

EXCLUDED FROM **WHAT?**

Voices of Italian young people **NEET**



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The aim of this presentation is to understand some aspects of the **concept of “SOCIAL EXCLUSION”** in reference to young people who are *Not in Education, Employment or Training*.

Contents:

- (Short) introduction to the NEET category;
- Concept of “social exclusion”;
- Examples of young men NEET (from the Italian context);
- Conclusions.

YOUNG PEOPLE “NEET”

(Not in Education, Employment or Training)

“NEET” category from UK > to Italy (recent use)

Italy is one of the European countries where the “NEET-phenomenon” is more accentuated > Year 2012: Italy: 23.9%; UE27 average: 15.9%.

NEET - STATISTICAL definition: young people between 15 and 29 years of age that during the reference week are not employed; and had not attended educational or professional training courses in the four weeks that precede the interview.

In a single measure, the “NEET” category summarizes the youth population *Not in Education, Employment or Training*, for which the transition to adulthood could be problematic.

BUT: 2 main problems with the use of the NEET category in social policy:

- it is based on a short period of time (1 month) and it has not a strong explanatory power, especially in periods of economic recession when a lot of young people spend a period of 1 month without work.
- it is very *heterogeneous*: it captures different and complex conditions (ex. unemployed, young disabled, housewives etc.).

NEET category includes 3 different groups in reference to the individual status in the labour market [Istat def.]:

1) UNEMPLOYED

They are looking for work
They are available for work

2) INACTIVE - “GRAY ZONE”

They are not looking for work
They are available for work

3) INACTIVE

They are not looking for work
They are not available for work



The “NEET category” should rely to the availability for work, and not to job search activities → **it should take account of individual intentions** (sub-categories 1 and 2)

This presentation is based on interviews on young men NEET:

- 25-30 years old;
- at least 6 months of time outside the education-labour system;
- living in Milan area.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “SOCIAL EXCLUSION”?

In the past: unemployment had meaning in a context of expansion of unskilled or semi-skilled industrial work.

In contemporary societies: unemployment, poverty and exclusion are distinct and historically specific realities. They were born in the light of a period of collective upward mobility, well-being, wealth, welfare state.

The term "exclusion" had no meaning in a highly stratified society, because the exclusion presupposes a shared understanding of what it means “being socially included”.

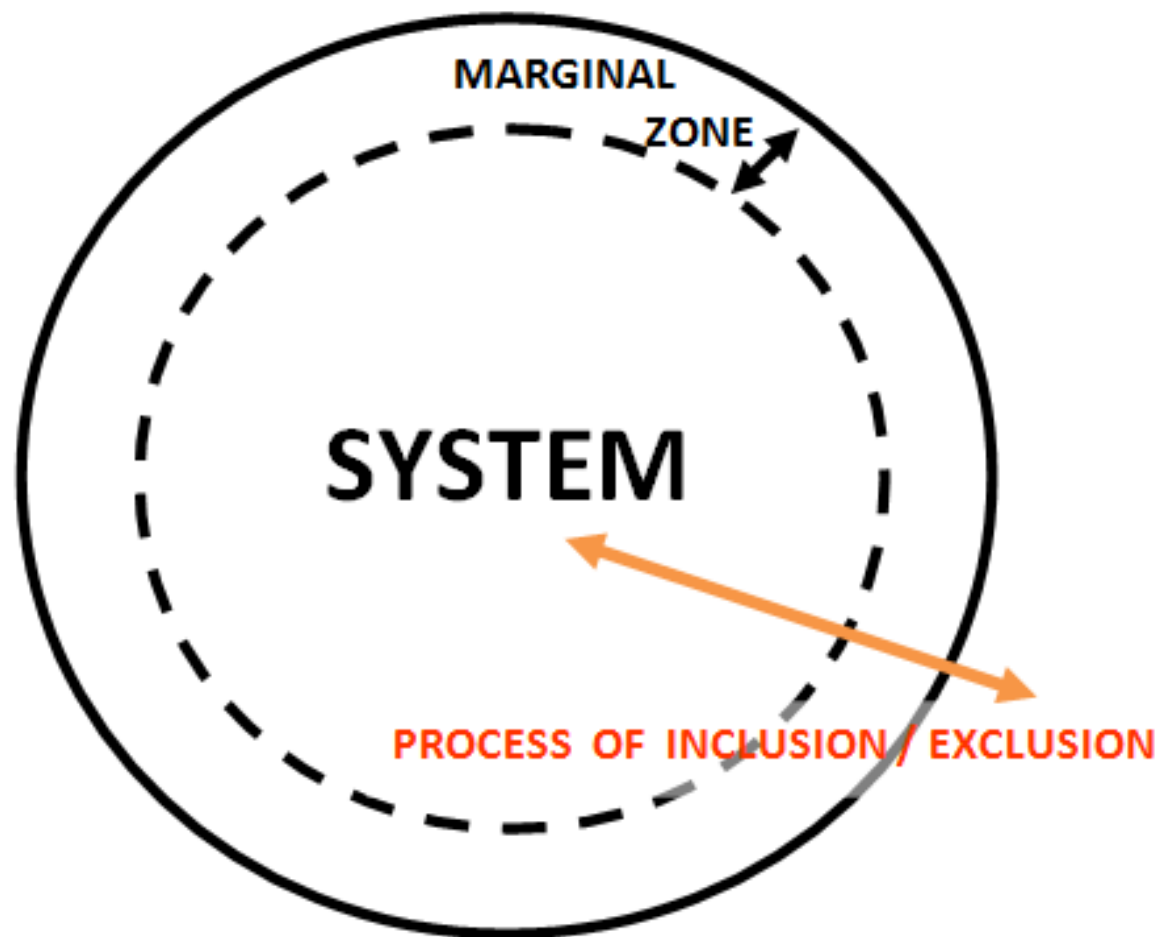
The historical and institutional context determines who may be affected by processes of marginalization and exclusion in the labor market, and in what way.

The concept of “social exclusion” not only refers to the characteristics of the people, but also to the actors and institutions that are responsible for determining exclusion.

→ It emphasizes an inside-outside dualism.

Inclusion, marginality and exclusion should be analyzed in relation to a specific social system.

The distinction between inclusion and exclusion presupposes a separation between system and environment, and a (possible) movement in and out of the system.



Exclusion from the labour market may result in social exclusion only in combination with the exclusion from (one or more) other dimensions of social life.

Exclusion
FROM the
LABOUR
MARKET

+

ECONOMIC exclusion

CULTURAL exclusion (from the possibility of living according to dominant and socially recognized models and values)

SOCIAL ISOLATION (extention and quality of social relations)

SPATIAL exclusion

INSTITUTIONAL exclusion (ex. from the institutions that manage situations of unemployment and poverty; the restriction of public and private services for poor people)

These dimensions affect the consequences and the individual perception of “exclusion”.

HOWEVER...

We have to consider that "SOCIAL EXCLUSION" is an ambiguous term, created by insiders of a "formal" system (ex. policy makers).

This notion receives meaning in reference to its opposite: the normative conception of what it means to belong to and participate in society.

The definition of this concept strongly influences the sense of legitimacy of people's requests, of what they can rightly expect, and the identification of who (or what) is responsible for social sufferings.

Example n. 1 - LUIGI: unemployed

“ I'm 29 years old and I have not yet achieved anything in life [*laughter*]... I'm in a situation of "deadlock"... I think I have untapped potential... I have a degree with honours, I want to be active and involved, and so on, but I lack of way out and I lack opportunities... Every day I hope to have a turning point but... nothing ever happens... so it's really an uncertain situation... a complete standstill... ”

“ I'm dealing with the difficulties of the labor market and, month after month, my aspirations change... now I have to send my CV and apply for jobs I didn't want to do before ”

“ I try to be active in the area that interest me: music is my passion and I try to express myself... I play in a band... I try to achieve more in this sphere... I try to live but not according to the canons of work, family, etc... I'm doing the thing I like to do... I try to express the part of me that is not productive for the market nor is profitable... ”

“ Who is Alberto? ... I don't know ... a boy in search of his way... a boy who is trying to find his way, his position in society... what he could do... what he will do... The question is difficult... ”

Example n. 2 - CARLO: inactive-“gray zone”

“ After the high school I promised my mother I would have 1 sabbatical year, then I've had 9... When I was eighteen my mother passed to me the legacy that my father left to me (he died when I was two years old). After that, only party! I've not worked for 9 years, and it's too late now... I never had a “real” job, except occasional DJ work. ”

“ Not-working means not supporting those who exploits you! Working does not satisfy me, but now I don't have money, and I'm forced to find a job... I'm not looking for work, but I need to work. I reduced my spending... I still have some money, but not a lot... [laughs] ”

“ I wake up around 1pm... then I'm on Facebook... I eat something... I go out or I wait until my friends stop working and we go to the gym around 5.30pm. I go back, I wash myself, I eat... then another hour, or two, on Facebook... and then I go out for a couple of hours... when I come home I watch films or tv series... and I sleep at least 10 hours a night... ”

Do you feel like a young man who "does nothing"?

“ Yes, but I also feel in the right in doing so. I'm interested in many things, like freemasonry, banks, mafia-State negotiations... and I know things that maybe a graduate or working person doesn't know! Doing-nothing doesn't mean that you're less useful to the community! Many people go to work, come back, listen to the news, and believe they're living a full life... are happy, and that's a problem! I'm surely doing something useful, for example I publish documentaries on Facebook: I feel I'm doing more than people who live an imposed life... ”

[28 years old / high school qualification / 9 years NEET]

Example n. 3 - ANTONIO: irregular worker

“ I’m “formally” unemployed for the Italian State, for 3 years. Initially it was a choice because I could not bear the costs of VAT... Then I realized that, in my case, be “regular” would be an obstacle, because I provide advices and products for my clients and I’m not in a well-defined category of workers, I’m not fully classifiable for the State. To be completely “in order”, I had to face a tax regime that didn't allow me to survive [...]. In this “tax fugitive” situation there is always something to invent to avoid being caught! ”

How do you sell your products and services without VAT?

“ There is a limit of € 5,000 a year that I can sell without an income tax return... then, you have to add up the clients who don't want the invoice and pay me in black money... and when clients request the invoice and I have already breached the roof of € 5,000, other people bill the services that I sell: I have friends with a job similar to mine, and we write the invoice in a vague way, in order to be accepted by their accountant... ”

“ I don’t know what it means having a “formal” job... In the past, I were “regular” only for short periods of time... ”

“ I rent and share a house with another boy, and also with my girlfriend [...] I don't receive assistance or help from my family. It’s the opposite: sometimes I economically help my mother, while my father never needed me... I individually pay everything: car, rent, bills... ”

CONCLUSIONS

“Excluded” people are not a class of poor (underclass).

The only thing people excluded have in common is a lack of integration with the “formal” institutions and ways of life.

If we analyze the individual paths, the statistical classifications of "socially excluded" and “Young NEET” are not adequate to the understanding of the world of the "excluded" people.

“NEET” is a static policy category, which is unable to capture the dynamism of contemporary youth transitions.

One must pay attention in defining a person as "socially excluded", and we always have to ask "*excluded from what?*".

In real-life situations, individuals are more or less included, marginal or excluded. Equating “formal” work participation with inclusion and non-participation with exclusion is not correct.

Whether exclusion from the labor market also lead to social exclusion depends on the social alternatives people have outside the "formal" activities and the socially legitimized ways of life, and on the (economic, social, identitary...) strategies they use to live, “survive” and define themselves.

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