

# Social exclusion: Continuities and discontinuities in explaining local patterns

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## Abstract

This article analyses place-specific and common social exclusion patterns and trends in a wide variety of European localities from a comparative case study perspective. The local level is where the interrelationship of multiple factors leading to social exclusion becomes obvious, and at the same time where policies responding to it are most directly needed. In our analysis, we focus on the national and local policy environment, the economic environment, and individual and territorial characteristics as generally accepted factors causing or contributing to social exclusion. Based on our empirical findings, we discuss connections/disconnections between these and locally specific patterns and trends of social exclusion. Though the results point to the highly contextual nature of social exclusion, there are nevertheless clear continuities and discontinuities in explaining local patterns.

## Keywords

case studies, common patterns, influencing factors, local level, place-specific patterns, social exclusion

## Social exclusion: Place-specific patterns and common challenges

There is widespread acknowledgement that the local level is the most relevant level for individuals experiencing and coping with social exclusion, though the underlying factors explaining social exclusion are widely linked to other levels (Atkinson, 2000; Murie and Musterd, 2004; Sidney, 2009). Nationally and regionally specific socio-economic restructuring processes, social

systems and policy configurations, in combination with micro-level factors, influence the level and scale of local social exclusion processes. The interaction between macro-level forces and micro-level factors, local space and place leading to social exclusion processes is reflected in locally distinctive

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and varied patterns of advantage and disadvantage.

The Europe 2020 strategy setting targets for combating poverty and social exclusion has led to renewed interest in social exclusion across Europe. Influenced by debates in France, the concept of social exclusion became popular in European policy debates in the 1990s. Since then, it has received considerable critical attention within the academic world (Atkinson and Davoudi, 2000; Copeland and Daly, 2012). Social exclusion is often seen as a rather vague and fuzzy concept, used interchangeably with poverty and distracting attention from structural problems, power relations or social inequality (Atkinson and Davoudi, 2000: 434–437). There is, however, widespread agreement that the concept of social exclusion – in contrast to poverty with its focus on income – allows greater attention to be paid to the multiple and mutually linked dimensions of marginalisation and integration in the different living spheres of the socially excluded (employment, housing, education, social participation, discrimination, income). Despite quite a large body of literature, the question remains of how and at which level to best intervene and politically influence the mechanisms producing social exclusion.

The aim of this paper is to understand place-specific patterns and common challenges across different localities and identify factors important in the policymaking. Evidence is based on 10 case studies, selected to cover different European macro-regions, territorial and socio-economic typologies and welfare regimes (see ‘Empirical evidence and methodology’ section). While most studies on social exclusion have focused on either an urban *or* a rural context, very few studies, as the present one, have investigated social exclusion patterns and their underlying mechanisms in both contexts. In ‘Interactions and

mechanisms explaining local social exclusion patterns’ section, we review the academic debate on the interrelationship between local patterns and wider mechanisms, focusing on a selected set of factors widely seen as influencing local social exclusion processes: economic and labour market developments, welfare regime types and the nature of local politics, individual characteristics and those of the immediate living environment. In ‘Connections and disconnections – Empirical evidence from the case studies’ section we discuss connections/disconnections between these and locally specific patterns and trends of social exclusion on the basis of our empirical findings. Winding up the paper, the final section summarises the findings and discusses their implications. A further question of interest is the extent to which local patterns are intensified or weakened by relational, macro-level shifts, such as spatially selective inner-regional European migration trends, or newly emerging patterns of centrality and marginality.

### **Interactions and mechanisms explaining local social exclusion patterns**

A considerable amount of literature has been devoted to how space and place influence social exclusion (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Milbourne, 2010, 2014; Wilson, 1987). This debate has been most intense for urban areas, with their geographies of concentrated disadvantage, and has focussed on the relevance of ‘neighbourhood effects’ (Friedrichs et al., 2003; Van Ham et al., 2012). In rural areas, space as a factor alleviating or aggravating social exclusion is most often discussed in terms of geographical distance and accessibility, though studies have also focused on socio-cultural contexts as influencing factors (Milbourne, 2014). Most researchers will agree that where one lives *may have an*

influence on individual economic and social prospects. Whether this is actually the case varies between social groups and individuals and is dependent on the political and economic environment and the nature of place.

The way different mechanisms interact at a social interactive (social cohesion, social relations and networks), a symbolic (place-based stigmatisation) or an institutional level (role and resources of local institutions) in a given place is of key importance here. Studies suggest that, for socially excluded individuals or those at risk of social exclusion, life is often centred on familiar places, and these 'small worlds' may acquire major importance in daily routines (Thompson et al., 2014: 69). Though of different relevance for individuals and social groups, the local level tends to play a role with regard to feelings of familiarity, belonging and well-being, instrumental ties and practical relations – even in times of intensified mobility (Bailey et al., 2012: 228; Bridge, 2002: 25; Milbourne, 2014).

A large body of literature has investigated the structural re-configurations across Europe and their different impact on localities since the 1970s: the unevenness of economic and labour market developments and the changes in policy and governance configurations (Andreotti et al., 2012; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Murie and Musterd, 2004). In their study on social exclusion and opportunity structures in European cities and neighbourhoods, Murie and Musterd (2004) conclude that there are a number of interrelationships between neighbourhood-related processes on the one hand and the national welfare regime and economic environment on the other hand. At the same time, however, they also argue that there is no 'simple or predictable interaction' between macro-level and local level processes. Different 'fault lines', related to contextual or

site-specific differences interfere with neat categorisations (2004: 1443, 1457).

In the following, we discuss the generative mechanisms/contributing factors identified in the literature as influencing and impacting local social exclusion. We discuss economic and policy environment factors, before turning to individual risk factors and spatial factors (territorial characteristics, availability and accessibility of local services, etc.). Our focus is on continuities as well as discontinuities between these factors and local social exclusion patterns and trends.

### *Economic and labour market restructuring*

The economic and labour market restructuring seen in the past decades, including de-industrialisation, a spatially selective concentration of knowledge-intense sectors in metropolitan areas, fragmented labour markets and income polarisation, as well as competitive pressure for global investments have had a massive impact on localities across Europe. However, the geographies of labour market change and economic restructuring are uneven as a result of historically developed structures, such as the intensity and structure of local manufacturing and the population structure and its education levels (Murie and Musterd, 2004: 1447f; Pratschke and Morlicchio, 2012: 1896f). Given these uneven economic development paths, but also influenced by different welfare regimes and societal conventions, distinct forms and patterns of social inequality and labour market exclusion can be identified in European cities and regions, with the result that localities have quite dissimilar capabilities to cope with economic restructuring, even more so in times of economic and financial crisis (Pratschke and Morlicchio, 2012: 1897).

### *The policy environment*

In the tradition of Esping-Andersen (1990) and subsequent work (Fenger, 2007; Ferrera, 1996; Wall et al., 2001), different categories of welfare regimes can be distinguished within Europe: universalistic or society based, corporatist statist or state based, liberal or individualistic, familial and the more transitional forms among the new Member States. They are characterised by different levels of decommodification and state redistribution. A direct connection between specific welfare regimes and the scale and level of local-level social exclusion patterns can consequently be assumed, as the role of ameliorative state interventions or informal support networks differs among Member States, as does entitlement to protection schemes (Baglioni and Oliveira Mota, 2013: 321; Ferrera, 1996: 19; Murie and Musterd, 2004: 1456f; Wall et al., 2001: 213f). Scholars have, however, at the same time identified disconnections, such as the fact that countries with strong welfare states may show high levels of segregation and vice versa (Musterd, 2005). Similarly, national institutional environments and policy arrangements are changing, including the devolution of policy responsibility from higher (national) to lower levels (regional, local) (Andreotti et al., 2012; Milbourne, 2010: 164–166; Taylor-Gooby, 2008), leading to the growing relative importance of the local and/or regional policy environment. In the literature, this has been associated both with a higher innovation capacity due to new institutional configurations and in general more space- and context-sensitive approaches, and with a fragmentation of local policy, reproducing and exacerbating levels of inequality within and between localities (Sidney, 2009). Cities or regions within the same welfare regime or within the same nation state may thus differ significantly with regard to main groups

affected and spatial patterns of disadvantage.

### *Individual and household characteristics: Situations of risk*

The literature suggests that such factors as employment status, educational qualification, citizenship, age, ethnicity, disability or being a single parent affect the *risk of social exclusion* (Atkinson and Davoudi, 2000: 440; Atkinson et al., 2004; Murie and Musterd, 2004: 1446). Single individual and household characteristics, however, do not automatically *result in* social exclusion. Whether situations of risk lead to social exclusion or not is dependent on national protection schemes, the availability of local services and other place-specific factors. Similarly, individuals may be excluded in one sphere (e.g. the labour market), but societally included in other spheres (e.g. social networks). Studies show that unemployment seems to be experienced as less stigmatising in Southern European countries (Paugam and Russell, 2000) where the unemployed benefit from significant social networks, particularly at family level (Borges Pereira, 2011: 484). Indeed, several studies focusing on subjective well-being and economic variables emphasise their weak relationship (Amato and Zuo, 1992; Diener, 2002; Easterlin, 1995; Rojas, 2004).

### *The immediate living environment and territorial characteristics*

Place-specific factors, such as the way the local housing market is organised, the availability and characteristics of local service delivery, territorial characteristics, but also local discourses on community belonging, may have a strong influence on local social exclusion processes (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Milbourne, 2010, 2014; Murie and Musterd, 2004). Segregation patterns,

locality stigmatisation or low-quality institutions, particularly in areas of concentrated disadvantage, may act to perpetuate social exclusion (Van Ham et al., 2012). In sparsely populated regions, the importance of access to relevant (high-quality) institutions and services for work, education and social well-being is obvious. However, even in urban areas where institutions and services are readily available and close by, the extent of their accessibility is at question. Socially constructed perceptions, whether individual or collective, may hinder full access to geographically close institutions and services (Bourdieu, 1989).

We will be discussing the interaction between these factors and local patterns of social exclusion in 'Connections and disconnections – Empirical evidence from the case studies' on the basis of evidence from the case studies.

## **Empirical evidence and methodology**

This paper draws on the results of the European comparative research project 'TiPSE – The Territorial Dimension of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe'. Its empirical evidence comes from research conducted in 10 rural and urban localities between September 2012 and June 2013.<sup>11</sup> Each case study had a specific thematic focus. Five themes, acknowledged as being closely linked to poverty and social exclusion, were defined: urban segregation, access to services, unemployment, ethnic minorities and education. Case localities were subsequently chosen for in-depth analysis. As Table 1 shows, a good balance was achieved between urban and rural case studies. Similarly, the case studies cover different welfare regimes across Europe. The partners with the best expertise in the (macro-)regional context carried out the case studies and selected the thematic

focus. Though we cannot claim that the case localities are representative in a strict sense, they were carefully chosen to allow insights into different European macro-regions and territorial and institutional (welfare regime) environments.

Our article draws on the case study reports compiled by the research partners of the ESPON TiPSE project consortium and comparative conclusions (Ramos Lobato and Weck, 2014).

Case study research used a common analysis framework building on qualitative and quantitative data analysis (see Kaup et al. (2012) for details). The aim of the case studies was to support European-wide data analysis within the TiPSE project and to illustrate and explain, in-depth and at micro-scale level, the multiple factors underlying poverty and social exclusion. Each partner conducted interviews with different stakeholders, including policy-makers, community group members and representatives from non-profit organisations, and in some cases also with affected population groups. The interviews (all in all 140) followed a common interview schedule. Case study analysis focused on the main factors and drivers behind social exclusion and poverty patterns and on the role of policies in overcoming social exclusion.

## **Connections and disconnections – Empirical evidence from the case studies**

In the following, we provide empirical evidence from the case studies and discuss lines of connection/disconnection between local patterns and the main mechanisms and factors introduced in 'Interactions and mechanisms explaining local social exclusion patterns' section. Analysing these lines, our aim is to explain case study similarities and differences.

**Table 1.** Case study characteristics (location, territorial characteristics and type of welfare regime) and selected findings.

Case study (characteristics)	Findings
<i>Urban segregation</i>	
<b>Attiki (Athens), Greece</b>	
■ Mediterranean/Southern countries	■ Low segregation levels do not imply low levels of social exclusion
■ Urban	■ Severe impacts of the economic/fiscal crisis (in combination with austerity policies), specifically in terms of increased vulnerability of immigrants
■ Familial	■ Relevance of social networks, but increasingly strained family resources
<b>Stockholms län (Botkyrka), Sweden</b>	■ Important role of network resources for (newly arriving) migrants in ethnically segregated areas
■ Nordic/Baltic Region	■ Today's segregation levels are deeply rooted in past developments (infrastructure, housing, etc.)
■ Urban	
■ Society based	
<i>Access to services</i>	
<b>Albacete (La Manchuela), Spain</b>	
■ Mediterranean/Southern countries	■ Severe impacts of the economic/fiscal crisis (in combination with austerity policies)
■ Rural, remote area	■ Outmigration of well-qualified young people in search of better employment opportunities
■ Familial	■ Increasing hostility towards immigrants
<b>Eilean Siar (Western Isles), UK</b>	■ Poor or lack of access to services in combination with poor public transport as an important trigger for social exclusion
■ Atlantic/Central Region	■ Positive (but also negative) repercussions of strong social networks in small local communities (social control and denial of poverty)
■ Rural, island region, remote area	
■ Individualistic	
<i>Unemployment</i>	
<b>Pohjois-Karjala (Lieksa), Finland</b>	
■ Nordic/Baltic Region	■ Feeling socially excluded or not when unemployed depends on locally rooted factors (cyclical unemployment)
■ Rural, remote area	■ Relevance of social networks and family support for making unemployment a less stigmatising experience
■ Society based	■ Severe impacts of the economic/fiscal crisis (in combination with austerity policies)
<b>Porto, Portugal</b>	■ Outmigration of well-qualified young people in search of better employment opportunities
■ Mediterranean/Southern countries	■ Relevance of social networks, but increasingly strained family resources
■ Urban, in industrial transition	
■ Familial	
<i>Ethnic minorities</i>	
<b>Nógrád, Hungary</b>	
■ East Europe/New Member States	■ Stigmatisation as a powerful influencing factor in the severe marginalisation of Roma
■ Rural, remote area, in industrial transition	■ Intergenerational transmittance of disadvantage
■ Transitional	■ School system intensifying/maintaining rather than reducing social inequalities
<b>Banská Bystrica, Slovakia</b>	■ Stigmatisation as a powerful influencing factor in the severe marginalisation of Roma
■ East Europe/New Member States	

(continued)



**Table 1.** Continued.

Case study (characteristics)	Findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Rural, mountainous region, in industrial transition</li> <li>■ Transitional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Intergenerational transmittance of disadvantage</li> <li>■ School system intensifying/maintaining rather than reducing social inequalities</li> </ul>
<i>Education</i>	
<b>Dortmund, Germany</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Atlantic/Central Region</li> <li>■ Urban, in industrial transition</li> <li>■ State based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Educational mechanisms reproducing social (and ethnic) inequality</li> <li>■ Intra-EU mobility raises policy challenges in host localities</li> <li>■ Polarised urban structure influencing school segregation</li> </ul>
<b>Izmir, Turkey</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mediterranean/Southern countries</li> <li>■ Urban</li> <li>■ Familial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Educational mechanisms reproducing social (and ethnic) inequality</li> <li>■ Flight of middle classes out of the state school system</li> <li>■ Polarised urban structure influencing school segregation</li> </ul>

Source: Own representation.

### *Labour market restructuring and the financial and economic crisis*

The case studies point to the general dilemma that paid work is widely seen as a crucial element of societal integration. However, as a result of employment restructuring, access to the labour market has become difficult for the low qualified. Even being employed does not necessarily protect against poverty, as seen by the increased share of working poor (for instance, in Germany). Precarious employment has become widespread, giving rise to low wages, uncertain entitlement to pensions or benefits and insecure future prospects.

Almost all case studies refer to the severe consequences of the fiscal and economic crisis, affecting cities and regions with a less favourable economic and population structure and/or weak public welfare provision to a far greater extent. This uneven impact of the crisis across our case studies becomes specifically visible when looking at Southern European cities and regions. Here, high unemployment rates and public spending cuts are leading to shrinking family

incomes, threatening families' capabilities to provide support for needy family members, while at the same time widespread austerity measures deny them alternative access to social protection. The case studies show three worrying trends stemming from the crisis: First, even well-qualified young people with academic degrees may be unable to gain access to the labour market, thereby boosting, as seen in the Spanish and Portuguese case studies, out-migration in search of better employment opportunities. Though young people with lower qualification levels remain more affected by unemployment, the case of Porto also shows that, in the context of a shrinking regional/national labour market, university education does not automatically protect against unemployment or in-work poverty – with wide-ranging repercussions on young people's motivation:

I have young people here, and when I ask 'Are you planning to go to university', they answer 'For what? There are no jobs for graduates; that is why I'll start working straight away. I will try to get a job in the shopping centre, with

McDonalds, or in another place, because I don't see the investment of going to university being worthwhile'. (Local expert working in a youth foundation, Porto, as cited in Ramos Lobato (2013: 42))

Second, the case studies point to an increased risk of middle-class families facing social exclusion. Evidently, there is a spatial concentration of these new risk groups in the Mediterranean countries most affected by the financial and economic crisis. There, the standard and quality of life of many middle-class families is threatened by increasing costs for housing, heating, food and education, relative to income, on the one hand and a reduction of state support and public services on the other hand.

More recently, there are more people coming to our job centre for the first time; people who have never been unemployed and are now addressing our service for the first time. (Local expert, Porto, as cited in Ramos Lobato (2013: 35f)).

We're talking about an entirely new category of people without shelter, whose professional, educational and social profiles markedly differ from those of the homeless people we dealt with until the economic crisis. (Local expert, Athens, as cited in Kandyliis et al. (2013: 32)).

I am now seeing families who were more or less normal before and now are almost at the edge, asking for the Council's Employment strategy and finding that their unemployment benefit is about to finish and they have two children and they do not know what to do. (Local expert, La Manchuela, as cited in De Lima (2014: 20)).

A third worrying trend is the growing prejudice and hostility towards immigrants, particularly observable in areas where competition for jobs is already quite high. The rejection and stigmatisation of foreigners can be observed in rural areas such as La Manchuela, where increasing numbers of migrant workers from Romania, Bulgaria

or Morocco work in the agriculture sector (mostly in low-qualified jobs), as well as in such urban areas as Athens, where immigrants are completely vulnerable and for the most part forced to work in the informal economy due to a lack of access to legal documents. In a range of larger German cities such as Dortmund, the sudden influx into low-income neighbourhoods of Romanians and Bulgarians forced to work informally due to their lack of employment permits until 2014 similarly fuelled negative reactions by local residents and increasingly polarised conflicts, influenced by the media and political discourse.

The three trends discussed above are locally selective in nature and scale, but they point to the fact that the fiscal and economic crisis had a specifically severe impact on the lives of people in localities with a feeble economy, in combination with a less comprehensive welfare state, partly intensifying pre-existing disadvantage.

### *The role of welfare regimes and the regional/local policy environment in explaining local patterns*

The case studies illustrate both connections and disconnections in the influence welfare regimes have on local social exclusion patterns. Countries with generous welfare regimes, such as the Nordic countries, in general show relatively low levels of material deprivation, and – in comparison with other European countries – score higher in fighting educational disadvantage and providing adequate housing, social and health services for those in need (Ramos Lobato and Kaup, 2014). Nevertheless, pockets of concentrated disadvantage and residential segregation exist even in the most generous and comprehensive welfare states (see Dymén and Reardon, 2013, for the example of Botkyrka, Sweden), thus pointing to the role of housing policies as contributory factors, and also the role of local



and regional policymaking. The case of Dortmund similarly illustrates the influence of education policies on reproducing social disadvantage, within the context of a welfare state with relatively high levels of state redistribution. At the same time, in many European countries welfare principles are shifting from public provision to self-activity and individual responsibility, with a heightened focus on improving individual employability, sharper eligibility rules for people on benefits as well as general cutbacks in public expenditure. This is particularly visible in familial welfare regime countries, where, as a consequence of austerity policies, young people especially struggle with the precariousness of state provision.

One factor boosting or weakening the impact of national welfare characteristics is national–local policy interaction. A stronger role of regions and cities in combating social exclusion may thus go hand in hand with both a higher potential for innovation in response to territorially specific patterns of social exclusion, and a higher risk of fragmented or ineffective responses to the challenges when not supported by complementary, strong higher level policies. The relevance of this local–national interaction becomes obvious when looking at the findings from Athens and Porto on combating the social exclusion of migrants. In Athens, for instance, in an environment of increasingly restricted resources, the situation of specifically vulnerable population groups has worsened dramatically over the past years. Immigrants find themselves trapped in the most precarious segments of the housing and labour market, while the absence of centralised immigration regulation on the one hand, combined with the Greek crisis on the other hand, has put enormous stress on the different immigrant population groups (see Kandyliis et al., 2013). Looking at the case of Porto, the situation and position of migrant

populations seem different. The fiscal crisis and austerity policies have had a severe, though less dramatic impact on migrant populations there, cushioned by central state integration policies in combination with local institutions specifically targeting migrant population. For instance, a ‘National Centre for the Support of Immigrants’ (Centros Nacionais de Apoio ao Imigrante) in Porto acts as a one-stop agency responding to the different needs of migrant population and is highly effective in overcoming departmentalised action (see Ramos Lobato, 2013).

In conclusion, local systems may prove to be effective in mitigating the wider national or international processes leading to social exclusion at local level, for example through interdepartmental cooperation allowing integrated policy approaches. However, their effectiveness is also dependent on a coherent wider policy framework. Immigrant rights, for instance, are nationally or centrally regulated, with the result that local initiatives may have limited impact on deprivation and exclusion when not embedded in a multi-level approach focusing on the underlying structural causes.

### *Individual and household characteristics as ‘risk factors’*

Depending on the context, the case studies identify different social groups which seem specifically vulnerable to the risk of social exclusion. Some of the most relevant factors or combinations of factors (by no means an exhaustive list) influencing the risk seem to be: immigration background, lack of access to legal citizenship and thus lacking access to the receiving society’s social institutions; belonging to a discriminated ethnic minority; young people in the context of a structurally weak labour market; old age in combination with health problems or social isolation in a sparsely populated area. In some cases, a single risk factor

may go along with a high risk of social exclusion, such as in the case of the highly stigmatised Roma population in Banská Bystrica and Nógrad (see Kovács et al., 2013). Both cases show how the interlinkage of material and non-material deprivation, rooted in discrimination and stigmatisation, lead to an intergenerational transmittance of disadvantage. Most often, it is the overlapping of different risk factors in a given local context that underlies social exclusion processes. While it is possible to identify single risk factors such as unemployment, these however do not automatically generate social exclusion. Other factors such as welfare state provisions or the locally specific service delivery also play a role. Even living in a remote area with a physical handicap and low income does not necessarily lead to social exclusion, as this is also dependent on the availability and organisation of local health services and support via social networks.

This context specificity is illustrated by the Finnish and Portuguese case studies, which show that being unemployed does not necessarily lead to feelings of social exclusion and stigmatisation. Both studies point to the interrelationship between individual and societal perceptions of social inclusion and exclusion. In rural Lieksa, where cyclical unemployment is historically rooted, periods of unemployment seem to be more societally accepted. Moreover, alternative 'productive activities' such as hunting and fishing or caring for elderly parents enhance feelings of inclusion and worthiness among long-term unemployed, against the background of generally comprehensive welfare state provisions (Kahila and Perjo, 2013). In areas where unemployment and precarious work affect almost an entire generation, as is the case in the Mediterranean countries at the moment, they may become a less stigmatised experience for the individual. Being embedded in strong social networks – as often exist in

rural regions and in familial welfare regime countries – seems to help prevent social isolation and thus to increase social well-being.

I do feel protected because fortunately I can rely on my parents and my friends. They make me feel protected. [...] I can see that there are a lot of people in the same situation. But if we did not help and support each other, perhaps we would be lost at this time. What helps us a lot is that we are all together. We are in the same boat and can help each other. (Young unemployed, Porto, as cited in Ramos Lobato (2013: 35))

Nevertheless, the absence of state support and uncertain perspectives lead to frustration and resignation among young unemployed people in Porto. There are also signs of an increased fragility of family networks in times of crisis, which is a worrying tendency in the context of a familial welfare regime with low levels of state redistribution. The Greek case shows that, due to material insecurity and anxiety during the crisis, mental health problems and suicides have increased rapidly throughout the last years (Kandyliis et al., 2013: 29).

Our findings thus support the relevance of a social exclusion concept that includes the different spheres of living of the socially excluded, in contrast to concepts of poverty based solely on income data. Rather than relying on income or employment data, we need to take into account the position of individuals in relation to various relevant institutions, resources and goods, and to combine (place-specific) external and internal perceptions in the analysis of social exclusion processes.

### *The immediate living environment and territorial characteristics*

Where one lives may increase the risk of social exclusion over and above individual characteristics, for instance due to the

stigmatisation of an area and its inhabitants. This is particularly evident for highly stigmatised ethnic minorities. In the case of the Roma population, stigmatisation, miserable housing conditions, deprived living environments and school segregation are all factors contributing to the inter-generational transmission of disadvantage (Kovács et al., 2013). In Porto, it is the high concentration of disadvantage in social housing districts, in combination with an area's stigmatisation, which is felt to be a factor influencing the social exclusion of inhabitants (Ramos Lobato, 2013). Stigmatisation plays a deteriorative role by influencing people's perceptions of their moral worth and exacerbating psychological distress (Reutter et al., 2009).

Housing policies have played a major role in the development of segregated, stigmatised housing areas, as the example of Porto shows, but also of Botkyrka, where the system of housing provision and urban planning played a key role in causing today's patterns of segregation (see Dymén and Reardon, 2013). The Botkyrka case study points on the one hand to an inter-relationship between relatively high levels of socio-economic and ethnic residential segregation and unequal access to the labour market, education or healthcare. On the other hand, it also shows that local social networks and resources in segregated areas might stimulate mutual support, which can be crucial particularly for newly arrived immigrants to overcome situations of social exclusion (Light, 1984; Zhou, 1992). At the same time, 'low levels of segregation [...] are not necessarily synonymous with prosperity and social inclusion' (Kandylis et al., 2013: 22), as the Athens case shows. There is thus no linear relationship between segregation levels and social exclusion.

Living in a remote or sparsely populated area may also aggravate individual situations of social exclusion due to geographical distance and the accessibility of services.

We find particular evidence for this in the two cases of Albacete/La Manchuela and the Western Isles. Here, the impacts of the financial and economic crisis, the dismantling of welfare services and poor public transport exacerbate access to relevant resources and institutions for specific population groups.

In Castilla-La Mancha's 800-odd municipalities, nearly 900 or so, maybe 85% of municipalities have no Senior Centres, and there are very small villages full of old people. And these people do not have access to the resources. (Local expert, La Manchuela, as cited in De Lima (2014: 34))

If you are a young adult trying perhaps to look for work etc., sometimes it is not always so easy for you. You must have access to a phone, hopefully a computer as well, so you can fire off your CV's and you occasionally will have to travel. Now either you will have to have a car if you live in a rural area, because buses, good as they are, aren't fantastic. (Local expert, Western Isles, as cited in De Lima and Copus (2014: 37)).

Access has not just a spatial, but also socio-cultural dimension. While services might be available at close distance, their accessibility might be hindered by social control or local norms on accepted forms of poverty and the 'undeserving' poor. Not claiming benefits for fear of stigmatisation or self-exclusion from public services is particularly prevalent in small local communities. Here, the close-knit nature of the community and a strong kind of work ethic may influence the behaviour of people living in poverty by denying its presence and confining poverty into private spheres (Milbourne, 2014: 576). This is evidenced by the following statement.

I think that with this generation there has always been this sort of work ethic, and, you know they have always viewed anyone that is not working as lazy. And anyone

that is on benefits or is in a council house, they are looked on as they are not working and, they are just playing the system. (Local expert, Western Isles, as cited in De Lima and Copus (2014: 29)).

While territorial characteristics influencing access obviously only play a minor role in urban areas, socio-cultural perceptions and barriers likewise shape aspirations and expectations of what is accessible or not. For instance, access to good schools is less dependent on whether the school is accessible in geographic terms, but rather on educational mechanisms reproducing social inequality. These mechanisms work in rather intricate and context-dependent ways and aggravate situations of poverty and social exclusion, over and above individual risk factors. The (lacking) availability and quality of local institutions in particular places, geographical and/or socio-cultural barriers in accessing relevant services and institutions, the stigmatisation of small-scale geographies of disadvantage, routines and perceptions of local institutions, etc. may all play a role in it. Place-specific measures to improve the quality of life in particular places thus need a coherent view of locally specific patterns of exclusion and the underlying mechanisms generating and reproducing disadvantage.

### **Summarising findings and pointing to policy challenges**

Our paper has focused on both wider generative mechanisms and place-specific factors influencing social exclusion processes. Wider generative mechanisms follow no easy or predictable logic and have no uniform implications across localities. Variations can be attributed to place-specific intervening factors such as historical patterns of structural unemployment, the role of the housing market, territorial settings, local welfare provisions or societal

perceptions. Table 2 summarises the main findings of our analysis.

Economic restructuring, deregulation and the casualisation of employment are common trends across Europe, but within the context of the financial and economic crisis they have had a particularly strong impact within individualistic or familialistic welfare regimes, where a weak labour market, strained family resources and state austerity policies have led to new groups at risk of social exclusion. Influencing factors are a city's or region's position within a hierarchically organised system of space (Pratschke and Morlicchio, 2012: 1897; Thompson et al., 2014: 66), locally specific economic development paths and national and local welfare systems shaping individuals' entitlement to protection schemes and mitigating territorial inequalities.

On the one hand, effective public policies can alleviate negative effects of the employment or housing market by providing social security benefits and access to housing for low-income groups (Pratschke and Morlicchio, 2012: 1900). On the other hand, local patterns of disadvantage – such as the level and impact of residential or school segregation – are not necessarily linked with specific redistribution regimes. The cases point to the role of coherence in the interaction of national and local/regional policies as an intervening factor explaining differences in combating social exclusion (of migrants, in the case of Porto and Athens).

Regarding individual risk factors there is no straightforward link between single risk factors, such as unemployment, and social well-being (see also Lorenzini and Giugni, 2011). Intervening factors are the social support provided by friends and family, the organisation of national and local welfare services, social networks and public infrastructure and services. The cases also indicate that place-specific experiences and perceptions, for instance in dealing with

**Table 2.** Generative mechanisms, main findings and intervening factors.

Generative mechanisms	Local patterns	Intervening factors
<b>Economy, labour market and impact of the crisis</b>		
<b>Connections</b>	<p>Relevance of formal paid work for social integration (relevant for most of the case studies)</p> <p>Difficult access to labour market for the low qualified (relevant for most of the case studies)</p> <p>Precarious employment as a widespread trend (relevant for most of the case studies)</p>	<p>Cities' or regions' position (process of marginalisation and centralisation)</p> <p>Nationally/regionally specific labour market opportunities and regulations</p> <p>State of the economy increases or reduces the crisis impact</p> <p>Ameliorative state interventions</p>
<b>Disconnections</b>	<p>Uneven impact of the crisis (at individual and national level)</p> <p>Pre-existing disadvantage and imbalances are accentuated by the crisis</p> <p>New risk groups (young and well qualified, middle class) in less comprehensive welfare states, where vulnerability to social exclusion is intensified by austerity policies, a weak labour market and strained family resources (see case studies Athens, La Manchuela, Porto)</p> <p>Growing prejudice and hostility against migrants (see case studies Athens, Dortmund, La Manchuela)</p>	
<b>National and local policy environment</b>		
<b>Connections</b>	<p>Specific welfare regimes go along with specific forms of state redistribution and decommodification, resulting in particular forms of protection or vulnerability of population groups</p> <p>Shifting welfare principles leading to precariousness of state provision (see case studies Athens, La Manchuela, Porto)</p>	<p>Housing market</p> <p>Housing and education policies</p> <p>Interrelationship (coherence/fragmentation) between local level policies and wider policy framework</p>
<b>Disconnections</b>	<p>No automatic linkage between local social exclusion patterns and specific redistribution regimes (see case studies Botkyrka, Dortmund)</p> <p>Effectiveness of local policies in combating social exclusion (of migrants) partly dependent on coherence between local and national policies (see case studies Athens, Porto)</p>	

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Generative mechanisms	Local patterns	Intervening factors
<b>Individual and household characteristics</b>		
<b>Connections</b>	Vulnerability of particular social groups (relevant for most of the case studies)	Social networks of affected individuals
<b>Disconnections</b>	Single risk factors do not necessarily lead to feelings of social exclusion (see case studies Lieksa, Porto) Context-specific link between individual and societal perceptions of exclusion (see Lieksa, Porto, Western Isles)	Organisation of (local) welfare services, public infrastructure Place-specific societal perceptions of unemployment or poverty
<b>Immediate living environment</b>		
<b>Connections</b>	Geographical barriers and difficult access to services can aggravate individual situations of social exclusion (see case studies Banská Bystrica, La Manchuela, Lieksa, Western Isles) Lacking availability and quality of local institutions, such as schools (see case studies Banská Bystrica, La Manchuela, Lieksa, Nógrád, Western Isles) Stigmatisation and segregation of specific neighbourhoods contributing to intergenerational transmission of disadvantage (see case studies Athens, Banská Bystrica, Nógrád, Porto)	Organisation of public services Area-based interventions in disadvantaged localities
<b>Disconnections</b>	Locally embedded social networks can help to overcome situations of poverty and social exclusion (see case studies Athens, Lieksa, Porto) Low levels of segregation not synonymous with social exclusion (see case study Athens) Socio-cultural dimension of access (see case studies Dortmund, Western Isles)	

cyclical unemployment (see the case of Lieksa), play a role in reducing or enhancing individual perceptions of social exclusion. Due to the cumulative and multidimensional nature of social exclusion processes, measuring single indicators related to such spheres as employment or income can only reveal a certain risk of social exclusion. Social exclusion always stems from a combination of factors in

various dimensions increasing people's vulnerability. To measure social exclusion and poverty, external and internal perspectives, statistics and surveys are thus needed.

Our findings show that locality may have an influence on individual opportunities for social inclusion, though are dependent on the interaction of different mechanisms in a given locality and with differing impacts on different population groups. Space can



thus be a driver of social exclusion as well as a factor alleviating situations of poverty and social exclusion. Case study findings show that spatial effects may work at a symbolic level (such as the stigmatisation of an area due to the low quality of housing estates, see Porto), at a social level (segregation hindering social contacts with resourceful population groups, see Botkyrka) or at an institutional level (quality of infrastructure and services in a given area, see Manchuela). Living in a remote or sparsely populated area may thus indeed intensify individual experiences of social exclusion when coinciding with lacking or low-quality public services, scarce public transport and higher living costs. Similarly, living in a segregated urban area may aggravate individual situations of social exclusion, though not necessarily. Social relations to family members or a wider social network and the way public services are organised may help to overcome or alleviate situations of stress.

Place-specific patterns call for place-specific responses. Cities and regions play a decisive role in combating social exclusion as they are an important strategic arena for developing targeted responses, in the form of integrative policies, labour market schemes, anti-discrimination policies or social services. Area-based regeneration programmes, for instance, allow an integrated approach towards improving the quality of life, in particular in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The effectiveness of any local-level response is of course dependent on supportive policies at higher levels.

One important finding of our study is that, though the factors discussed above serve as a frame for analysis, more attention needs to be given to the ways and mechanisms in which these factors are being transformed and restructured in relation to wider processes. As regards these wider processes, various supra-national trends are of importance, such as the progress of neoliberal

policies (retrenchment of welfare states, etc.), the restructuring of the labour market (casualisation of employment, etc.), austerity policies linked to the financial and economic crisis, a widening gap between those with and without resources (polarisation of income, etc.). Geographies of social exclusion need to be reflected within these wider trends. Thompson et al. (2014: 66) state: 'It is important to remember that marginal places are not necessarily geographically peripheral; rather, they are placed on the margins of the hierarchically organised cultural systems of space'.

Categories such as 'rural' or 'urban' are of limited help in explaining contemporary patterns across territories, given the considerable differences within these geographic categories. The challenges in old-industrialised urban areas, for instance, are quite different to those in well-connected, booming metropolitan regions. Though there are specifically 'rural' and specifically 'urban' challenges, there are also common ones linked to the relative marginality and centrality of urban or rural areas rather than their geographic position. Even infrastructurally well-connected urban areas may become marginal in terms of political or economic dependency, stigmatisation or disconnection from the central cores of innovation and agenda-setting processes. Similarly, rural and remote areas are not automatically peripheral from this perspective, but become so when geographic peripherality overlaps with infrastructural, socio-economic and political marginality, i.e. poor accessibility and a lack of resources to influence local situations and make best use of local potential.

The character and nature of marginal and central areas, in this wider sense, has been continuously changing in the last years, as has the political frame for dealing with such. The economic and financial crisis and the political reactions to it, for instance, have had wide-ranging and spatially very

selective repercussions on localities and regions and have created new peripheries. In the localities most affected, prejudice and hostility towards stigmatised groups, immigrants or migrant workers have increased (Athens, Manchuela, Nógrád). Mobile, young and well-qualified population groups are leaving the peripheral areas in search of better employment prospects in the more 'central' (in terms of economically successful and well-connected) areas.

Recent years have seen a remarkable shift in policies towards strengthening growth regions, within a discursive frame of metropolitan regions as centres for growth and innovation. Local infrastructure and services are often felt to be slowly deteriorating in the non-metropolitan areas. Austerity measures, often related to the financial crisis, are taking an additional toll over and above 'old' patterns of intra- and interregional territorial polarisation and the increasing attractiveness of some metropolitan regions. Intra-EU mobility statistically still only plays a minor role compared to intra-national or intra-regional mobility and is socially selective. Our cases (Porto, Manchuela, Dortmund, Athens) show that such migrants, though few in numbers, nevertheless may raise substantial policy challenges in the home and receiving localities. The questions of how to respond to these new peripheries (and centralities) and how to deal with increased inner-regional disparities are two of the most challenging ones in dealing with social exclusion in Europe, especially as social cohesion has always been at the heart of the European unification process.

Concluding, a policy focus needs to be put on combating the perpetuation of inter-regional disparities, linked to the marginality of regions and localities in terms of political or economic dependency, or disconnection from the central cores of innovation and agenda-setting processes. Promoting territorial solidarity and preventing regional

divide are important, and the territorial trends discussed above need to be given more attention within the EU 2020 monitoring of poverty and social exclusion.

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### Note

1. For information on the individual case studies see: [www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Projects/Menu\\_AppliedResearch/tipse.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/tipse.html) (accessed 12 August 2015).

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