

10 Changing social characteristics, patterns of inequality and exclusion

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Introduction

Poverty and social exclusion are increasing Europe-wide, following the recent economic crisis, but also for long-standing reasons. This chapter summarizes what is known about patterns of poverty and social exclusion across rural Europe, drawing particularly upon an analysis of the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS). This shows poverty and related domains of exclusion are worst in the rural areas of the poorest countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where the impacts of post-socialist transition and patterns of new (often foreign) investments have disadvantaged rural areas. However, the geographical remoteness of rural territories contributes to poverty and exclusion more broadly, and this explains why living conditions have also deteriorated in some areas of southern Europe.

The chapter briefly looks back on the development of social equality politics and state intervention to combat poverty and social exclusion, from the start of the nineteenth century to the most recent changes induced by the economic crisis. It explains how social scientists pioneered new ways of understanding social exclusion, conceptualizing it in terms of multidimensional, dynamic processes across a variety of socio-economic, cultural and political domains. Earlier research tended to view poverty as distributional and cross-sectional, and as an exceptional part of an otherwise well-functioning society. Newer research sees social exclusion as a dynamic, embedded feature of society that operates in multiple dimensions at global and local scales. It recognizes people as agents who translate their (embodied) experience of social exclusion into patterns of behaviour rooted in diverse capacities to act.

This chapter continues by focusing on the localization of 'poor people in poor places'. It outlines how relational and historically embedded patterns of economic and state restructuring and policy-making intersect with social identities such as class, gender, ethnicity and age, and result in the construction of social exclusion at the social and territorial level. The chapter concludes that rural poverty, social exclusion, depopulation and counter-urbanization can only be understood when the interrelation between (rural and urban) territories,

macro-regions, nation-states and social groups are taken into account. This includes the consideration of processes of territorial fixation and segregation that define who is perceived as (not) belonging to certain places.

Patterns of inequality

Earlier chapters in this book have set out the emergence of new ruralities across the EU, but rural poverty and social exclusion are often neglected and difficult to map, partly because of the scale at which statistics are collected and harmonized, with averages concealing regional inequality, partly because these relate to national benchmarks rather than EU-wide definitions, and partly because the processes involved are hard to observe.

Some insights may be gained from an analysis by Shucksmith *et al.* (2009) of urban–rural differences across the EU, using data from the EQLS for 2003. (Unfortunately, no more recent rural–urban analysis has been commissioned.) This survey examined key aspects of the quality of life in the then twenty-five EU Member States (EU15) and the ten New Member States (NMS10), the two acceding countries – Bulgaria and Romania – and one candidate country, Turkey (ACC3). The EQLS included respondents in rural as well as urban settlements, so offering the opportunity to explore rural–urban differences in quality of life across the enlarged EU. The analysis was undertaken at the level of four country clusters defined by GDP (Fahey *et al.* 2003): (1) EU12 High: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK; (2) EU7 Intermediate: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain; (3) EU6 Low: Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia; (4) ACC3: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey.

Quality of life was analysed within and across the four country clusters, focusing on rural–urban differences in the following domains: income and deprivation; housing conditions; education; employment; work–life balance; access to work, school, family, friends and services; and subjective well-being. The analysis focused on individuals' life situations and their perceptions, covering not only multiple life domains but also their interplay, and it brought together objective information on living conditions with subjective views and attitudes to provide a picture of overall well-being (Shucksmith *et al.* 2009).

Two key patterns emerge from this analysis. First, in the richer (EU12 High) countries, urban–rural differences within the domains considered are minimal, whereas the differences between urban and rural areas become greater in the poorer countries of the east and south, underscoring generally the rural as being disadvantaged in comparison with the urban, with a markedly lower level of material welfare and quality of life. This is reflected in lower levels of income, lack of basic household items, housing conditions and basic amenities (dampness, rot and lack of inside toilet, for example). There are also significant differences in level of education (except for EU6 countries), IT literacy and Internet access, unemployment and employment in primary production. Within

this general pattern, the ACC3 countries stand out as having particularly high levels of urban–rural difference and high levels of reported disadvantage in rural areas. The obvious implication is that, in relation to the cohesion and convergence objectives of EU policy, it is the rural areas of the New Member States, accession and candidate countries that are most in need.

Second, there is no strong evidence of a superior, subjective well-being in rural areas that might be thought to compensate for material disadvantage. Urban–rural disparities are evident in poorer country clusters, not only in terms of objectively measured indicators of material welfare and of deprivation or disadvantage, but also in terms of perceptions of economic prosperity or deprivation, of security of employment or fear of unemployment, and of sense of safety or fear of crime. The ability to combine these is one of the strengths of the EQLS (Fahey *et al.* 2003). It is also possible to explore issues regarding the strength of family and social networks, of sense of community and of social identification and experience of and attitudes to civic engagement, relevant not only to the quality of life and welfare of individuals and families but also to social cohesion. As might be expected, life satisfaction and happiness are somewhat higher in the richer countries, but urban–rural differences are small, and, although they slightly favour rural areas in the EU12 High, elsewhere the balance is marginally in favour of the urban. On the other hand, levels of optimism are significantly higher in urban areas, and this applies to all the country clusters. This quality-of-life approach has allowed the examination of the widely held view that the intrinsic, non-material qualities of rural life compensate for the lack of material advantages of urban life. Although there is some evidence of factors that may ameliorate rural disadvantage – for example, lower rural incomes in poor country clusters may be offset to an extent by self-provision of food – there is little evidence that non-material aspects of lifestyle, social networks and community are better in rural areas. The EQLS data do not, therefore, bear out the assumption of a rural idyll that compensates for objective, material disadvantages and, thereby, might lessen the need for intervention to address the cohesion issues affecting rural areas in the poorer countries.

Social inequality and the welfare state

In the nineteenth century, new social statistical analyses challenged the widespread assumption that poverty was self-inflicted by revealing low pay, job insecurity, poor health, lack of services, poor housing and lack of education as structural causes of poverty, and Booth (1889–1930) and Rowntree (1901) argued for state intervention to ensure a minimum acceptable standard of living. In the wake of mass unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s, and then after the Second World War, a political consensus emerged in Western Europe that poverty and unemployment were structural and systemic, and that governments could manage economies to achieve full employment, while also assuming responsibility for looking after citizens 'from the cradle to the grave'. The twin

pillars of this approach were Keynesian economic management and the welfare state, notwithstanding differing regimes of welfare capitalism in each country (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1994, 1999).

This post-war consensus around the effectiveness of state provision of universal benefits was challenged in the 1960s and 1970s. First, it became apparent that poverty (at least in relative terms) persisted, despite the welfare state. Second, there was an ideological challenge from the emerging New Right, which drew on monetarist and neo-liberal theories to argue for a return to selectivity and individual responsibility. Third, the economic crisis post-1973 called into question the Keynesianism underlying the post-war settlement. These challenges, in slightly different forms and times, affected every country in Western Europe, many of which consequently moved in varying degrees to embrace aspects of neo-liberal policy, 'rolling back' their welfare state provisions, marketizing what remained of the public sector, and cutting social security budgets. In Eastern Europe, universal welfare provisions and full employment guaranteed by the socialist regimes were generous at the expense of the quality of services, which was often low, with queues frequent and corruption rife. Following the collapse of the socialist system, most Central European states adapted their generous welfare services, trying to secure a safety net for the growing numbers who were unemployed, while simultaneously retaining entitlements of the earlier regime; this is what was called 'premature welfare states' by Kornai (1997). Affordability, however, quickly forced governments to embark on reforms focusing mainly on limiting unemployment entitlements and pensions. In Hungary, for example, the level of total welfare spending declined from 40 per cent to 30 per cent of the GDP between 1991 and 2002, the duration and the amount of unemployment benefits were decreased, and the pension system was reformed (Lelkes 2006).

In recent years, policy debates about inequality have tended to focus on social exclusion rather than on poverty, for a number of reasons. The concept originated in France (Burchardt *et al.* 2002), but gained currency during the EU anti-poverty programme (Room 1994), when the term 'poverty' was unacceptable to the conservative governments of the UK and Germany. However, the concept was also attractive to many policymakers and academics, because of its focus on the multidimensional, dynamic processes underlying inequality and poverty. Accordingly, social exclusion effectively replaced poverty in the EU vocabulary, and 'it was then re-exported to all the European countries' (Murard 2002, p41). Social exclusion is now written into the Maastricht Treaty and is seen in the EU in terms of an 'active welfare policy'. This approach draws on the US model of 'welfare to work', but places its emphasis on helping people into work, rather than on 'individual failings' (such as single parenthood) that might hinder labour-market integration. This was institutionalized into the European Employment Strategy, from 1997, and the National Action Plans, now National Reform Programmes. It is also prominent in the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, where combating poverty and social exclusion ranks high (European

Commission 2010). Exclusion of the most numerous minority of Europe, the Roma, is a case in point and is addressed by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies of 2011 (European Commission 2011c). The social exclusion of unemployed youth is addressed through mobility programmes, such as 'Your first EURES job' and 'Youth on the move', supporting young people's entrance into training and employment programmes throughout Europe (Andor 2013).

In recent years, the economic crisis and accompanying cuts in public spending and the turn towards 'austerity' have, however, substantially reduced public assistance and welfare entitlements. The effects are variable and uncertain so far, but, when crisis-combating policies result in income losses and raise private costs, increasing poverty risks and rates are to be expected. Cuts in public health care spending may serve as an example here: by reducing health care entitlements, private health care expenses increase through the loss of refunds, as well as through increasing expenditures for private care arrangements that are no longer publicly provided and paid for. Research in Greece uses the lens of self-reported health to demonstrate how crisis intervention in public health care may contribute to social exclusion:

As previous studies have shown, reduced income is one of the determinants of worsened health outcomes for the population. It is associated with reduced food consumption, reduced use of preventive care services and health services utilization in general, and increased stress and adoption of high-risk behaviours.

(Zavras *et al.* 2012)

New ways of understanding social inequality

Meanwhile, social scientists have extended the concept of social exclusion, underlining the multiple dimensions of exclusion that, in combination, (re)produce social inequality (Berghman 1995; Burchardt *et al.* 2002; Philip and Shucksmith 2003; Commins 2004). Reimer (2004), in particular, reformulating Polanyi's (1944) three 'modes of economic integration', proposed that processes of social inclusion/exclusion may be seen to operate through four social systems: (1) market relations or private systems; (2) bureaucratic relations or state administrative systems; (3) associative relations, i.e. collective action processes based on shared interests; (4) communal relations, based on shared identity, among family and friends' networks.

[These] represent four relatively coherent ways in which people organise their relationships to accomplish tasks, legitimise their actions, allocate resources, and structure their interactions. Exclusion and inclusion can occur with respect to any or all of these types of relationships, simultaneously creating both distributional and relational manifestations of the problem.

(Reimer 2004, p78)

One's sense of belonging in society, as well as one's purchase on resources, depends on all these systems. It is notable that Reimer viewed these four systems, not only as the underlying dimensions of social exclusion, but also as dimensions of individuals' and communities' capacity to act. This is important in emphasizing individual agency, as well as structural forces.

A small number of studies have sought to investigate processes of social exclusion in rural areas of the UK and Europe (see Bertolini and Peragine 2009, for an overview; also Milbourne 2004; Shucksmith and Schafft 2012). For example, Chapman *et al.* (1998), Shucksmith and Chapman (1998), Phimister *et al.* (2000) and Shucksmith (2000) report the results of a multidisciplinary, mixed-method research programme in Britain from 1997 to 2000, which included the analysis of longitudinal panel data for rural households. This showed that, even in the UK, one-third of rural households had experienced spells of poverty during 1991–6. These spells were mainly short lived and associated with changes in employment status or in household composition. Rural employment, however, was characterized by persistent low pay, because of the dominance of low-paying sectors (agriculture, tourism), the small size of firms and difficulties in accessing training. However, rural poverty went unrecognized, because it is dispersed, in contrast to the concentrated poverty typical of urban areas, and because rural areas are popularly imagined to be idyllic and problem-free.

Jentsch and Shucksmith (2004), Dax and Machold (2002) and Shucksmith (2004) investigated how social exclusion affects young people across rural Europe. Other studies looked into gender difference and the vulnerability of rural women (Bock 2010). Rural women are more at risk of social exclusion compared with men, especially in the remote rural areas in the south and east of Europe, where employment depends heavily on agriculture, and women's employment is low (Copus *et al.* 2006; Bock 2010). These are also the areas where local politics are dominated by men (Bock and Derksen 2008; Oedl-Wieser 2008) and where lack of access to social services (public transport, health care, education, etc.) constrains women's mobility (Shucksmith *et al.* 2005; Copus *et al.* 2006). The rural exodus of young women may be indicative of the (high risk of) social exclusion of women, from which they get away through migration (Bock 2010). However, the high level of female out-migration also underscores the low quality of life and territorial exclusion of many remote rural regions, which, across much of Europe, seem unable to maintain their level of population and, through continuous out-migration and ageing, enter a vicious circle of ongoing decline (Copus *et al.* 2006; Goll 2010).

In Eastern Europe, rural social exclusion became a topical issue during the accession period after the millennium. The collapse of rural economies, land privatization, the dismantling of large-scale agriculture and its inevitable consequences – emerging mass joblessness, insecure livelihoods and deepening rural poverty – dominated political and academic discourses. According to Alanen (2004, p49), rural poverty inevitably appeared across the Baltic countries when collective farms were relinquished. In Estonia, large-scale farming nevertheless survived, with much lower employment capacity than

before, but, in Latvia and especially in Lithuania, family farms that were too small to secure people's livelihood became dominant. Analysing rural exclusion in Lithuania, Poviliunas (2007, p174) argues that, during the course of post-socialist restructuring, 'social policy is transformed into patronage, which in turn contributes to the formation and reproduction of a subculture of dependency'. Even more destruction and emerging poverty were reported from the poorest countries of East Central Europe, Bulgaria and Romania, where millions became dependent on subsistence farming for their sheer survival (Vincze and Swain 1998; Kostov and Lingard 2002).

Social exclusion remains a contested term, not only among academics (Levitas 1999). Some view social exclusion as a technocratic concept, originating in anti-poverty action rather than being theory-based, whereas Room (1995) argued that the concept offered a more theory-based approach than the 'mundane and atheoretical tradition of counting and comparing the poor'. Other critics regard social exclusion as a euphemism, diverting attention from necessary redistribution or, at worst, a code for cultural explanations of poverty and the 'underclass' discourse. The concept's advocates resist such criticisms, arguing that a relational understanding of poverty and inequality will enable policy to address causes rather than merely symptoms, and that it allows for a more sophisticated policy design, without altering policy objectives (Hills 2002). Even so, substantive criticisms of the concept of social exclusion remain (Savage 2003), notably that it unduly emphasizes boundary formation and carries an implicit notion that all but a few are included in a cohesive society, undifferentiated by class or social division. Finally, concepts of both social exclusion and poverty may be criticized for focusing on a narrow social group, so diverting attention from broader class relations underlying social inequalities (Murard 2002; Savage 2003).

Following Shucksmith (2012), we can move beyond these limitations, while retaining a focus on multidimensional dynamic processes, rooted in localities, by returning to class analysis in its new, reinvigorated Bourdieuvian formulation. Class formation for Bourdieu is a continuous, contested and fluid process of discursive construction, identity formation, mobilization and struggle based around habitus, field and capital. Moreover, class formation is inextricably bound up with place, in that the social construction of place (and rural places) is necessarily class-infused; in Bourdieu's sense, these place-identities are themselves a source of advantage to dominant classes and, conversely, also a source of inequality and exclusion. Rather than seeing rural areas as simply a stage on which the exogenous, national class structure is played out:

Bourdieu's approach to class analysis allows us instead to investigate the reflexive and localised nature of class-formation, and the associated role of class-infused constructions of place and rurality in the accumulation and storing of assets and in relations of exploitation, which together lead to persistent inequality.

Going forward, then, there is a need to research, not only the ways in which those in similar social positions (Bourdieu's 'classes on paper') construct place and rurality, but also how these discursive and symbolic constructions are then enlisted in class formation and domination. How does rurality itself become a vehicle for increasing and storing inequality and, thence, for its inter-generational transmission? And how do the socially and politically constructed identity and stigmatization of places add to the process of territorial fixation and segregation and the place-based exclusion of people? Wacquant's theory (2007a, 2007b) of advanced marginality and territorial stigmatization may be helpful here.

Wacquant demonstrates that it is not only people who are stigmatized or whose presence 'blemishes' places, it also works the other way round, with places tainting their residents. Following Wacquant, territorial stigmatization contributes to the further dissolution of places, as it undermines feelings of belonging and encourages residents to leave in order to escape from exclusion. Territorial stigmatization, hence, motivates disengagement and de-solidarization, and so undercuts social cohesion and further weakens communities. In this process, the rolling back of welfare states plays an important role, as economic restructuring and the withdrawal of public resources may lead to a spatial accumulation of economic hardship and ecological degradation. These negatively affect the status of places both materially and symbolically, reinforcing feelings of social stigma among the residents and so contributing to their marginalization.

Negative representations and sociofugal practices then become articulated to set off a deadly self-fulfilling prophecy through which public taint and collective dishonour end up *producing* that which they claim to merely record: namely, social atomism, community 'disorganization' and cultural anomie.

(Wacquant 2007b, p184)

Wacquant developed his theory for explaining territorial exclusion in the metropolitan context, based on studies of American ghettos and French *banlieues*, but his theory can also help to elucidate how such processes contribute to the marginalization of rural places and rural social exclusion.

The case of Roma segregated neighbourhoods in Central and Eastern Europe may serve as an example of Wacquant's (2007b) notion of 'blemishing places'. In Hungary and Romania, approximately 60 per cent of the Roma live in the least-developed rural regions, but also in Slovakia and Bulgaria, the proportion of rural residents among the Roma is high (40 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively) (Somogyi and Teller 2011, p6). The Roma settlements differ, ranging from small villages inhabited (almost) exclusively by Roma people (Hungary and Slovakia) (Vukovich 2008; Mladek and Pukačová 2010; Virág 2010; Kovács 2012) to various forms of segregated neighbourhoods within or just outside villages or towns (Somogyi and Teller 2011,

p6). In the case of Roma, residential segregation has a clear 'racial' component.¹ Research has also revealed the multiple dimensions of their exclusion. A decade ago, Ladányi and Szélényi (2002, p89) concluded, on the basis of comparative research on Roma in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, 'that with post-communist transition, a Roma underclass might be in the making', mainly owing to deindustrialization and the destruction of their jobs in the course of economic restructuring. They identified three dimensions of exclusion: residential, educational and job related, and so were clearly arguing that the phenomenon of 'underclass' is rooted in structural causes. According to Poviliunas (2007, 174), the 'rural underclass' in Lithuania is not only a social fact, but is also a social construct of what he calls 'Moral Underclass Discourse', rooted in neo-conservatism and the notion of rurality as subordinate and dependent on paternalistic policies.

'Poor people' and 'poor places'

A review of research on poverty and social exclusion in rural areas of the EU by Bertolini and Peragine (2009) made an important distinction between poor places and poor people. The economic and demographic decline of certain rural areas is significant in understanding these excluded places. In some cases, places have been reliant on large-scale extractive industries, which, once in decline, leave a degraded landscape and communities 'blighted by widespread unemployment, long-term sickness and poverty a decade after the collapse' (Bennett *et al.* 2000). In some countries, notably the UK, the land and property market and development regulation have served to perpetuate rural areas as elite spaces, with hidden poverty and social exclusion (Philip and Shucksmith 2003), so that the issue is not one of poor places but of 'poverty among affluence'. In other rural areas, the decline of agriculture has led to 'land abandonment' and an out-migration of a significant proportion of the population. Here, the problem is that some (vulnerable) people remain trapped by their lack of opportunity and their lack of mobility (Shucksmith and Rønningen 2011).

The latter process is especially prominent in the New Member States, where post-socialist restructuring of agriculture, privatization of industries and cuts in public spending led to immense losses in rural employment while offering few alternatives (Kostov and Lingard 2002; Hann and Sárkány 2003; Alanen 2004). Scarce employment opportunities and meagre livelihoods encourage many rural residents to search for employment elsewhere, and, although remittances are sent home (White 2010), the absence of residents may substantially weaken the social basis of especially the more remote rural areas, as research in Poland and Romania has shown (Horváth 2008; Kurek 2011; Marquardt *et al.* 2012; Pantea 2012).

In many cases, the flow of migration attracted the poor to already 'poor places', where they have been trapped (Brown and Schafft 2003). As a result, regional disparities increased, reflecting a sharpening social and spatial

polarization (Kovács 2010). In Slovakia, Poland and Hungary, the former rural–urban divisions have increasingly been replaced by a new division between developing and depressed regions. The ‘Eastern Wall’ in Poland, the north-east NUTS 2 regions of Hungary and the adjacent eastern counties of Slovakia are depressed regions, with a tendency towards ghettoization in the latter two (Kováč 1994; Kovács and Bihari 2005; Tarkowska 2008; Kovács 2010; Matlovičová *et al.* 2012). In Romania, however, the gap between urban and rural areas in terms of infrastructural amenities, access to services and transport has remained, and poverty is still most prominent in rural areas (Gherghinescu 2008).

Some of the issues for rural places are about their remoteness from the ‘core’ of their nation; this is equally an issue for some islands and border/periphery regions. Distance from services (public and private) and lack of access are described by a number of commentators (e.g., Wallace *et al.* 2006; European Commission 2010), and, although much emphasis is placed on the potential for ICTs to bring services to remote places, the reality of the market rollout is of a rural broadband gap. In their study of a number of islands and border regions of the EU, Leontidou *et al.* (2005) draw the distinction between the experience of geographic isolation and that of social or cultural exclusion from ‘the national centre’, and demonstrate that the one does not necessarily imply the other. In some of their case study areas, residents perceived both geographic isolation and social and cultural exclusion, in others, neither of the two, or residents just felt a strong sense of geographic isolation.

‘Remoteness’ and ‘isolation’, hence, are not only geographically defined, but also depend on senses of socio-economic and political (dis)connectedness or even abandonment. This is of particular pertinence in the context of the present economic crisis, which increases disparity in Europe, between and within countries and between social and ethnic groups. Already existing inequalities are reinforced, but also new vulnerabilities are created and ‘new poor’ are identified, for instance among self-employed, impoverished, middle-class citizens. Some interpret the cuts in public spending and turn towards austerity as ‘state violence’ towards vulnerable social groups who depend on public support and who suffer most from the turn towards austerity that is presented as necessary to reduce state debts (Degenhardt and Verdolini 2012). With the continuing crisis, it is difficult to forecast how the status of people and places will be affected. So far, there is clear evidence that the crisis puts some groups more at risk than others and further aggravates existing differences between people and places.

One may argue, then, that the present economic crisis provides another remarkable case of territorial stigmatization. It demonstrates how the hierarchy of places may change rapidly, not only materially, but also symbolically, with Greece as a clear example of blemishing places and Greek residents trying to defend themselves against territorial stigmatization. At the level of the European Union, there are signs of de-solidarization and threatening dissolution, and old prejudices towards the southern Member States (and vice

versa) reviving. It is not yet clear how the crisis affects rural areas. A recent study by the European Commission suggests that rural areas have certainly been hit by the closure of plants, loss of employment in industry and construction and the cuts in public budgets and resulting loss of services (European Commission 2011a). On the other hand, EU support through the CAP has been maintained, so that agriculture has been protected. The situations also differ considerably between rural areas, and more research is needed to arrive at a comprehensive assessment. The contrast is particularly notable between the Old Member States, where youth unemployment is often highest in the densely populated areas, and the New Member States, where the situation is often worst in thinly populated areas (Eurostat 2012a, 2012b). Based on statistics from 2009, it is clear that the share of population at risk of poverty is higher in the thinly populated areas (21 per cent) compared with intermediate (14 per cent) and densely populated areas (15 per cent). The risk is high in Central and Eastern Europe (particularly Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia and Lithuania) and in the south (Greece and Spain) (European Commission 2011a, 2011b). The situation is severest among young people, but also women, the elderly and lower-skilled people run a high risk of poverty in this part of rural Europe (European Commission 2011a, 2011b).

The risk of (severe) material deprivation shows a similar pattern.² In 2010, 12 per cent of the residents of thinly populated areas in Europe were seriously deprived (by the EU’s definition), compared with 8 per cent of the densely populated areas and 6 per cent of the intermediate ones. With regard to the risk of deprivation, the gap between the Old and New Member States was even wider than that of poverty risk: in thinly populated areas, the deprivation risk was 23 per cent for the New Member States and 5 per cent in EU15 countries. Again, the situation is most difficult in the following countries, with a rate of severe deprivation in thinly populated areas: 50 per cent in Bulgaria; 35 per cent in Romania; 33 per cent in Latvia; and 26 per cent in Hungary, in 2011. Interestingly, the figures of severe deprivation were quite low in the same year, even in the most crisis-ridden countries of the Old Member States, such as Greece (14 per cent) and Spain (4 per cent) (Eurostat 2013).

With the high and still-rising levels of unemployment and deprivation, the crisis is an important push-factor for out-migration, especially among young people, who move from the south and central east of Europe towards the north and west in search of employment. The crisis also reinforces the ongoing trend of rural to urban migration. However, there is also evidence of a reverse trend – people leaving urban areas to seek refuge in rural areas. For Greece, recent research has revealed an increase in new entrants into agriculture, people who have moved back from the cities to make use of the agricultural property they still held, or who are searching for agricultural employment and a better quality of life (Gkartziou 2013; Kasimis and Papadopoulos 2013). In the predominantly rural areas, owner-occupancy and subsistence food production seem to be one of the tools people use to mitigate the consequences of the crisis, even though there may still be a high risk of (in-work) poverty (Zografakis and Karanikolas

2012). A similar trend could be witnessed during the transition period in the New Member States, where loss of income and employment motivated many urban poor to move to the rural areas (Kostov and Lingard 2002; Brown and Schafft 2003; Kovács 2007; Salasan and Fritzsche 2009). In that time, subsistence or semi-subsistence farming provided a buffer against poverty for rural residents in Central and Eastern European countries (especially Romania, Bulgaria and east Hungary) to a varying degree, for shorter or longer periods of time.

When discussing the risk of poverty and deprivation, the situation of the Roma again deserves special attention. According to recent research by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2012),³ there is a dramatically wide gap between the livelihoods of Roma in segregated residences and non-Roma households living in close proximity (in the same villages, or in nearby neighbourhoods). Their monthly income is significantly lower, and their employment rates are at an extremely low level, particularly among women (Laat and Asenov 2011).⁴ The rate of severe deprivation is also highest among Roma, according to the same study (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2012). The Hungarian data reflect the sharp social and spatial polarization of the country, and the existence of regions with an increasingly deprived population of Roma and non-Roma ethnicity. For both groups, low educational attainment acts as a barrier to accessing labour markets and restricts low-educated working-age people to insecure and precarious jobs, not only in Hungary, but also in most New Member States (European Commission 2013, p4). However, it is the intergenerational transmission of poverty among the majority of Roma population that marks them as a growing, economically and socially excluded, social (ethnic) group. The scale of the problem of Roma exclusion encouraged the Commission to co-sponsor such large-scale, ongoing programmes as the 'Decade of the Roma' in 2005, and to launch Roma integration strategies in 2011.

Conclusion

This chapter reveals spatial patterns of exclusion that suggest a higher risk of social exclusion in 'peripheral' places, many of which are located in remote rural areas in the south and east of Europe. Often, the geographical remoteness of rural areas has contributed to poverty and exclusion more broadly, and, in many cases, the quality of life in these areas has for long been lower compared with more central (rural and urban) places in north-west Europe. However, the recent crisis has also hit areas that had been rather prosperous previously. Among the latter are rural, but also urban, areas, whose economies have suffered as a result of the economic downturn and accompanying cuts in public spending. How the economic recession is affecting rural areas in particular is still unclear. In many remote rural areas in the south and east of Europe, especially, evidence suggests that the risk of poverty and severe deprivation

has definitively increased. However, there are also indications that the rural areas may act as a refuge for groups who hope to save on expenses, through cheaper housing and subsistence agriculture. Such inflow of new populations could support processes of revitalization. Overall, the diagnosis of rural poverty is difficult, because of the scale on which data are collected: averages conceal inequalities, even within wealthy regions. Even so, we may generally conclude that disparities within Europe, between and within countries, regions and communities, have grown since the economic downturn, and that the remote rural areas in the south and east are among the hardest hit.

The risk of social exclusion clearly differs among social groups as well, with gender, race, age and class as important structural features that, in their interaction, explain why some groups are less able to resist marginalization and discrimination. Exclusion of social groups interacts with territorial exclusion, each exacerbating the other through a process of cumulative social and territorial stigmatization. Based on research and available statistics, there are clear indications of a high incidence of 'poor people in poor places'. People may try to escape from the marginality of 'blemishing places', but, when they succeed and save themselves, they then contribute to depopulation and further territorial decline. European policymakers fear another rural exodus from disadvantaged rural areas in Eastern Europe in particular, but trying to fix people in places may (unintentionally) add to their mutual exclusion. In many cases, the impoverishment of places and people results from political and economic changes, such as occurred in the period of transition in Central and Eastern Europe or, more recently, in the economic recession. In some other cases, the area may have been marginal for many years, or the group has always been stigmatized and discriminated against. The latter is clearly the case with Roma, whose segregation and fixation (ghettoization) in marginal (often rural) places and multi-dimensional social exclusion are probably unparalleled in Europe.

So far, research on poverty or social exclusion in rural areas has tended to focus on a particular social group, a certain period of time and/or a specific spatial setting, and often also prioritizes a particular dimension of exclusion. New research on poverty emphasizes the relational and historically embedded patterns of economic and (welfare-) state restructuring, the distribution and exercise of power at the territorial and supra-territorial level, political and civic participation and the social isolation of specific groups; the research studies how these phenomena intersect with class, gender, ethnicity/race, age, place and other social identities and result in the construction of exclusion at the social as well as the territorial level. In doing so, it addresses long-standing issues, such as mobility and accessibility (of places and services) in innovative ways, underlining the importance of connectivity (instead of distance) and defining the peripherality of places as relative and relational. As the material presented above demonstrates, studying rural poverty and social exclusion from a territorial as well as relational point of view is necessary, as processes of rural deprivation can only be understood when the interrelation between territories, nation-states, as well as social groups or classes is taken into

account. This also includes the consideration of who is perceived as (not) belonging where (territorial fixation and segregation). These new avenues have been pursued both through various quantitative (analysis of longitudinal panel data) and qualitative (local case studies, ethnographies) methods, in different ways in different countries in Europe, as the examples referred to above attest. More research is needed to understand better how the ongoing crisis affects the vulnerability of people and places, alters their relative peripherality and (partly by encouraging mobility and displacement) reframes socio-economic and political relations within Europe.

Notes

- 1 Because of fears of stigmatization, not all Roma identify themselves as Roma; the percentage of self-declared Roma is usually about half of the estimated figures. Kertesi and Kézdi (2011) estimate that the proportion of Roma in the total population is close to 10 per cent in Bulgaria and Slovakia, between 4 and 7 per cent in Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, and around 2 per cent in Albania and the Czech Republic.
- 2 Material deprivation and severe material deprivation rates are defined by Eurostat as the proportion of people living in households who cannot afford, respectively, at least three or four of the following nine items: (1) coping with unexpected expenses; (2) one week annual holiday away from home; (3) avoiding arrears (in mortgage or rent, utility bills or payments of purchase instalments); (4) a meal with meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent every second day; (5) keeping the home adequately warm; (6) a washing machine; (7) a colour TV; (8) a telephone; (9) a personal car (Eurostat 2012b, p9).
- 3 The FRA Roma pilot survey covered Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain.
- 4 It must be added that, when Roma are employed, they only have access to the most insecure jobs: the level of job insecurity has proven to be three times higher in the case of Roma, compared with non-Roma employees with the same educational attainment (Kertesi 2010).

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