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**‘Social Exclusion and Poverty
between Theory and Empiricism:
The Mapping of Two Social Science Constructs’**

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Social Exclusion and Poverty between Theory and Empiricism: The Mapping of two Social Science Constructs

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DRAFT

Abstract

Concepts are a fundamental part of the empirical research process on different levels but, in contrast to theoretical or empirical considerations, they are rarely examined systematically in the social sciences. In the present study, we compare content analytically the concepts social exclusion and poverty. We are able to produce a cartography of the conceptual space of the concepts based on their contrasting definitions, indicators, and models. Our investigations show that although social exclusion is usually conceived of in contrast to poverty, both concepts share a considerable conceptual space. In this article, this congruence is demonstrated and the connection to the roots of poverty in the conception and investigation of social exclusion highlighted. Concurrently, the subtle changes in the conceptualisation between poverty and social exclusion are discussed in relation to their sociological and sociopolitical implications.

Social Exclusion and Poverty between Theory and Empiricism: The Mapping of two Social Science Constructs

“To speak of science without concepts suggests all sorts of analogies – a carver without tools, a railroad without tracks, a mammal without bones, a love story without love. A science without concepts would be a fantastic creation” (Blumer 1969: 153).

1. Introduction

There exists a close connection between theoretical and empirical studies (Merton 1995/1949), that is, however, hardly recognised and taken up as a theme by researchers because of the gap between theory and empirical knowledge. For instance, empirical studies always contain theoretical aspects already in the first exploratory phase. For example, in serious research social indicators are not selected by chance. And even if this should be the case, there is at least much theory implicit in the gathering of data with reference to these indicators. Contributions to theory can actually be imagined without empirical proof. On closer consideration, however, it becomes clear that empirical findings are often referred to during discussion, for instance when criticising a specific theory. Besides theoretical and empirical work, there is another category of scientific research: the study of concepts. Concepts, understood as abstract ideas, are the building blocks of theoretical arguments and empirical studies. They form the base upon which the social sciences are seeking to contain social complexity. As such they are not only linked to theory and empirical knowledge, they are often, and mostly implicitly, contained in theoretical and empirical work.

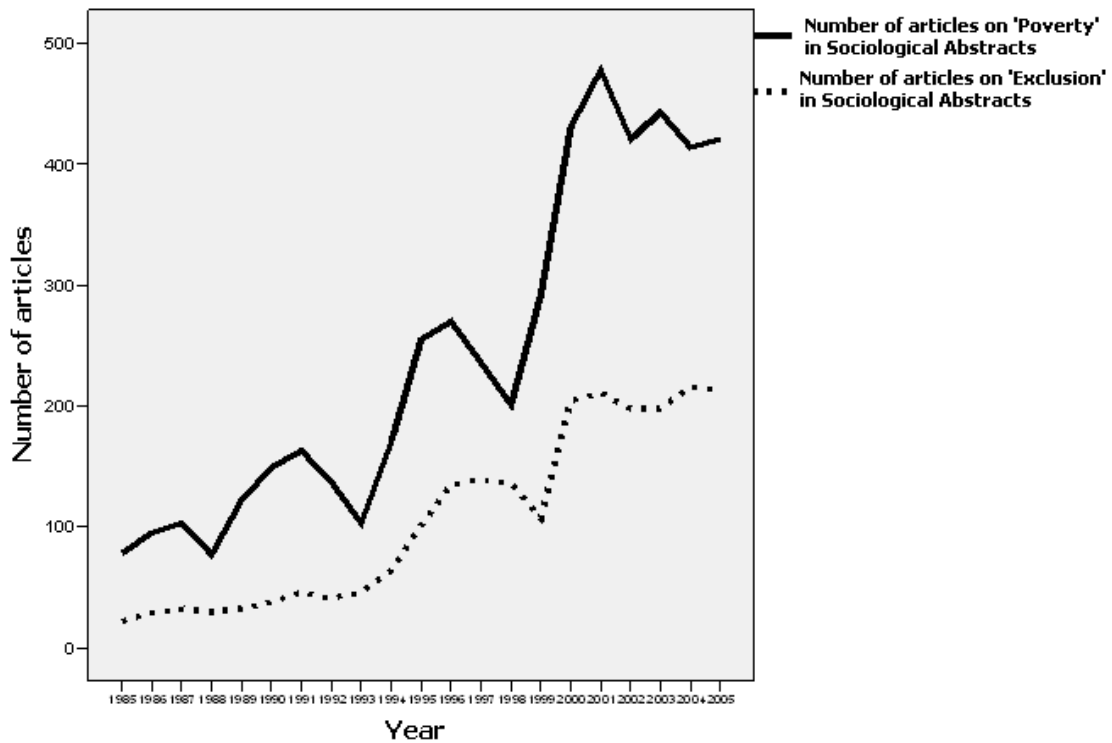
Despite the central meaning of concepts, and in contrast to theoretical and empirical work, the focus of studies in the social sciences is seldom on an examination of the concepts themselves. Given the gap between theory and empirical knowledge, this lack of consideration has proven to be a shortcoming. Studying concepts as a link between the theoretical and empirical point of departure could, in our opinion, provide the possibility of bridging the gap, or at least facilitate a better understanding. It is against this background that concepts of social exclusion and poverty will be examined, by means of examples. Whereas poverty has always been a central term in social-scientific and political research, the concept of exclusion has steadily been increasing in significance during the past few years. The following diagram (figure 1) illustrates the increase in the number of publications on the theme of poverty and social exclusion. The graph reflects contributions in English in one of the most important databanks in the social sciences – Sociological Abstracts – between 1985 and 2005, that refer to the concepts poverty or exclusion in the abstract.

The increased volume depicted here cannot only be ascribed to the pressure to publish and the subsequent admission of additional publications in the databank, but also to the rise in public interest in these themes.

Our study focuses on a comparison between the concepts of poverty and social exclusion in theoretical and empirical studies. The purpose is twofold: on the one hand, we would like to expand present critical discussions of the concept of exclusion, particularly those that refer to the content width and choice of indicators, by means of a systematical analysis of both concepts (eg. Barnes 2005; Burchardt 2002a; Böhnke 2002; Castel 2000; Levitas 2006; Walker 1995). On the other hand, possible implications of such conceptualisation of exclusion and poverty for social research should be highlighted and the social and political consequences for those affected by poverty and exclusion in particular, and for society in general, should be elucidated.

Diagram 1

Fig. 1 Number of English Articles in the data bank „Sociological Abstracts“ between 1985 and 2005, that contain the concepts „Poverty“ or „Exclusion“.



2. Conceptual analysis of social exclusion and poverty

The central role played by concepts in the total research process is succinctly summarised in a quote from Blumer:

“[Concepts] are significant elements in the prior scheme that the scholar has of the empirical world; they are likely to be the terms in which his problem is cast; they are usually the categories for which data are sought and in which the data are grouped; they usually become the chief means for establishing relations between data; and they are usually the anchor points in interpretation of the findings” (1969: 26).

Concepts constitute themselves according to a content attributed to them, in which the author determines what he or she means by a specific construct. At the same time, the embodiment of this (attributed) content differentiates a particular concept from other concepts. As a result, concepts stand in a close relationship but also in opposition to each other. Furthermore, concepts and the theoretical and empirical studies they are linked to, are subject to temporal changes and culturally determined variations. Concepts are therefore dependent on trends and fashions, such as research and political strategies, that stress, omit or change current specific conceptual aspects. Outlining, contextualising and determining the content of a concept, as well as differentiating it from other concepts, makes it possible to conceptualise, classify, categorise and structure research areas, which is thus simplified and made comprehensible. At the same time these theoretical and empirical modelling implies the construction of research subjects that feed into socio-political legislation and guidelines, which subsequently have consequences for individuals, groups or a society (Bowker/Star 2000; Potter/Wetherell 1987).

Given that concepts in the sciences determine meaning, they, in themselves, have to be the subject of study (Blumer 1069:26 and 154 ff). As example we have chosen the concepts of social exclusion and poverty. A comparative analysis of both concepts is of interest to the social sciences, not only because of their central meaning, but rather because both concepts are closely linked to each other - specifically in studies on exclusion - but without the concepts themselves being the subject of a systematic, comparative study. Based on a conceptual analysis, we shall, therefore, in the next chapters construct a map of social exclusion and poverty, in which we shall take into account the three areas in which the concepts are represented: firstly, in the defining of concepts; secondly, in the selection of indicators and thirdly, in theoretically and empirically supported models.

3. Methodology

We used concepts of poverty and exclusion in theoretical and empirical studies as the database of our study. The enormous number of publications on exclusion and poverty necessitated a selection and strict limitation of the corpus of our data. As regards content, we focussed on literature - English and German - that concerns itself explicitly with poverty and social exclusion at a theoretical and empirical level. In an exploratory study undertaken for the project "Who is in(side) and who is out(side)? Dynamics of the socio-cultural and political integration and exclusion in Switzerland", undertaken in the context of National Research Programme 51 "Integration and Exclusion", more than 300 articles on poverty and exclusion had initially been gathered and preliminary analysed. Those articles, which cover the period 1985-2005, can be accessed through social science databanks like "JSTOR", "Sociological Abstracts", "Web of Science" or "WISO-Net". For the present study we had expanded the initial data corpus with additional material, amongst which older classical research studies on poverty, books as well as journals and reports on poverty and social exclusion from the databanks referred to. Particularly worth mentioning are the reports and publications of the United Nations and the World Bank, as well as the European Union. We have likewise taken into account various more recent Anglo-Saxon studies on social exclusion, which had been undertaken under the auspices of similar institutions, for instance the Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE), supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, and the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), founded by the Labour Government in 1997.

Our corpus of data was analysed on three levels, using the qualitative content analysis method. Firstly, we were interested in the question of how the concepts were embedded in content, where the borderlines of the concepts lie and how porous they are. For this purpose, we have examined the definitions and differentiation of the concepts "social exclusion" and "poverty", on order to discuss their differences and commonalities. On a second level we analysed the indicators according to which the content of the definitions and models of social exclusion and poverty had been defined. On a third level we were interested in how indicators in models were integrated and brought into a particular - partly explicit, partly implicit - causal relationship with each other.

The material provided by about 300 texts is not representative, and no generalised conclusions can be drawn from our analyses. Linked to this is the limitation that a precise classification of the sample scope was impossible because of the vast number of publications on exclusion and poverty, which raises the problem of a possible bias in the selection of the data corpus. We did not aim, however, to determine the extent of a particular mould. Rather, our corpus of data allowed us, through a systematical analysis on various levels, to explain the dimensions according to which social exclusion has been conceptualised in comparison to poverty. In this manner a number of important content and methodological dimensions in the research on exclusion and poverty in the social sciences could be clarified.

3. Definitions of social exclusion and poverty

The first part of our results is based on an analysis of our data corpus with regard to the definitions of social exclusion and poverty used. Definitions are the conceptual basis of a notion, in that it constitutes the content and differentiates it from other notions. Through this differentiation, the notions and ideas contained in a concept become recognisable. In our studies we were therefore interested in the types of definitions that could be found, and to which extent differences in similar empirical and theoretical work emerged.

3.1 Concepts of social exclusion and poverty without explicit definition

In various studies in our body of data, the point of departure was an intuitive understanding of the concepts social exclusion and poverty. This is proven particularly by the diverse ways in which the concept “exclusion” is applied. In socio-political studies especially, the fundamental understanding of exclusion is only vaguely outlined or not defined at all. The concept “social exclusion” only becomes clear when it is analysed in the context of the theoretical and empirical models and the associated indicators on which they are based (e.g. Kronauer 2002; Middleton 2002; Levitas 2006; Rahman et al. 2001). Here the point of departure is, implicitly, an agreement in conceptual content and a generally shared meaning.

The same observation was made with regard to poverty. Poverty admittedly plays an important role in political agendas, but in some countries no official definition of poverty exists (Gordon 2006). Even in various studies that – often controversially - deal with measuring poverty margins, (for a summary, refer to e.g. Barnes 2002; Bergman 2003; Gordon 2006; Jordan 1996; Leu et al. 1997; Piachaud 1992), the silent assumption is that poverty is defined by an anonymous, but apparently unambiguous divisive line between the poor and not-poor.

Although the content of meaning of exclusion and poverty is intuitively comprehensible, assuming that a mutual understanding exists is problematic. The enormous number of studies that concern themselves with exclusion is in itself an indicator of the wide scope of social exclusion as a concept. A glance in various social science and history dictionaries also illustrate the variety in differing notions of the concept of poverty that had developed: a distinction is made between voluntary and involuntary poverty, absolute and relative poverty, traditional and new poverty, continuous and dynamic poverty, to mention but a few examples (Bergman 2003; Bruce/Yearley 2006; Carigiet et al. 2003). Normative concepts become apparent in the definitions as well as in the entrenchment of both concepts in empirical and theoretical studies. In defining social exclusion and poverty not only complex phenomena are outlined, but different emphasis is placed on the study of social exclusion and poverty, depending on the theoretical, political and ideological notions (e.g. Budowski et al. 2002; Levitas 1998 and 2006; Townsend 1996).

3.2 Denotative and connotative definitions of social exclusion and poverty

Apart from studies that conceptualise exclusion and poverty without explicit definition, three other ways in which both concepts were defined were found in our corpus of data: denotative, where an author explicitly determines what is meant by a particular construct; connotative, where a concept is outlined by a chain of associated complex phenomena without defining the concept itself, and a combination that contains denotative and connotative elements.

Based on the literature on exclusion and poverty used in our study, we maintain that denotative definitions, as well as definitions with a denotative and connotative approach, are

found relatively often in the study of poverty as compared to studies on exclusion. In his article "The concept and measurement of poverty", Gordon, for example, states "that there is a general agreement that poverty can be defined as having an insufficient command of resources over time" (2006: 32). In this denotative definition, poverty is equated with a lack of resources, which is, however, not expounded. A similar definition stem from Fluder and Stemlow, whereby material and immaterial means are explicitly included in the concept "resources". The authors consider those poor, "who, when all available (material and immaterial) resources are taken into account, do not reach a certain level in the provision of resources (after deduction of compulsory payments such as rent, taxes, maintenance), described as the poverty threshold" (1999, p.5).

Similarly Buhmann et al. define poverty denotatively as "(A) lack of, or even a total absence of quality of life" (1989, p.9).

The pioneering study of Peter Townsend, on the other hand, contains a definition of poverty that presents denotative as well as connotative elements:

„Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at the least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities" (1979, p.31 et al. p.249f).

Townsend conceptualises poverty denotatively and connotatively by linking the concept to a lack of resources and other more complex phenomena like eating habits, participation and living standards. A similar blend of the denotative and connotative is found in the definition of the European Economic Community (EEC):

"The poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State in which they live" (EEC 1985: Article 1, No. 2).

Here poverty is defined denotatively, and outlined connotatively as lack of resources and exclusion from living standards regarded as below the minimum. In the same category are the definitions of poverty in the study of Ulrich and Binder (1998, p.17) or Rowntree. The latter defines primary poverty as a lack of joint income "to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency" (1901, p.117) and further elevates the problem of poverty above the merely financial, placing it in the area of the satisfaction of physical needs. He includes expenditure on food, living space, household objects such as lighting, heating and clothing, which should be adequate enough „to keep the man in health, (...) and not be so shabby as to injure his chances of obtaining respectable employment" (ibid. p.140).

In our corpus of data we have rather seldom found a combination of the denotative and connotative in the definitions of exclusion. This combined type can be illustrated by a definition used in a study by the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the London School of Economics:

„An individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in key activities of the society in which he or she lives" (Burchardt et al. 2002b, p.30).

We found it of interest that in the definition of poverty by the EEC, as well as in the definition of exclusion by Burchardt et al., the idea of participation implicitly or explicitly plays a central role. In the first case, however, the lack of participation is not linked to a more closely

defined lack of material and immaterial resources. In the second, on the other hand, it is the individual itself who does not participate in key social activities.

As regards the studies on exclusion analysed by us, it became clear that connotative definitions were more prominent when the concept poverty was referred to. By means of connotation nothing is said about the core meaning of a particular construct, but that which is connected to the construct in a broader sense is identified. The explicit connection of a phenomenon with a number of other phenomena is characteristic of the definition of social exclusion particularly in empirical studies, as seen at Eurostat or at the European Disability Forum:

“Social exclusion is analysed as the link between low income, activity status and a number of indicators which relate to means, perceptions and satisfaction of the groups under study with respect to the standard of living and quality of life” (Mejer 2000, p.1).

“Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon, which is linked not only to income and expenditure, but also to activity status, educational attainment, housing, health, subjective assessment in making ends meet, and citizens’ satisfaction with health and welfare services” (European Disability Forum 2000, p.7).

In the definitions above, social exclusion is defined by means of associative relationships – the phenomenon is not named as such. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) founded in 1997 by the Labour Government has for many years been using the concept in the this sense:

„[Social exclusion is] a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown“ (SEU 2001).

Social exclusion is therefore not defined as such, but is linked to a number of various complex phenomena like unemployment or criminality and depicted in an implicit causal context as the consequence of a variety of social problems.

Concepts of poverty, too, in addition to their emphasis on denotative definitions, present various applications of the concept that link poverty to a list of complex phenomena. This illustrated by the following definition of the United Nations:

“Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life” (United Nations 1995, p.41).

In contrast to a denotative definition, this connotative example does not describe what poverty is. Rather, the concept poverty is described by a number of phenomena and set in relation to various other concepts such as hunger, health, homelessness. As before, with reference to the notion of participation in the connotative definitions of the SEU and the UN, the similarity of the complex phenomena is striking: on the one hand it is linked to social exclusion and on the other hand, to poverty. This conclusion is reinforced by the explicit reference to the aspect of social exclusion in the definition of poverty.

In summary, the examples of the three types of definition discussed in this chapter. All illustrate that poverty is only rarely conceptualised as a solely economic phenomenon. A lack of resources is central to the denotative, as well as to the combined denotative and connotative definitions of poverty. The concept “resource” itself, as well as other notions linked to the concept of poverty, reveal a wide scope with reference to content. Thus,

“resources” refer to material as well as immaterial means. In the same way, the definitions indicate that though monetary means form part of the concept of poverty, aspects like participation in acknowledged social activity and conditions of life are in the foreground. Furthermore, the examples reveal a strong similarity in the definitions of poverty and exclusion. Whereas a lack of resources, regardless of how the latter is defined, is central to denotative and the combined denotative and connotative definitions of poverty, the concept “resources” is listed as one of many factors related to poverty in connotative definitions of poverty. The same applies to studies on exclusion, in particular those in which the explicit mentioning of a lack of resources occurs as a phenomenon among many; or those – like in the definition of Burchardt et al (2002b, p.30) quoted above – it is not any longer mentioned as a constituting element of exclusion.

3.3 Differentiating between social exclusion and poverty

Definitions of concepts are not understood through their content only, but also by considering the extent to which they retain their outline when differentiated from other concepts. When barely any difference in content can be determined in the comparison of definitions of social exclusion and poverty, these concepts could perhaps become clearer when an analysis is made of the differentiation of both concepts.

Social exclusion has become one of the most important themes in socio-political agendas in the entire Europe. The concept is embedded in discourse specific to countries and situations, which cannot here be discussed in more detail (for an overview, refer to Byrne 2000; Kronauer 2002; Levitas 1998; Paugam 1998; Silver 1995, Welshman 2006 for example). We found it noteworthy that the concept of exclusion initially introduced in France, was in the beginning discussed through various socio-political regulations in the context of the exclusion of people with physical and psychological disabilities, aged invalids, single parents, amongst other things, that do not necessarily imply a lack of income (e.g. Kronauer 2002; Silver 1995). However, the term social exclusion was, in various nuances, soon linked to poverty. On the one hand, the discourse about the North American concept “Underclass” (e.g. Byrne 2000; Kronauer 2002; Levitas 1998) was extended in this manner. On the other hand, it partially replaced previous concepts of poverty, particularly on a political level (e.g. Bergham 1995; Burchardt et al. 2002a; Townsend 1996; Sell 2002).

In the social sciences, social exclusion is linked to the concept of poverty in a different manner. In our corpus of data three partially overlapping groups can be identified. Firstly, social exclusion is presented as a new word for the old concept of poverty, that does not have any additional application and concerns itself with a number of problems. The not entirely unambiguous content of the concept exclusion is criticized, because it does not elucidate the concept of poverty any further (for an overview, refer to Lister 2004: 87f). Secondly, for other researchers, exclusion is a meaningful addition to the existing concepts of poverty; for a third group, it is a totally new approach (e.g. Barnes 2002; Burchardt et al. 2002a; Byrne 2008; Levitas 1998; Lister 2004; Tsakoglou/Papadopoulos 2002; Veit-Wilson 1998, Welshman 2006).

Based on a number of studies on exclusion in our corpus of data, it was established that the concepts of social exclusion in the three groups referred to are defined in contrast with concepts of poverty and deprivation. In research on exclusion a negative relation to existing concepts of poverty is prominent, in that poverty is reduced to solely monetary aspects. In contrast, “multi-dimensionality”, “dynamic”, as well as the investigation of “agency” are highlighted as core elements of social exclusion (see diagram 2).

An example of this conceptualisation of social exclusion as differentiated from poverty is found in a report of the European Union:

„The concept of social exclusion adds several dimensions to traditional analyses in terms of poverty and rests on the analysis of a combination or cumulation of handicaps. Social exclusion includes the economic, financial, monetary view of poverty, but adds to it aspects of non-monetary deprivation and a relational dimension which is absent from the traditional concepts of poverty” (Eurostat 2007, p.3f).

In this definition, poverty is described as a monetary aspect of exclusion. Nevertheless, further characteristics of social exclusion remain largely open. Also, it becomes clear only to some extent how social exclusion can be distinguished from poverty, or what its causal relationship to poverty is. Similar conceptual differentiations are also found, for example, in the New Policy Reports "Monitoring poverty and social exclusion" of 1998. It is noteworthy that here too, poverty and exclusion were initially regarded as synonyms where social exclusion was separated from poverty in later development:

„The notion of poverty that has guided the development of this report is that where people lack many of the opportunities that are available to the average citizen. Low income and limited expenditure, especially on essentials, will be indicative of this, but the report also includes many indicators of things that researchers have found to be disproportionately associated with low income, for example, certain forms of ill health and restricted access to service This broad concept of poverty coincides with the emerging concept of social exclusion. Its great practical value is that it widens the focus to include factors that may be thought to cause severe and chronic disadvantage. In the context of this report, it means that indicators connected with long-term lack of paid work, or poor educational qualifications, can be included alongside more readily understood aspects of poverty” (Howarth et al. 1998, p.13).

Walker and Walker stress the aspect of dynamics in the understanding of the concept of exclusion:

„[P]overty [refers to a] lack of the material resources, especially income, necessary to participate in British society and social exclusion is (a?) more comprehensive formulation which refers to the dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any of social, economic, and political or cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society. Social exclusion may, therefore, be seen as the denial (or non-realisation) of the civil, political and social rights of citizenship” (1997; p.1)

Given these conceptual differentiation, two conclusions can be made. Firstly, in studies on exclusion the concepts of poverty and social exclusion are differentiated from each other in that the three factors "Multi-dimensionality", "Dynamics" and "Agency" are conceptualised solely as phenomena of social exclusion. This succeeds only because researchers do not, or only partially, take into account core approaches to and results of studies on poverty. In the previous chapter we have already seen that only a few studies on poverty focus solely on monetary aspects. With reference to the two other aspects through which social exclusion is distinguished from poverty, it is shown that Townsend already has regarded poverty as a dynamic concept (Gordon 2006, p.33; on dynamics, also Buhr/Leibfried 1995; Leisering/Voges 1992 for example) and has taken the relativity factor into account. To the same extent subjective aspects of poverty, as well as the possible course of action for those affected, are highlighted in various studies (e.g. Leu et al. 1997; Sell 2002; Sen 1997; Ulrich/Binder 1998). Secondly, it is noticeable that in the study of exclusion, like in the study of poverty, the aspect of multi-dimensionality in particular is important. In contrast, dynamics and agency, as constituting elements of social exclusion, are seldom studied. There is an interest, particularly on a political level, in research surveys on the percentage of the poor and excluded measured against the total population, and in changes over a specific period of time (e.g. Eurostat 2007; Howarth et al. 1998; Rahman et al. 2001). In this way the

process is measured according to which the dynamics of exclusion is implied, albeit measured on a macro level; though not explicitly linked to the question of “agency” and mechanisms of exclusion.

Diagram 2

Fig. 2 Conceptual differentiation between Social Exclusion and Poverty in various studies on Exclusion.

Social Exclusion	Poverty
<p>Multi-dimensional</p> <p>Wide concept with stress on related aspects such as inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power.</p>	<p>One-dimensional</p> <p>Narrow concept with focus on aspects of distribution and income, as well as lack of resources, poverty as part of, alternatively, a particular form of social exclusion.</p>
<p>Dynamics, Adhering to the Process, Relativity</p> <p>As dynamic concept, exclusion examines the process of differentiation in a specific place in a specific time-span. It is defined relatively in terms of norms and standards at that specific time and place.</p>	<p>Static and Passivity</p> <p>Studies on poverty refer to a specific point in time and not to a dynamic process. „If poverty is a photograph, exclusion is a film“ (Estivill 2003:21).</p>
<p>Forms of Behaviour</p> <p>With reference to social exclusion, the behaviour of individuals affected by exclusion and those who exclude are examined.</p>	<p>Focus on level of income and not on behaviour</p>

Sources (Selection): Atkinson 1998; Barnes 2002; Bergham 1995, Burchardt et al. 2002 a und b; Byrne 2000; Estivill 2003; Hobscraft 2002; Kronauer 2002; Room 1998; Tsakoglou & Papadopoulos 2002

In summary, our analyses in this section have revealed five types of definition of social exclusion and poverty. Firstly, studies in which no definition of exclusion or poverty were found. Secondly, studies in which both concepts are explained denotatively and thirdly, those in which poverty and exclusion are described by a chain of various phenomena and linked to an extensive list of indicators. The fourth group entails combined forms of denotative and connotative definitions. Finally, in the fifth group definitions of social exclusion are found that are characterised by an explicit differentiation in content from other concepts, like poverty. The many areas where both concepts overlap stand central to this outcome. The result of mainly connotative definitions of social exclusion is a vague construct, which is often directly or indirectly linked to a lack of resources and, subsequently, to poverty. The vagueness in the definitions and the wide scope of the construct hold a number of implications for methodology, which will be discussed next at the level of indicators.

4. Indicators of social exclusion and poverty

In order to formulate and operationalise definitions and theoretical and empirical models, various indicators are used; through their specific selection and attribution of content, certain logics and explanations are generated, and social meaning is constructed. On a second

level of analysis we shall therefore examine the indicators of social exclusion and poverty, and illustrate the similarities and differences of both concepts through examples.

4.1 Indicators of social exclusion

Social exclusion as multi-dimensional phenomenon is conceptualised in the definitions and also in empirical and theoretical studies by an often large number of indicators. Based on this multi-dimensionality, the Social Protection Committee (SPC) of the EU explicitly selected 18 indicators to measure social exclusion (SPC 2001: 11). The ten most important indicators are:

1. low income rate after transfers with low-income threshold set at 60% of median income (with breakdown by gender, age, most frequent activity status, household type and tenure status),
2. distribution of income (income quintile ratio),
3. persistence of low income,
4. median low income gap,
5. regional cohesion,
6. long term unemployment rate,
7. people living in jobless households,
8. early school leavers not in further education or training,
9. life expectancy at birth
10. self perceived health status.

A similar wide application of the concept and a link to poverty are also apparent in other definitions and studies on social exclusion. As example, we cite the definition of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), which has since its inception in 1997 operationalised social exclusion in terms of the following indicators: „unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown“ (SEU 2001). In the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Britain (PSE), one of the latest and most extensive related studies, four dimensions of social exclusion are distinguished/identified (Levitas 2006: 135-138):

1. impoverishment or exclusion from adequate resources or income,
2. labor market exclusion,
3. service exclusion,
4. exclusion from social relations.

Howarth et al. (1998) select a total of 46 statistical indicators to measure poverty and social exclusion. Those are divided into the following groups: Income levels, Income dynamics, Economic circumstances, Health and well-being, Education, Barriers to work, Exclusion from work, Disadvantage at work, Social stability, Social cohesion, Vulnerability, Crime and its costs, Housing und Access to services (for critical review: Barnes 2005; Levitas 2006). Kronauer conceptualizes social exclusion in terms of/according to three main indicators: “Marginalisation in the labour market, to the point of total exclusion from gainful employment; restriction of social relationships, to the point of exclusion and social isolation; exclusion from the possibility to participate in socially acknowledged life opportunities and standards of life” (2002, p.151).

The following table (fig. 3) illustrates a compilation of various indicator groups of social exclusion and the way they are characterised in each case.

According to our analysis, there are two main areas of focus in the conception of social exclusion on this level. Firstly, the indicator groups “Income”, “Training” and “Gainful employment”, that are present in almost every definition and model of social exclusion (e.g. Böhnke 2002; Howarth et al. 1998; Kronauer 2002; Levitas 2006). And secondly, the notion

of a lack of participation in various areas regarded as socially relevant. In the selection of these indicators, exclusion is extensively linked to existing concepts of poverty. Other indicator groups like “Accommodation” or “Conditions of health” and their characteristics follow the example of studies of lack of care in a multi-dimensional sense, which is customary in the study of poverty.

Diagram 3

Diagram. 3 Main indicator groups of social exclusion with particular manifestation of content

Indicator groups of Social Exclusion	Specific manifestations of the indicators of Social Exclusion
Economic Resources	Poverty, gainful employment, income from insurance, pension, governmental aid, participation in a socially adequate standard of living
Training	School-leaving qualification obtained, level of education, marks, the ability to read, write and calculate, premature school-leaving, exclusion from school, playing truant, low school and social qualifications
Gainful Employment	Long-term unemployment, involuntary job-sharing, low salary, access to gainful employment, discrimination in the workplace
Participation	<p><u>Political</u>: Lack of political rights, not voting, no participation in political campaigns, no interest in politics, equal status in access to rights and institutions</p> <p><u>Social</u>: Lack of social rights, lack of access to services, lack of participation in recognised social activities, e.g. annual vacation, visiting restaurants, invitations to dinner, to have a drink, etc., social isolation, symptoms of anomy, like feelings of isolation and coping with problems, fears and worries, individual self-assessment in bad participation opportunities</p> <p><u>Cultural</u>: „Opportunities to realise individually and socially recognised life-style goals” (Kronauer 2002:152); Visits to museums, libraries, further education</p> <p><u>Economic</u>: Material participation</p>
Social Interaction	Lack of social interaction and networks, social isolation, lack of a person to confide in, no or limited contact to relatives or neighbours
Social Stability	Integration in relevant areas of society, social cohesion, endangerment through criminality, disintegration of family structures
Accommodation Situation	Living in overcrowded conditions, lack of basic provision in the household, living conditions, living environment
Health and Illness	Life expectation, mortality and rate of morbidity, vulnerability

Sources (Selected): Bailey 2006; Böhnke 2002; Burchardt et al. 2002b; Horwath 1998; Kronauer 2002; Levitas 2006; Middleton 2002; Sparkes & Glennerster 2002

4.2 Indicators of poverty as compared to social exclusion

The notion of lack of resources is central to the core indicators of poverty concepts. Those indicators are not used uniformly in poverty definitions and models; rather, they contain diverse economic, social and cultural components. Townsend, for example, categorises various forms of income like wages, money, interest, government and private aid, tax credit and gifts under resources (1979, p.88ff and p.177ff). In other studies the notion of resources is also conceptualized in terms of immaterial indicators. Fluder and Stremlow, for example, take “all available (material and immaterial) resources” (1999, p.5) into account in their

definition of poverty. Poverty could refer to a “lack or total absence of quality of life” (Baumann et al. 1989, p.9). In this study quality of life encompasses seven “dimensions and aspects of life” (ibid. 11, as well as the following list):

1. Being part of a healthy social network,
2. Secure economic activity that is accepted by society,
3. A congruence of physical structures and content on the one hand, and the externally experienced reality on the other hand,
4. Being rooted in socio-cultural tradition and having acceptable concepts of values and world views,
5. Being entrenched in a healthy natural environment,
6. Access to religious and spiritual experiences, as well as
7. Access to training opportunities.

To this broadly conceptualised notion of resources, a list of further indicators to operationalise poverty is added to the definitions and models of poverty. In his study of 1901, Rowntree had selected indicators from the sphere of food, accommodation, rent and household objects to empirically illustrate poverty (1901:119). In his subsequent studies, he included other indicators, such as the cost of insurance, newspapers and travelling to work (Townsend 1954). Sen (1983, p.160f) conceptualises poverty in terms of a lack of minimum capabilities, which could, with recourse to Adam Smith (1976/1776, p.869), also contain indicators like “avoidance of shame”. In determining the standard of life, Townsend presents a total of 60 indicators in his study of 1979 that include, amongst others, diet, heating, lighting, accommodation and living environment (Townsend 1979, p.31 and 249f, also refer to Bergham 1995 and Whelan/Whelan 1995). In various later studies, poverty is measured by the onset of deprivation (z.B. Bradshaw et al. 2001; Fluder/Stremlow 1999; Gordon 2006) or in addition, linked to other points of departure, like resources and situation of life (e.g. Döring et al. 1990; Glatzer/Hübinger 1990; Leu et al. 1997; Ulrich/Binder 1998). In the study on poverty of Leu et al. (1997), they include economic situation, provision of accommodation, quality of accommodation, training, work, health, private networks, problems and problem-coping. The UNO describes absolute poverty as

“severe deprivation”, characterised by the following indicators: „basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services” (United Nations 1995, p.41).

These indicators show that poverty as a multi-dimensional concept, just like social exclusion, is linked to a wide range of indicators which are fairly similar for both. Economic factors, training, gainful employment, health and the state of accommodation, as well as participation and opportunity for interaction, thus represent fundamental indicators in definitions and models of both exclusion and poverty.

This multi-dimensional point of departure results in various methodological problems for poverty and exclusion. On the one hand, there is a risk that the selection of the often long list of indicators could be influenced by chance, as it is not clear from the studies and definitions why the selected factors in particular are regarded as defining the concepts of social exclusion or poverty. The outline of the construct remains vague, because in principle new indicators could always be added. Lazarsfeld has described it accurately as follows: „When a battery of indicators is being drawn up, one difficult problem is to decide where to stop” (1958, p.103). Finally, the selection of indicators has to be seen in the context of normative, theoretical, ideological and political orientation, as illustrated in the discussions in the United Kingdom with reference to social exclusion (e.g. Burchardt et al. 2002a; Levitas 1998 and 2006). On the other hand, questions – not only about the borders of the constructs – arise from the long lists of indicators. It remains open whether the indicators describe cause, effect or the concept itself (Lazarsfeld 1958; Levitas 2006; Whelan/Whelan 1995). The long chain

of indicators entails the risk that a particular phenomenon is measured against itself in a tautological circle. Dealing with this type of construct is difficult in a theoretical as well as in an empirical respect, and not only because of possible tautologies. In addition, a methodological problem exists: based on the implicit assumption of an existing relation to other constructs, it is not any longer required that a theoretical relationship be proven.

5. A comparison of models of social exclusion and poverty

Up to now we have considered the concepts of social exclusion and poverty in terms of definitions and indicators from a conceptual perspective. Here we present the model according to which selected indicators are linked to each other and organised in a particular logic. Explanations and implicit causalities about causes and consequences of poverty and exclusion are thus conceptualised. This embedding in explanatory and causal models and associations results not only in a particular demarcation of social exclusion and poverty, but specific social groups are also conceptualized, explained and provided with a normative value. Social exclusion as a complex, normative and multi-dimensionally conceptualized phenomenon leads to connotative definitions and broad indicator chains, and – like in the case of poverty – also to various explanations of the causes and consequences of social exclusion. The overview (fig. 4) illustrates a compilation of causes, indicators and consequences, in terms of which social exclusion and poverty are conceptualised in various studies examined by us.

In this table it is explained that the overlap in the definitions and indicators of social exclusion and poverty determined up till now, are continued in the models of both concepts. Causes, indicators and consequences of social exclusion and poverty have proven to be largely identical. Furthermore it is noteworthy that causes, indicators and consequences have the same characteristics; namely, the same phenomenon can, depending on its position in the model, be a cause, as well as an indicator or a consequence. The following example of social exclusion, in which a notion of economic poverty is conceptualised as a consequence and also as a cause, is presented as illustration:

Social Exclusion Model 1: Inadequate schooling (cause) leads to poverty (consequence) through limited opportunities in the labour market (indicator).

Social Exclusion Model 2: Poverty (cause) necessitates living in a less privileged environment (indicator), which results in inadequate schooling (consequence).

Based on the connotative definitions present particularly in studies on exclusion, our analyses furthermore indicate that the order of the model in a study often remains implicit, that is, various phenomena related to social exclusion are examined, but it is not explained which element is cause, consequence or indicator, and which phenomena represent the concept itself. The problematic nature of this blending becomes clear particularly in those studies in which the same phenomenon is used as a cause, an indicator, a consequence and as a part of the concept (e.g. Levitas 2006).

Diagram 4

Fig. 4 Causes, consequences and indicators in the models of Social Exclusion and Poverty (Selection).

	Dimensions	Poverty	Exclusion
CAUSES	Economic	Inadequate household or individual income, debt, financial strain, subjective income needs	Poverty (lack of economic resources), financial riches or high social status
	Training	Inadequate schooling or lack thereof	Inadequate schooling or lack thereof, exclusion from school though bad behaviour, playing truant
	Gainful employment	Long-term unemployment, total or partial loss of a job, involuntary part-time work	Long-term unemployment, total or partial exclusion from the labour market
	Participation, Social contacts, Integration, Service	Growing up in a broken home, conflict with the partner, delinquency, problems to adapt	Lack of services (e.g. public transport)
	Accommodation	Living in a less privileged area	Living in a less privileged area
	Health	Physical and psychological illness, disability, psychological illness	Physical and psychological illness, disability, psychological illness
	Personal characteristics/ belonging to a social group	Age, gender, ethnicity, type of family, family structure	Age, gender, ethnicity, financial riches, type of family, communities
INDICATORS	Economic	Inadequate household or individual income Debt, financial strain	Poverty (lack of economic resources)
	Training	Only compulsory schooling, no or unfinished vocational training	Limited school qualifications, no scholastic or vocational training
	Gainful employment	Lack of gainful employment, part-time work	Lack of gainful employment, part-time work, bad working conditions
	Participation, Social contacts, Integration, Service	Lack of participation in acknowledged social activities, social isolation	Lack of access to services, lack of participation in acknowledged social activities, social isolation, anomic symptoms
	Accommodation	Living in a less privileged area	Living in a less privileged area
	Health	Physical and psychological illness, disability	Physical and psychological illness, disability
	Personal characteristics/ belonging to a social group	Age, gender, ethnicity, type of family, family structure	Age, gender, ethnicity, family structure, financial riches, type of family, communities
CONSEQUENCE	Economic	Through lack of gainful employment/lack of training: No acquisition of essential goods (food, household, clothing), limited consumer options, raising small loans/indebtedness	Through lack of gainful employment/lack of training: No acquisition of essential goods (food, household, clothing), limited consumer options, raising small loans/indebtedness
	Training	Limited training because of gender, age, lack of finance	Limited training because of gender, age, lack of finance
	Gainful employment	Lack of or limited gainful employment because of age, gender, ethnicity, bad health, inadequate school education and vocational training	Multiple unemployment after the first job loss, dissatisfaction at work because of lack of or inadequate schooling
	Participation, Social contacts, Integration	Social isolation, deprivation in social and cultural areas, dissatisfaction with life, limited quality of life, no close friends, fears and worries because of lack of finances	Through exclusion from the labour market: Lack of social contacts, integration, loss of status, exclusion from certain services because of area of residence and poverty; lack of political engagement, membership of societies, social contacts due to poverty
	Accommodation	Living in a less privileged area and close living conditions because of lack of finance	Living in a less privileged area, bad neighbourhood because of poverty, homelessness because of lack of training
	Health	Health problems because of a lack of finance	High mortality and suicide rate because of job loss or lack of education

Sources (Selection): Atkinson et al. 2002; Bailey 2006; Barnes 2005; Böhnke 2002; Budowski et al. 2002; Glatzer & Hübinger 1990; Howarth et al. 1998; Kronauer 2002; Leu et al. 1997; Lupton & Power 2002; Sen 1997; Townsend 1979; Ulrich & Binder 1998, Wansing 2005

A further result of our comparative analysis of models of exclusion and poverty has shown that, in most models, social exclusion is placed in a double relationship with poverty in the economic sense; one of the reasons being that economic poverty is the cause for a particular aspect of social exclusion. Also, for example, in various studies where inadequate financial resources are conceptualised as the cause of a lack of participation in the political sphere, inadequate access to services and cultural opportunities, as well as lack of social contacts (e.g. Burchardt et al. 2002b; Estivill 2003; Fahmy 2006; Fisher/Bramley 2006; Kronauer 2002; Middleton 2002). Bönke links, for example, social exclusion to poor income, and finds that particularly long-term unemployment and a precarious state of care contain the danger of physical strain, disorientation and a loss of social networks (2002, p.55). Poverty in the economic sense is, on the other hand, also a consequence of exclusion, in that, for example, inadequate schooling, playing truant or being excluded from school because of bad behaviour by pupils are not only conceptualised as the cause of separation in marriage, chain smoking, depression, delinquency, etc., but also as the cause of financial poverty through bad opportunities in working life, caused by a lack of education (e.g. Howarth et al. 1998; Sparkes/Glennerster 2002). Or, an exclusion in the sense of exclusion from gainful employment, results in the remaining in a economically inadequate situation because of a lack of social contacts, further resulting in homelessness, bad health and a higher suicide rate amongst the youth, or a precarious situation as regards accommodation in a bad residential area in general (e.g. Estivill 2003; Howarth et al. 1998; Lupton/Power 2002).

If the results of our comparison between the concepts of exclusion and poverty in the chapters up to now are summarised, it becomes clear that social exclusion is examined in close adherence to the existing concept of poverty. If both concepts reveal agreement to such a large extent in the theoretical and empirical examination of our data, can it be assumed that social exclusion can be considered a mere replacement for existing concepts of poverty? In order to answer this question, one has to distinguish between the conception of exclusion inherent to itself and the theoretical and empirical implementation of the concept.

As we have seen, the concept of social exclusion is constituted by differentiating it from concepts of poverty. By this, poverty is reduced to a mere economic factor, and, in contrast, social exclusion is understood as a wide concept. This width is apparent not only in the connotative definitions of exclusion in particular. Rather, social exclusion should not only apply to poverty in the economical sense, but should also include various social groups. In some – comparatively few - studies, this claim is implemented in so far as social exclusion is conceptualised outside the terms of economic exclusion, and thus differentiates itself clearly from existing concepts of poverty. Also included in the theme, is the voluntary exclusion of people with means (Barry 2002), exclusion through illness, discrimination on the basis of gender, religion and skin colour, or the non-participation determined by geographical factors or cultural identity (e.g. Burchardt 2002a; Estivill 2003; Whelan/Whelan 1995; Wansing 2005). The multi-dimensionality of social exclusion should therefore apply not only to the many and diverse phenomena related to the concept, but also to the groups affected by exclusion. This wide self-understanding of social exclusion clashes with the theoretical and empirical implementation which focuses on the examination of phenomena that are practically identical to those that have classically been studied in the context of poverty.

Based on our analyses of the concepts of social exclusion and poverty, we could conclude social exclusion, to a large extent, examines the same phenomena that pertain to poverty. Social exclusion could, therefore, be regarded as a replacement of the study of poverty. On the other hand, the self-understanding of the content width and simultaneous differentiation from poverty concepts inherent to the concept of social exclusion, could have various consequences for poverty research. Firstly, poverty understood in the economical sense could become one of many factors that could ultimately disappear from exclusion studies,

although implicit in the studies themselves, poverty is examined in its multi-dimensional sense. This is explained by the already known definition of Burchardt et al.:

„An individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in key activities of the society in which he or she lives“ (2002b, p.30).

In this study Burchardt et al. examines the problem of poverty through the concept of social exclusion. This becomes apparent when the key activities not mentioned further in the definition, are considered in the model. There they are measured in terms of „consumption“, „production“, „political engagement“ and „social interaction“ (Burchardt et al. 2002b, p.31ff). As is the case in classical poverty studies with reference to poverty, the lack of participation in key social activities is listed as characteristic of exclusion. In the definition itself, though, no reference is made to poverty in the economical sense, but the individual is implicitly conceptualised in the context of the problem of a lack of social participation.

Closely related to the reduction of poverty to an economic problem and the wide self-understanding of social exclusion, is a second consequence: because social exclusion, as a broad phenomenon, can be applied to a large number of groups, the focus of the examination of possible problems of classical poverty groups can shift to the examination of the social exclusion of diverse groups that are not affected by poverty. Silver (2008/1996) gives an impressive example of which consequences such a shift could have on a political level.

„Thus, though the idea of exclusion could be useful to reformers who wish to point to the inadequacies of existing welfare states, conversely it may serve to distract attention from the overall rise in inequality, general unemployment, and family breakdown that is affecting all social classes. By ghettoizing risk categories under a new label and publicizing the more spectacular forms of poverty requiring emergency aid, policies to combat exclusion may make it easier to re-target money on smaller social categories, like the homeless or the long-term unemployed. It may even undermine the universal social insurance schemes that traditionally protected the working- and middle-classes“ (2008/1996: 304f).

A third consequence has bearing upon methodology. If poverty is examined by means of the concept of social exclusion, it is done in terms of a concept that is mostly defined connotatively. Through these connotations the methodological problems of the long chains of indicators and modeling discussed in this article, where there can no longer be distinguished between cause, indicator and consequences and the concept itself.

6. Conclusions

Through a systematic analysis of the content of about 300 texts we could, in this study, show that social exclusion and poverty often overlap to a large extent on a methodological as well as a content level. Because of the complexity of the interaction and the dependence on context of the social phenomena, it is difficult to accurately grasp the content of poverty and exclusion and differentiate precisely between them. When the complexity of social exclusion and poverty is transferred to models, problematic aspects arise with reference to the methodology. For example, the selection of the often long indicator chains seem to be at random, because the underlying ideological, political or theoretical convictions are not explicitly defined, and also because it is not clear from the studies and definitions why the factors selected to conceptualise social exclusion and poverty are regarded as suitable. It is methodologically problematic in that it is difficult to differentiate between cause, effect and the concept itself because of the long indicator chains and the number of phenomena that exclusion and poverty are linked to. As a result the danger exists that a particular phenomenon forms a tautological circle with itself. A further problem exists in that, based on the implicit assumption about an existing theoretical relationship with other constructs, it is

no longer required that such a relationship should be proven. These methodological problems are more prominent in the conceptualisation of social exclusion, because it is linked to a number of phenomena by connotations that do not define the content of the concept. Through this, the concept becomes porous in relation to other concepts like poverty, for example, and an unambiguous differentiation is ultimately impossible. This porosity results in social exclusion becoming a Black Box that can be filled with various definitions, indicators and theories.

Apart from the intersection in aspects of methodology, there are wide areas where social exclusion and poverty overlap with reference to content. On the one hand, the studies contain notions of poverty and social exclusion themselves. By means of various conceptualisations, on the other hand, different pictures of society and its responsibilities and the nature of individuals become clear. Based on our results it is determined that poverty is not only defined in terms of economics, but that it is linked to various phenomena such as gainful employment, training, accommodation, health, participation in social activities, subjective well-being and quality of life; thus, phenomena that also play a role in concepts of social exclusion. The notion of resources in concepts of poverty is not uniform either. Conversely, it becomes clear that the conceptualisation of social exclusion largely follows existing concepts of poverty and therefore refers to poverty in the economic sense. Based on the self-understanding of social exclusion as a concept with which not only economic poverty should be examined, this economic link is not always explicit, however. This is illustrated most clearly in studies in which a material poverty apparently plays a role, but economic aspects are referred to indirectly, as is the case in the examination of voluntary exclusion from elite groups, or the unequal access of the disabled to the education system and the more inferior job opportunities associated with it, for example.

This close linking of social exclusion to poverty, together with the wide scope in content and theory and randomness, as well as conceptual vagueness and limited differentiation from other concepts, does not only cause methodological difficulties, but also has implications at socio-political level. Social politicians can, because of the width and porosity of concepts of exclusion, decide if they choose the results of studies that have social structures as point of departure, or those that have motivation theory as point of departure. As the predominant economic and social politics submit to the demands of a global free market economy, it is not unlikely that social and structural interpretations are met with increasingly less regard and acceptance, and that, as a result, the possibility that poverty and exclusion could be alleviated by a redistribution of resources as a socio-political measure is not recognized. Rather, there are points of departure where the definitions, theories, selection of indicators and chains of causality are in agreement with popular liberal market theories. The wide scope of the exclusion concept, in particular, allows that its economic interdependence and unequal and unfair distribution of resources can be ignored. There is no small danger that economically oriented social politics will attempt to withdraw from its responsibility to fight against poverty, and distance itself from social demands for redistribution to satisfy the demands and regulations of a liberal market. In addition, the strongly politicised but vague notion (as regards content) of social inequality can contribute thereto that, with reference to the alleviation of social inequality, a considerably higher own performance is expected whereas the demand on individuals, regions and population groups is declining. The state would, in this manner, distance itself from a welfare state which is expensive and restrictive to the national economy, and place itself in the service of the so-called "winners" of the global economy, enriching them.