a few examples of intervention enable us to draw certain lessons which may be completed or deepened by subsequent studies.

a) The partnership lever

The first lesson concerns the key role of the local partnership.

Partnerships are necessary to fight social exclusion. They help establish closer relations between the actors who are prepared to make the effort and also serve to bridge the gap between needs and resources, to involve the beneficiaries in the action, to open prospects of enlargement to other social groups, other forms of intervention.

The local partnership can be a forum for consultation and discussion about the distribution and destination of the funds, which has the advantage of taking better account of the characteristics of the area.

Partnerships are educational and instructive. They help build a system of indicators that take into account the full complexity of the problem. The partnership takes on full meaning in particular when the following are included:

- > the associations which, because of their experience of fighting exclusion, have concrete knowledge of the situations and an understanding of the complexity of the problem;
- > the public services that manage assistance for people in difficulty and can provide more systematised information and design appropriate support measures at the local, regional and national level;
- > the municipal officials who as elected representatives are supposed to work for the well-being of all the municipality's citizens;
- > and especially the beneficiaries – the fact that the objectives and the methods can be compared from the beneficiaries' point of view is a "safeguard". It is a way of calling the interventions into question at all times and therefore ensuring their relevance and quality. This participation by the excluded plays a key role in their return to the mainstream of society. By no longer considering them welfare recipients but instead equal partners helping to define common objectives, the beneficiaries find elements to put their situation in a social, economic, cultural and political context and in so doing manage to rid themselves of guilt.

The actions analysed in chapter III clearly show the importance of carefully thinking about their necessary integration within a partnership working in a more general fashion on local development. Essential questions about the future of the area-based approach arise: how can the social inclusion actions be made an essential part of any intervention strategy? How can the search for economic competitiveness be made compatible with the systematic search for social inclusion/cohesion?

b) Giving the approach time to work

The second lesson is that implementing a local area-based approach takes time. Indeed the main difficulty is to get people to share the values of social cohesion and solidarity, largely overshadowed in modern society by the great emphasis on competitiveness which is omnipresent in the world of education, research and politics.

Therefore the long term is essential for its implementation. Short-term anti-exclusion actions generally leave the traditional social divisions intact and do not consider any radical changes such as introducing a form of representation for those excluded.

The system of guidance and counselling set up by the CILDEA association is the result of twenty years of militancy and community actions. The impetus was given particularly by the work councils of certain large companies in the region of Lyons which at the end of the 1960s began to organise actions of solidarity with the farmers of the region. Proof of the importance of this long militant entrenchment, the attempts to transfer the method of counselling and guidance to other regions in France have so far failed. When the values and practices of solidarity are not already part of the common cultural references, it is in fact very difficult to find experienced farmers who are prepared to do counselling work.

The social cooperatives in Italy also have twenty years of militant history, which explains why they are today a social and political reference in Europe.

However, there are times when an event affecting the profound values of an individual or an area radically transforms the individual or area. Some elements (media, political decisions) can also contribute to a faster awareness of the need to change. The introduction of the framework law against social exclusion in France, for example, helped make people aware of the extent of the problem.

c) Establishing the link with regional, national and European policies

There is hardly any doubt that it is first at the local level that a process of social acceptance must begin. It is at this level that the complex reality of the exclusion can be seen and that the necessary work can be done to identify, involve and mobilise all the human resources around common objectives. However, this is only the beginning. It is important that the link be established with other initiatives taken at other levels. By complementing or speeding up local endogenous processes, the regional, national and European initiatives can facilitate social inclusion.

Therefore, the relatively standardised approaches decided by the national or regional governments (public aid for the unemployed, needy families, the disabled, social policies, training, etc.) also have a fundamental role to play. But their impact will to a large extent depend on their coordination with territorial approaches that can serve as relays on the ground.

A certain number of government agencies have understood the need for this coordination.

In Portugal, income support, which was introduced in 1997, is granted by social security centres but in collaboration with other partners – municipalities and associations working locally to fight exclusion. For this, “Local Assistance Boards” have been created in each zone where the centres intervene. The boards help identify the potential beneficiaries and give their opinion about granting or stopping income support for families and about the accompanying measures needed. This gives the measure a lot more impact than would have been the case had it been applied through purely administrative procedures.

However, the local actors need adequate preparation if these new forms of state intervention are to be successful.

A recent audit showed that only three of all the boards set up in Portugal are operating satisfactorily.

Yet, a great part of this preparation involves the adoption of measures encouraging the implementation of local projects.

The Community Initiatives aimed at the fight against the exclusion of certain specific groups have played a major role in this. The European programmes NOW (for women), YOUTHSTART (for young people) and HORIZON (for the disabled) have helped create partnerships to implement projects. The LEADER groups themselves have often taken this kind of initiative for their actions.

The LEADER group of the island of La Palma (Canaries, Spain) has organised its local intervention strategy by coordinating its LEADER II programme with the NOW and HORIZON programmes. This has enabled it to introduce in the island rural revitalisation work a social dimension that is essential for the most disadvantaged families who are able to stay in their homes and actively participate in the community actions.

Some of the national programmes also play a decisive role in the emergence of local approaches to the fight against social exclusion.

The INTEGRAR programme elaborated within the “Community Support Framework” in Portugal encourages a territorial approach to the fight against social exclusion. It has contributed to the setting up around these objectives of a number of local groups and helped launch a whole range of projects throughout the country in rural and urban areas.

Therefore the third lesson that can be drawn from the actions already launched is that an area-based approach must be able to coordinate the interventions devised locally with regional, national and European aid programmes.

4.3 Potential and limits of the LEADER method

What can be done about the unsolved problems with the territorial approach to social inclusion? What solutions have come from the LEADER programme itself, deliberately designed to promote the territorial approach, and can LEADER provide more answers? Finally, what exclusion problems do the LEADER groups face? These are the questions that we will now attempt to answer.

The coordination provided by the LEADER groups has turned out to be a powerful instrument to identify and take advantage of marginalised resources and skills. But it has also been a way to understand the characteristics of exclusion in rural areas and laid bridges between people, resources and institutions.

LEADER has helped find solutions for:

- > the composition and evolution of the Local Action Group partnership;
- > the project selection criteria and methods;
- > the consultation with government agencies about the local use of public funds – including unemployment benefits.

a) The composition and evolution of the partnership of the Local Action Group

How can the forms of local partnership set up by LEADER serve as a model for the partnership approach to social inclusion?

The composition of the LEADER partnerships depends on whether the social or political forces, which are the expression of the economic interests in the area, consider it in their interest to work together to elaborate a common project. This structure, fundamental in any LEADER intervention, brought about a form of consultation between representatives of local interests and between public and private sectors, particularly there where the mixed nature of the partnership was preserved.

However, the experience of LEADER I and LEADER II shows that over time these structures tend to become rigid, refusing to expand, particularly to include representatives of weaker social groups.

But there are exceptions which show that the road remains open. In Ireland, the Cavan-Monaghan group asked the community groups that its coordination strategy had created (associations of voluntary workers, organisations of mutual assistance, of social and cultural action, etc.) to join the LEADER partnership. Other LEADER groups chose to encourage participation in local activities in other forums of community debate where the excluded or their representatives were included.

Therefore greater thought has to be given to the matter so that the LEADER partnerships take better account of the need for social cohesion, which is the purpose of the actions being organised. The main problem is determining how the excluded can be given a voice within local partnerships. Just deciding that disadvantaged social groups must be able to express themselves is not enough.

The LEADER partnerships could therefore encourage lessons in participation, democratic debate and the building of a community voice by creating the necessary conditions for the establishment of representations where the most disadvantaged social categories are included. If forums are not created where the weakest segments of the population can talk about their difficulties, the measures adopted and the actions taken may very well not translate into any substantial change.

The “**local partnership approach**” is therefore the method needed to break down the ghettos, because it opens the debate to all the social categories and to all the local interests while encouraging awareness of one another²⁶.

[26] For more about this, see: Amouroux op.cit.

b) Project selection and financial assistance criteria

The LEADER groups developed a series of techniques to encourage the elaboration of projects and to select them according to the main strategies defined in the local action plan²⁷. When the composition of the partnership lent itself to this, they developed methods to guarantee a certain balanced access to opportunities for the different segments of population in the area.

One difficulty nonetheless remains: the people, businesses or associations in the mainstream of society are obviously more likely to come up with dynamic projects, not to mention the fact that certain local action plans do not have interventions explicitly aimed at encouraging social cohesion.

Debate and discussion must therefore look in two directions:

- 1) What forms of mediation are needed so that the weakest segments of the population or the people in the area worst off also have ways to elaborate dynamic projects? What kind of coordination and identification work has to be supported by the local relays to ensure the success of projects by people or groups in difficulty?
- 2) How should the development strategy be designed so that it has an impact in terms of social acceptance and therefore results in a balanced improvement in the quality of life?

Some answers already are to:

- > help the people and communities develop local services so that new activities of solidarity are created and places are created where people can meet and there can be an expression of citizenship;
- > encourage the various businesses and structures “to mutualise” the jobs, in other words to collectively manage the human resources to deal with the impossibility of hiring full-time salaried employees for certain jobs – eg. a manager can work for several companies at the same time;
- > develop forms of assistance for local credit and for investments where there is shared liability (guarantee funds, loans on trust, ethical investments, etc.);
- > encourage non-monetary trade and networks of solidarity (alternative economy poles, time bank, etc.);
- > help schools take initiatives to introduce learning about their area in the curriculum.

c) Consultation with government agencies about the local use of public funds

This review of the lessons of the area-based strategy devised by LEADER would not be complete without mentioning the consultation with the public institutions present in the area.

Three methods are important and they are to:

- > favour, in the context of a local development and social cohesion strategy, the intervention of these government agencies in the projects selected. The theme may be retraining the long-term unemployed, setting up mobile services or introducing accompanying services to stabilise the local population;
- > encourage the signing of agreements between local associations and government agencies with a view to personalising the services for the categories in difficulty;
- > involve the government agencies in debates on the local use of public funds so that the institutional answers can be compared with the resources and answers of the local actors.

[27] See “Selecting projects”, *Dossier of the LEADER European Observatory*, Brussels, 1998.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The European Union is seeing a paradox emerge in its rural areas and in its urban areas. Whereas the countries which make up the Union have never been so rich and “competition” and “performance” have never been so important, the demand for social protection is growing even faster than in the past. This comes at a time when most of the Member States are deciding to consolidate their finances by limiting public expenditure. Thus, the level of people’s dependence on social protection systems has probably never been so great since the end of World War II.

This paradox can be explained by a set of demographic, social and economic factors which together are putting pressure on social protection systems. The ageing of the population in general (combined with a concentration of elderly people in certain rural areas) and the practice of early retirement are coming in the wake of higher unemployment both in number and duration (since 1982, the unemployment rate has continued to remain over 8% in the European Union). Because unemployment benefit systems were designed to provide a temporary income to the jobless, over half the Union’s unemployed have had to resort to other forms of assistance²⁸ this past decade.

Furthermore, in addition to the problems related to the structure and extent of the protection system, social exclusion has specific characteristics in rural areas because of their isolation, the scattering of their pop-

ulation and their restructuring. The loss of confidence in traditional values, the disappearance of job security and the shortage of housing, the lack of local prospects, etc. have incalculable consequences on social links and therefore on the social cohesion of rural areas. Interventions aimed at the individual, especially the individual categorised as “excluded” or a “welfare recipient”, cannot solve the problems of this dimension. Therefore new tailored solutions more and more need to be found at the local level.

However, to boost the capacity to intervene locally, reforms have to be introduced to encourage in particular consultation and coherence between the different institutional frameworks through partnerships. More statistical work also remains to be done in order to have a differentiated reading of the phenomenon for rural and urban areas. Further analysis of exclusion and cohesion trends is necessary for a clearer picture of the current changes under way in rural areas.

This document has only looked at a few aspects of the problem. A lot of questions remain unanswered, particularly the extent to which the exclusion problem is taken into account in local rural development strategies. By making a better quality of life one of its main priority areas of intervention, the new Community Initiative LEADER+ might bring new solutions and help elaborate pilot methods of intervention to fight exclusion in rural areas.

[28] European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, *Social protection in Europe*, 1997, p.13.

Leader II est une Initiative communautaire lancée par la Commission européenne et coordonnée par la Direction générale de l'Agriculture (Unité VI-F.II.3).

Le contenu de ce dossier ne reflète pas nécessairement les opinions de l'Union européenne.

***Leader II** is a Community Initiative launched by the European Commission and coordinated by its Directorate-General for Agriculture (Unit VI-F.II.3).*

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Financé par la Commission européenne
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