

Gabor Hera – The process of social exclusion – One page summary

The focus of the dissertation is the phenomenon of social exclusion. Although, the term itself is widespread but thorough investigation reveals that the concept is often used in different ways at different times and at different locations. In order to clarify this diversity of approaches and definitions, the author firstly describes the routes and the core elements of the concept.

As the following chapter introduces, the definition and aspects of social exclusion provide an excellent framework for interpreting processes at the macro level and describing the situation of disadvantaged groups within the society, e.g. the Roma minority in Hungary. However, the author underlines the importance of the micro level, where groups are formed and group-members communicate and interact with each other in their everyday life. Thereby, the next chapter describes the situation of the Roma minority in a Hungarian village. The profound analysis reveals the everyday life and conflicts of the villagers, the manifestations of social exclusion and the motives behind rejection. At the end of this chapter, the author concludes that the conflicts between the local Roma and non-Roma are not (solely) interethnic. The real underlying reason for conflicts are the clashes of the powerful groups of interests in the village. In addition, Hera even points at the local conflicts that were considered risky to talk about and emphasise that lack of open communication often leads to stereotyping and thus intensifies the process of social exclusion.

The following section introduces the way social exclusion emerges in the community of social scientists in Hungary. The prevailing norms of the community that were violated by a young researcher are firstly outlined. The author also provides an overview of a research report that led to an intense debate and introduces critics representing the “guards” of the established science and the defence of the “separatist” researchers. The consequences of the debate are also elaborated. The case study reveals that opposition of different groups can lead to exclusion due to the phenomenon of in-group favouritism. In addition, the author points even at the role of the negative emotions that arose due to the intense debate resulting in stronger anti-outgroup reactions. Finally, it is emphasised that exclusion can emerge, even as deviation is often interpreted as a violation that invites punishment; deviants are frequently isolated in order to clarify and strengthen the values of the in-group.

The case studies support the understanding of the importance of the micro level and identifying some important factors that contribute to the emergence of social exclusion. In addition, the second case study even helps to describe science as a practice that is not organised by objective, independent and neutral researchers but a social activity that is operated by human actors who are influenced by norms, personal biases and emotional involvement.

At the end of the dissertation, the author identifies some possible questions and directions with regard to further research work.