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The established and the outsiders : aspects of inclusion and exclusion

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The Established and the Outsiders
- Aspects of inclusion and exclusion

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In current debate a number of terms are used to describe the positions of different groups and individuals, eg. deviation, marginalisation, segregation, integration, inclusion and exclusion. The terminology aids us in giving everyday life a manageable structure and meaning, but it also work as a tool of stigma and to keep large groups outside society, not least in research agendas. By using the terminology as structuring devices and analytical categories to describe and understand processes of exclusion do we add, although not purposely, to the formulation of the boundaries of exclusion.

To understand these processes it is necessary to begin within us. By viewing our own position and behaviour it will soon be obvious that it is about *Us and Them*. Norbert Elias and John L Scotson have in a very illustrative way described how it works in their study - *Established and Outsiders* (1965).

Winston Parva

Elias & Scotson studied in the beginning of the 1960's a suburban area in the outskirts of a large and wealthy industrial town in central England. They called it Winston Parva (WP). WP had a population of less than 5000, but had its own industries, schools, churches, shops and clubs. Elias & Scotson were able to categorize WP in to three areas:

Zone 1. A middle class area
Zone 2. A working class area (most of the industries were established here)
Zone 3. A working class area

One single contractor built WP during the 1880's. The first area built was zone 2. During the 1930's and 40's zone 1 was built as a residential district with detached houses. People with the opportunity

and high enough income moved in to zone 1, which became an area for them better off. Zone 3 was built later and on land earlier disqualified. It was claimed to be wetlands and the haunt of rats. The apartments stood empty for a long while despite low rents. It was first when an Army camp and a military industrial complex were established the zone was inhabited. Quickly an "Us and Them" relationship was realised between the established in zone 1 and 2 and the newcomers in zone 3.

Design and analysis

Elias & Scotson searched answers to why this segregation had occurred and what function it had. Initially they studied demographic and social factors as class, income, work and origin of the population. However, they did only find minor differences between zone 2 and 3. The major differences were between zone 1 and 2.

The analysis of quantitative data did not give any satisfactory explanation to why zone 2 and 3 appeared so different. They had, as the quantitative analysis clarified, a similar social structure seen through socioeconomic and class factors. According to Elias & Scotson an answer had to be found elsewhere. Their new hypothesis focused on the necessity of studying the groups' contact and confrontation, as well as what barriers and conflicts arose when two earlier independent groups became dependent on each other. Or as Elias phrased it - those figurations arising when cultures and values meet.

The fulfilled qualitative study, based on interviews with every 30th household in the voting roster, voluntary organizations and a youth club, did not produce an acceptable basis for an explanation of the antagonism between the zones.

Elias & Scotson's conclusions were therefor that it was possible to analyse and compare areas as these three using historical, economical, cultural, political, religious and administrative variables. However, such an analysis would not provide a complete explanation of inclusion and exclusion, as well as of the existing process of marginalisation. As Elias & Scotson found there were no significant differences between zone 2 and 3. The explanation rather had to be looked for in the relationships between the inhabitants in the areas, ie. how people established relations over life when they played, went to school, worked, did business, worshipped or had an enjoyable time together. The most elementary forms of social life, they argued,

develop mutual dependency and constitute the basis for the existence and formation of society (a societal contract).

> What matters is the recognition that the types of interdependencies, of structures and functions, to be found in residential groups of home-making families with a degree of permanence raise certain problems of their own and that the clarification of these problems is central for the understanding of specific character of a community qua community. (E & S, p.147)
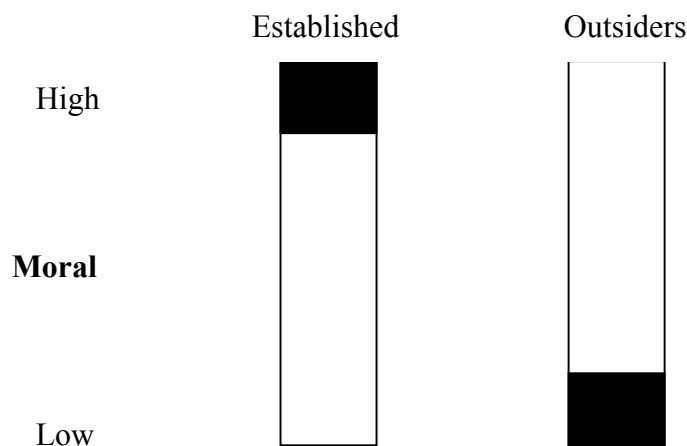
A central theme described by Elias & Scotson concerns differing attached values of the families and their members in networks of the kind. Expressions as better, worse, nice, weird, connected to their capabilities of adapting and following existing values and norms, ie. the rank of families and status in the society. At the top of the hierarchy they found those with a long history in the community. The conflict was one mainly between old and new groups. Old must not be understood as biological age, but as ”a unique social position and superiority.”

This power structure can only survive if it is transferred from generation to generation and if the sources of power are monopolized, ie. kept out of other groups' reach. Elias & Scotson called it ”monopolized transfer of specific abilities”, as connected to common taboos and norms of conduct that separates better groups/individuals from worse.

In their analysis Elias & Scotson found three patterns that strengthened segregation and maintained the societal structure. First what they called ”the old mother centred family” in which the village elite was reproduced. Second that local clubs and family networks played an important role. And third that gossip had an important function in establishing and supporting social order. They mentioned gossip centres and how cliché-based judgements, condemnation and discrimination of ”them”, while praising and promoting ”us”, continuously fed the existing order. The gossip had both an integrating and a segregating effect and contributed to the development of group charisma and collective shame. The situation created a configuration that none longer could control, it was shaped collectively by superiority – subordination, collective shame – group charisma, or in other words internalised behaviour.

Elias & Scotson's conclusion was that the image the established, the powerful and ruling segments of the community, had about

themselves and mediated to others had a tendency to be based on the most excellent part of an idealised group. On the other hand, the image of the others, the outsiders, with relatively less power, had a tendency to be based on those worse off, whose characters were negatively enhanced. Members of the established partition that fell outside the frame, "black sheep", had a tendency of being expelled or excluded. However, this figuration was not a static situation, but a continuous dynamic process.

Established   Outsiders

High

Moral

Low

Taken from preface by Gunnar Olofsson in Elias & Scotson (1999) p. xiii

Conclusions

Elias & Scotson argue that their analysis is applicable on all levels. It may be used for analyses of small local communities and work places, as well as for regions, nations and global systems. In many societies, processes of the kind, of inclusion and exclusion, focus on views of sexuality, religion, and class- and ethnic belonging. Particularly clear are these processes when;

> Confronted with the difficulties of a highly mobile and quickly changing world one is apt to seek refuge in the image of a social order which newer changes and projects it to a past that newer was. (E & S, p.160)

First when a "rational figurative analysis" of existing figurations' nature and structure is done it is possible to understand and control exclusion and inclusion processes.

Processes of exclusion and inclusion are relational

Exclusion and inclusion and discourses of marginalisation relate to space and boundaries of normality. These boundaries are either social, spatial or symbolic, or a mix of them all. The fixation of the boundaries is a process of ongoing discussions and rearrangements. A boundary does not need to be real, ie. it has no actual content or focus (Tuula Helne, 2001). In the transition to a post-modern global society there is a tendency of a blur shaping or description of its boundaries, such as the global village (Mcluhan, 1967) and the multi- or trans-cultural society.

Values in the post-modern society have also become more relative and thus made it hard to capture what is normal and what is deviant and different. Definitions of normality are losing their sharp edge. Discussions on marginalisation can, in this perspective, be seen as a structuring and integration crisis.

Social exclusion and inclusion must be understood as dynamic processes evolving over time. These processes are relational, ie. they can only occur as a consequence of individuals or groups meeting. Outsiders are not excluded in any absolute sense; hence a term as "social exclusion" is problematic to use. Outsiders are always related to other individuals and to society. The established and the outsiders live in symbiosis, based in a figuration of power and dependency, ruled by social interaction and by the structures of society.

Our terminology for understanding this process is far from complete and in need of constant review. According to Ulrich Beck (1998), for example, we need to adapt our terminology to fit a more unbound, less integrated and pluralistic world: a new global sociology.

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