

Inequality, power and injustice in rural areas: beyond social exclusion?

Mark Shucksmith
Newcastle University, UK

1. Introduction

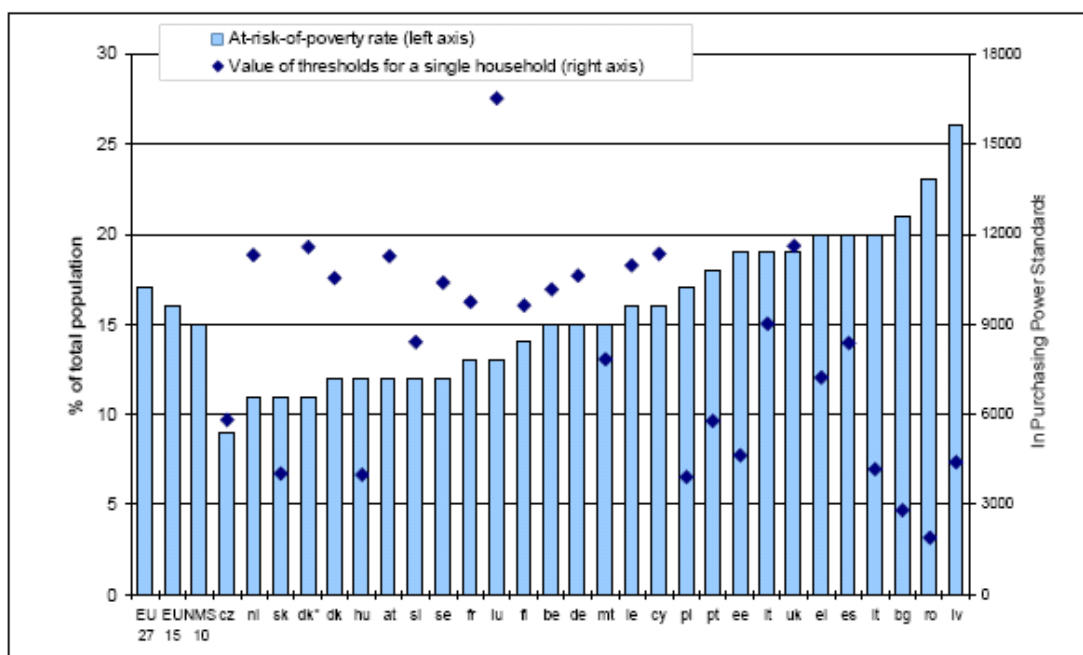
As inequalities widen across Europe, rural sociologists may return to researching the causes and experiences of inequality, poverty and injustice encountered in rural areas of Europe. This paper reviews approaches to the study of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in rural areas and seeks to relate these to new directions in class analysis and to ideas of place and hyper-mobility. While illustrating the argument with examples drawn from the UK, the paper is primarily conceptual, suggesting a new research agenda on class and inequality in rural areas.

Poverty and inequality have been concerns of social scientists for over a century. In the Nineteenth Century in the UK, as elsewhere in Europe, new social statistical analyses challenged the widespread assumption that poverty was self-inflicted, initially by revealing the role of unsanitary neighbourhood conditions in spreading disease and exacerbating poverty conditions, leading to a series of Public Health Acts from 1848, which addressed important structural causes of ill health and poverty. Statistics and quantitative analysis were also the foundation for the pioneering reports of Booth (1889-1903) and Rowntree (1901) who assembled empirical evidence of the causes of poverty. Each concluded that poverty was pronounced, and that the major cause of poverty was not individual weakness but rather “the adverse conditions under which so many of the working class live” (Rowntree 1901), including low pay, job insecurity, poor health, lack of services, poor housing and lack of education. State intervention was required, each argued, to ensure a minimum acceptable standard of living.

After the Second World War and in the wake of mass unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s, a political consensus emerged in Western Europe that poverty and unemployment were not mainly due to individual failings but were structural and systemic, and that governments could manage economies in such a way as 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-Anderson 1990, 1999). But 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 who 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 whom consequently moved in varying degrees to embrace aspects of neo-liberal policy, ‘rolling back’ their welfare state provisions, marketising what remained of the public sector, and cutting social security budgets. In Eastern Europe such changes came later as part of the post-Soviet transition.

Meanwhile, social scientists sought to understand inequality and injustice in various ways. The UN continues to use an absolute definition of poverty in terms of a failure to fulfil basic human needs. Accordingly the UN’s International Fund for Agricultural Development states that “rural poverty is practically non-existent in the EU” (IFAD 2011). However, the EU and most European countries understand poverty as a relative concept. Following Townsend (1979), people or households are defined as poor if they can not enjoy the everyday lifestyles of the majority in that society. This relative definition of poverty has been operationalised in official statistics across Europe as an income below 60% of the national median income, as shown in Figure 2.2 below.

Figure 2.2: At-risk-of-poverty rate and illustrative value of the at-risk-of-poverty thresholds (single adult household); 2008



Source: EU-SILC (2008). dk*: values including imputed rent²

In terms of understanding the causes of poverty, debates have persisted over individual-cultural explanations as against more structural, systemic explanations. Sociologists tend less towards the view that poverty is self-induced, instead preferring structural and cultural explanations, which identify capitalism itself as a source of poverty, along with social class and skill differentials, and gender, race, age and disability (Lister 2004).

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 1995), 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, 41).

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 institutionalised into the European Employment Strategy from 1997 and the National Action Plans, now National Reform Programmes. In the UK, policies targeted young people, unemployed men in areas of industrial restructuring, and deprived urban neighbourhoods through a series of 'New Deals', with employment seen as the key integrating force which would bring income, identity, self-worth and networks. Of course, such 'supply-side' measures by themselves are insufficient if demand for labour is lacking in the locality. Moreover, while employment is recognised as important to life-chances, Philip and Shucksmith (2003) have argued that a broader approach is needed since processes of exclusion extend far beyond the labour market and indeed are multi-dimensional.

The concept of social exclusion has accordingly been extended by various authors, including Commins (1993), Berghman (1995), Burchardt et al (2002), Philip and Shucksmith (2003) and Reimer (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, ie. 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, 78). 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 has viewed these four systems not only as the underlying dimensions of social exclusion but also as dimensions of individuals' and communities' capacity to act – a suggestion to which we will return later.

A small number of studies have sought to investigate processes of social exclusion in rural areas of the UK and Europe (see also Shucksmith and Schafft 2012). For example, Shucksmith and Chapman (1998), Chapman et al (1998), Phimister et al (2000a) and Shucksmith (2000a) report the results of a multi-disciplinary, mixed-method research programme from 1997-2000¹, which included analysis of longitudinal panel survey data for rural households. Milbourne (2004) has emphasised the importance of studying social exclusion in its local contexts, as evidenced in numerous case studies. Jentsch and Shucksmith (2004), Dax and Machold (2002) and Shucksmith (2004) investigated how social exclusion affects young people across rural Europe. And recently European Commission consultants reviewed the various studies they could find on poverty and social exclusion in rural areas of Europe (Bertolini et al 2010).

¹Since identification of this as a research priority by Shucksmith et al. (1997), research in the UK began to be conducted on dynamic processes, and the identification of "bridges and barriers" to exclusion and integration, through a combination of longitudinal analysis of rural households in the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), following the same randomly-selected 7,164 individuals each year between 1991-96 (Chapman et al. 1998), alongside a suite of 9 qualitative, place-based studies conducted by teams in several universities. These were funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Social exclusion remains a contested term, not only amongst academics (Levitas 1999). Some view social exclusion as a technocratic concept, originating in anti-poverty action rather than being theory-based, whereas Room (1994) argued 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, worse, 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 more sophisticated policy design without altering policy objectives (Hills 2002). Even so, substantive criticisms of the concept of social exclusion remain (Savage 2002), notably that it unduly emphasises 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 criticised for focusing on a narrow social group, so diverting attention from broader class relations underlying social inequalities (Savage 2003; Murard 2002).

Indeed, this last criticism reflects the tendency of sociologists often to leave the study of poverty and social exclusion to social policy researchers, preferring instead for sociology to focus on more theory-based issues of class, gender and ethnicity. The next section turns to these more 'sociological' perspectives on social divisions and inequalities, and to address the question of why class analysis appears to have fallen out of favour.

2. Social Divisions and Inequality: back to class?

Social divisions according to class, gender, ethnicity, religion, age and identity all influence individuals' present and future prospects – their life chances. Sociologists have viewed class relations as pre-eminent amongst these, at least until recently, and therefore as major causes of inequality. It is a paradox that while inequality is increasing (in rural areas as elsewhere) this has been accompanied by a declining interest in class amongst social scientists. Why did class fall out of favour? Might class analysis still offer insights into processes of social change and rising inequality across rural Europe?

Discussion of class necessarily begins with Marx and Weber (Wright 2003). Marx's theories of economic class, rooted in relations of production under capitalism, have been developed, revised and extended by Marxists and neo-Marxists (eg. Braverman 1974; Friedman 1977; Massey 1984) to encompass deskilling, deindustrialisation, the spatial division of labour and the emergence of the 'service class', for example. However, the observed decline of class consciousness and class identity, which are central to Marxist theories of class, has proved a fundamental stumbling block to Marxist class analysis. That is to say, a 'class in itself' is becoming less and less likely to constitute a 'class for itself'.

Weberian theories of class make no such claims about class consciousness, and so may appear more resilient. For Weber, class is a function of market power, expressed not only through labour markets but also through property markets (including housing, pension rights, shares and other property holdings). An individual's class location reflects not only their ability to generate income through employment but also their ability to generate income and wealth through the accumulative potential of property ownership, including domestic property. Shucksmith (1990a)

drew on this aspect of Weberian class analysis to suggest the central role of housing markets and property interests in social change in rural Britain, and in the unjust social outcomes which characterise rural society in the UK. He also called for research into property markets and associated class relations in other European countries.

But both Marxist and Weberian theories of class have been criticised as inadequate and reductionist, partly as a consequence of the 'cultural turn' in the social sciences, but also because of problems within class analysis itself. One criticism was that research tended to prioritise employment and occupation as the key axis of inequality, to the neglect of gender, race, ethnicity and age (Crompton 1998), and that this grew especially problematic the more society became structured around differences in consumption, rather than production. Rather than relations of production dominating a 'work-based society' ('you are what job you do'), Ransome (2005) argues that social relations of consumption now dominate contemporary affluent, consumption-based societies ('you are what you buy'). Moreover, most class analysis focused on the working class, exploring for example whether class consciousness was being eroded by workers' growing affluence. The middle-classes were problematic for class analysis, seen either as occupying a contradictory class location (eg. farmers) or, in the 1980s, as a service class which served the interests of the dominant economic class, a functionalist perspective which was largely abandoned during the 1990s (Butler and Watt 2007).

Devine and Savage (2005, 10-11) conclude that class analysis "ultimately had two major problems. First, the empirical problem... was that there was no coherent class-consciousness amongst the population," or at least among the working class. "Insofar as class-consciousness can be related to class position, this relies on an instrumentalism that sees ideas and values as linked to the interests of particular structurally defined groups. This entails a reductionism that is unable to satisfactorily account for the complexity of values and ideas in evidence." The second main problem identified by Devine and Savage (2005, 11) is that conventional class analysis "failed to resolve deep-rooted problems linked to their reliance on a subject-object dualism, and its associated binaries," leading to an impasse around structure and agency identified by Newby (1982), Marshall (1988) and Pahl (1989) as well as to a critique from proponents of the cultural turn, who emphasise the constructed nature of identities and their relational qualities.

However, the abandonment of class analysis in the face of these long-standing problems may have been premature. Savage and those working with him (see Butler and Savage 1995; Savage 2000; Savage et al 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Devine et al 2005) and Skeggs (1997) have proposed that it is possible to overcome these problems and to reinvigorate class analysis by adopting as a theoretical foundation Bourdieu's ideas of class, habitus and field. Indeed, Devine and Savage (2005, 13) claim that "Bourdieuian perspectives now command the stage" in class analysis. This is because, in contrast to Marx and Weber, Bourdieu *expects* class-consciousness to be lacking: it is the very non-recognition of the power and significance of class which leads to deep-rooted and enduring inequality. "Classes are most powerful and significant not when there are high levels of class consciousness and class identity, but when such awareness is in fact absent" (Savage 2002, 83). In addition, Bourdieu's theory of practice transcends the dualism of structure and agency inherent in earlier class analysis, while offering a more fluid, reflexive notion of class as manifested in culture, identities, lifestyles and everyday life.

Bourdieu sought to move away from a narrowly materialist conception of power and inequality by introducing the concepts of cultural capital (defined as culturally-valued taste and consumption patterns), social capital (various kinds of valued relationships with significant others) and symbolic capital (cultural capital which is further elevated through social recognition to confer prestige, legitimacy and value) alongside economic capital. Every individual has a portfolio of these various types of capital, and seeks to use these to acquire further capital and to transmit these resources inter-generationally. For Bourdieu, class has both a material element and a powerful symbolic and cultural component. Thus, "Bourdieu views class relationally and dynamically as being concerned with the ways in which individuals and groups utilise a range of resources in their dealings with others who similarly do likewise. These resources take the form of various kinds of 'capital', and it is the distribution of these capitals in social relations of power which provides the basis for the class structure in Bourdieu's work" (Butler and Watt 2007, 173).

Bourdieu proposes that individuals with similar combinations of capitals, who therefore occupy similar positions in social space, may in principle be viewed as a class. However, these are only theoretical classes, or 'classes on paper'. They only become 'real classes' once individuals identify with one another and act together collectively (Bourdieu 1992). Whether or not they form a real class, individuals who share a similar position in social space are likely to live in similar places, forming families and neighbourhoods, and "they are likely to develop similar lifestyles, outlooks, dispositions and a tacit sense of their place in the world or 'class unconsciousness'; that is, class *habitus*" (Crossley 2005, 93).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is central to his theory of practice. Habitus invokes a process of socialisation whereby the dominant modes of thought and experience inherent in the life-world are internalised by individuals, especially in their early years but also through their continuing experiences and social interactions. It is "an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted" (Bourdieu, 1977, 95). Moreover, habitus is not only embodied but is situated in relation to a '*field*' or social space such as education, academia, music, art or housing (Bourdieu, 2005), in which interactions, transactions and struggles occur. Bourdieu argues that practice (or behaviour) is not wholly consciously organised and orchestrated: on the contrary, most behaviour is "necessary improvisation" informed by "a feel for the game" (practical sense). Such practice is not without purpose, for actors have goals and interests (to gain economic capital, social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital and to transmit these inter-generationally) and pursue strategies, even though these are not wholly conscious. Actors thus know instinctively – without knowing they know – the right thing to do, so long as their habitus and the field remain adapted to one another. For example, Bourdieu analysed the French housing market, revealing how it is bureaucratically constructed and controlled in such a way that those with better constituted habitus and greater economic and cultural capital are able to enforce their interests through symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2005, 92).

Symbolic violence is a crucial concept in understanding how class-based action leads to entrenched inequality: Bourdieu argues that forms of symbolic capital tend to deny and suppress their instrumentalism and self-interest by presenting themselves as disinterested and of intrinsic worth. Symbolic violence is defined by Bourdieu as "the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu, 1992, 167). This does not usually imply physical violence but rather refers to domination of more subtle forms and 'misrecognition'. Thus,

agents are subjected to forms of violence (treated as inferior, denied resources, limited in their social mobility and aspirations), but they do not perceive it that way; rather their situation seems to them to be ‘the natural order of things’” (Webb et al., 2002, p25). Hence habitus relates to power, as “the dominated apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making them appear as natural” (Bourdieu, 2001 (1998), 35).

Bourdieu argues, and illustrates in his work, how the power of the dominant class succeeds in defining, through symbolic violence, what counts as legitimate knowledge, what social relations are valuable, and what symbols confer prestige and social honour. These symbols are socially constructed to suit the interests of the dominant class. For example, in education the power of the dominant class defines the curriculum and what constitutes success, and those who acquire through socialisation within families a cultural capital which conforms with this will appear more gifted, while others will not (Lee, 1989). Moreover they will appear to be ‘naturally’ gifted, so concealing the class-based power relations underlying the outcome (Bourdieu, 1973). “In this way, the embodied cultural capital of these pupils is used (however unknowingly) to procure the qualifications (institutionalised cultural capital) which in turn afford power in the job market” (Crossley 2005, 95).

Symbolic violence and misrecognition are thus at the heart of the exercise of what Lukes has termed the third face of power. Bourdieu’s work is illustrative of “aspects of power as domination that we have sought to emphasize: above all, the ways in which its effectiveness is enhanced by being disguised or rendered invisible by ‘naturalisation’, where what is conventional and position- or class-based appears to the actors as natural and objective, and by ‘misrecognition’ of its sources and modes of operation” (Lukes, 2005, 141).

Another important feature of Bourdieu’s conception of class is that class boundaries are not exogenous and fixed, but are seen as contested and socially constructed. Indeed definitions of class are themselves part of the game, “a stake in symbolic struggles that are, essentially, part of the class struggle. His position is reflexive” (Crossley 2005, 98). So the class categories which we take-for-granted and which appear natural to us, such as ‘manual workers’ or ‘professional and managerial’, must also be regarded with suspicion as socially constructed in the interests of the powerful, though they may derive in part as well from our own appropriation of these labels².

Bourdieu’s approach to class analysis has been applied in a number of studies, including those by Skeggs (1997, 2003, 2005), Savage et al (2005), Vester (2005), Blokland (2005), Devine (2005) and Phillips and Western (2005) in case studies in the UK, Germany, Australia and the US, for example. Further developments of the paradigm through strong phenomenological research have been suggested by Charlesworth (2000) and Allen (2010), but these are beyond the scope of this paper.

Class formation for Bourdieu is therefore a continuous, contested and fluid process of discursive construction, identity formation, mobilisation and struggle based around habitus, field and capital. This offers a more promising basis for the development of new research on processes of social change and growing inequality in the rural areas of Europe.

² This concern with the use of language to express power is reminiscent of Foucault. While Foucault and Bourdieu have many affinities, they disagreed over Bourdieu’s adherence to class-based theory.

3. Place and Inequality

Inequality exists between places, just as between social classes. A recent report for the European Commission on 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in Rural Areas' (Bertolini et al 2010) highlights the distinction between poverty *in* rural places and poverty *of* rural places. But does place itself give rise to inequality? Some sociologists have suggested that inequalities derive not only from relations of production and of consumption, but also from spatial relations and place identity ('you are where you live') (Savage et al 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Some go so far as to argue that "attachment to place may have begun to usurp occupation as the means by which identity becomes articulated" (Butler and Watt 2007, 76). For rural sociologists this is particularly interesting. How far is 'place' central to the construction, maintenance and representation of social differences and divisions? This section turns to examine the intersection of class, inequality and place, paying particular attention to the social construction of rural places and their role in class formation and in the intergenerational reproduction of inequality.

There have been many attempts to explain why places are materially unequal. Early neo-classical explanations focused on natural resource endowments and proximity to markets, with disagreement between those who saw spatial inequality as a temporary phenomenon that would disappear as resources followed market signals, and those who thought a cycle of cumulative causation would reinforce and exacerbate inequalities unless governments intervened. Sociologists debated the merits of modernisation theory, seeing rural areas as lagging behind, and dependency theory, seeing rural areas as exploited by capitalist relations (eg. Carter 1974). Often, thinking was framed in terms of evolution (stages of economic growth) and penetration (by external modernity) (Bonnano and Constance 2003, 243). By the 1990s, these explanations were challenged in turn by emerging ideas of endogenous (van der Ploeg and Long 1994) and neo-endogenous rural development (Lowe et al 1995; Ray 2006; Shucksmith 2010). Practitioners (OECD 2005) and rural social scientists (Lowe et al 1995; van der Ploeg et al 2000) proclaimed a 'New Rural Paradigm' in which inequality between rural places might be explained in terms of their endogenous, agentic potential and their networks. Relevant factors included: governance, institutions and public investment; entrepreneurship; economic structures and organisation; cultural traditions and social arrangements; peripherality and infrastructure; and human resources and demography (Bryden and Hart 2004; Terluin and Post 2003; Terluin 2003).

This approach raises important questions regarding the autonomy of local actors, the distribution of local power, and inequality more generally. Research revealed that endogenous and neo-endogenous approaches risk exacerbating inequality, both between places because of the uneven capacity of local place-based communities to prosecute endogenous development (Shortall and Shucksmith 1998; Arnason et al 2009), and within communities because internal power relations are ignored or obscured (Shucksmith 2000). These risks could be moderated by the state engaging in capacity-building and investment. Further, there is debate about the extent to which issues of fundamental structural disadvantage can be addressed solely through endogenous or neo-endogenous development approaches. The European Commission's Barca Report (2009) raised the question of whether remote rural areas have 'territorial potential' at all, and this remains a crucial empirical question for both research and EU policy.

The role of place is also the subject of renewed theoretical debate. It is now generally acknowledged that place is socially constructed, and indeed co-produced and contested. Place exists in a world of meaning and represents a distinctive, bounded and embodied type of space that is defined by, and constructed in terms of, the lived experiences of people. Again, this construction is power-infused, with place conceived of as the locus of complex intersections and outcomes of power geometries that operate across spatial scales (Massey 1991), and also as fundamental to the making and remaking of identity and difference. "Places are thus relational and contingent, experienced and understood differently by different people; they are multiple, contested, fluid and uncertain (rather than fixed territorial units)" (Hubbard et al 2004, 6).

Some contemporary scholars question whether places, including rural places, still exist in the highly globalised and networked societies of the twenty-first century. Castells (1996), most notably, has argued that we are witnessing the "annihilation of place" by faster communications technologies which constitute the 'space of flows'. Thus, "the network society exhibits a deep tension between the abstract placelessness of network mediation and the stubborn desire of human beings to embed their lives in particular places" (Barney 2004, 32). Similarly, Urry (2007) has drawn attention to the development of social practices which presuppose huge increases in the speed and distance of travel, to the extent that society is now 'mobilised'. Economies and societies have been reconfigured around mobilities, founded upon an emergent 'mobility complex' - a new system of economy, society and resources spreading around the globe to remake consumption, pleasure, work, friendship and family life. Moreover, he contends that these mobility practices diminish the friction of distance to such an extent that rural society is now fully integrated within overall society. In relation to inequality, Bauman (1998) has argued that mobility (the freedom to move perpetually) becomes the most stratifying factor of our late-modern or postmodern times. This has implications for place, and for notions of boundedness and community, as well as for stratification. For the richest third of the world's population, at least, lives come to be determined less by site-specific structures, of class, family, age, and especially of neighbourhoods. "Family and friends are more a matter of choice, increasingly spreading themselves around the world"..., dependent upon "an extensive array of inter-dependent systems of movement in order to connect with this distributed array of networks... Paralleling this is the way in which touring the world is how the world is increasingly performed, with many people becoming connoisseurs and collectors of places" in a further amplification of mobility. "Contemporary capitalism thus presupposes and generates some increasingly expressive bodies or habituses relatively detached from propinquitous family and neighbourhoods; many other people are employed in servicing such habituses through the 'experience economy'" (Urry 2010, 10-11).

This 'mobilities turn' raises many questions for rural sociology, calling into question the very notion of "place" itself, and issues of social and economic boundedness. Urry argues that notions of place, neighbourhood and boundedness have been undermined by increasing mobility, a process exacerbated by the laxity or even absence of governance and regulation that accompany neo-liberalism. What does this mean for ideas of place-based rural communities and for neo-endogenous rural development?

However, other sociologists dispute the annihilation of place, having found strong empirical evidence of the continuing importance of place, even in an age of hyper-mobility. In revisiting major British sociological studies of the past 70 years, Savage (2010) finds that place has retained

its significance for identity, but that the character of this connection has changed as (some people's) mobilities increased. Specifically, those with greater mobility seek out "enchanted landscapes" where place has particular resonance for them and where they can elect to belong. Thus, "we can detect the growing significance of the imagined landscape for those seeking to 'put down roots' and find a 'place of their own'. Whereas in the middle of the 20th Century most people had a functional and pragmatic conception of place, this [subsequently] gives way to a rich world of evocative locality" (Savage 2010, 22). Savage is careful to distinguish 'elective belonging' from nostalgia: with nostalgia, "one's place of residence appears to have lost its magic", whereas with elective belonging "one's place of residence is seen as embodying magical qualities" (Savage 2010, 23).

"Far from lamenting the loss of community, most people we interviewed [between 1999 and 2001] waxed lyrical about where they lived. They were clear they did not live in a faceless, global environment, but in a particular place with its own identity, meaning, and 'aura', with which it was immensely important to them to claim affiliation. The history of the place in which they lived was not as important to them in making these associations as the way in which they could claim that the place belonged to them through their conscious choice to move and settle in it. This was a landscape constructed predominantly as a personal map, a sense of the landmarks which mark their scape. It is aesthetic in so far as it was important to claim beauty, and ethical in so far as it involves making a statement that one exercises responsibility through 'putting down roots' and thereby chooses to affiliate one's identity with a specific location" (Savage 2010, 24).

Interestingly, for those who elect to belong, "the landscape evoked is one which is defined by physical, rather than social, markers. Visual and other sensory perceptions are crucial, whereas the values, attitudes and interests of other local residents seem less important, unless they intrude unduly. People bracket out those who live in the place as irrelevant to their own apprehension of it" (Savage 2010, 25), although in another study local social history was found to be important to the elective belonging of some incomers (Smith and Phillips 2001).

In direct contrast to these people, who generally have high levels of cultural capital, many others with less cultural capital exhibit quite different, but similarly strong, relationships to place. "These, it turns out, are people living in the midst of a location in which they were born and bred, and who are strongly vested in their current location in which they are irredeemably thrown. This is a different way of experiencing place and belonging from that which the culturally privileged exhibit... They present themselves in passive terms, not choosing their location, but literally placed by it" (Savage 2010, 32-3).

Savage emphasises the link between mobility, stratification and elective belonging to place. "People's ability to talk of an enchanted landscape is premised on a contingent relationship to place. It is mobility between different places which allows people to use abstract aesthetic, ethical and pragmatic criteria to evaluate them," though this in turn lifts social groups out of the landscape (Savage 2010, 22). Attachment to place remains strong, but "turns out to be a crucially loaded affair. We can discriminate, in the broadest terms, between those who choose and are vested in place, and those who are thrown into, and dwell in it. Nostalgic accounts [of disenchantment and loss] turn out not to stand in contrast to those of elective belonging but

appear as caught between these two orientations” (Savage 2010, 33), as “a resource for the relatively underprivileged to counter the moral claims of the newly arrived” (Savage 2010, 24).

Place, then, is inextricably bound up with class, power and inequality. The social construction of place is necessarily class-infused, in a Bourdieuvian sense, as are place-based rural development actions. In turn, class formation itself is bound up with place, in so far as place is implicated in the contested and fluid process of discursive construction, identity formation, mobilisation and struggle based around habitus, field and capital. This suggests ways in which a new research agenda might develop to investigate inequality, power and place in rural areas of Europe.

4. Inequality, power and place in rural areas.

This paper began by reviewing the concepts of poverty and social exclusion, through which researchers have sought to understand the emergence and deepening of social inequalities in Europe. As a heuristic concept, social exclusion has brought many insights, with its focus on the dynamic, multidimensional processes underlying inequality. There is continuing value in such work, particularly the analysis of longitudinal, panel data (eg. BHPS, SILC) and in the sort of localised studies championed by Milborne (2004, 170). Nevertheless, social exclusion does suffer from an undue emphasis on boundary formation and the implicit notion that all but a few are included in a cohesive society undifferentiated by class or social division. Might we now move beyond these limiting aspects of the concept of social exclusion while retaining its focus on multidimensional dynamic processes, rooted in localities, in order to explore how power is gained and exercised by privileged groups in creating and maintaining inequality, as well as documenting the experience of marginalised groups?

A starting point might lie with Reimer’s idea of systems of integration (market, bureaucratic, associative and communal relations) which, he argued, constitute the relational basis not only for mechanisms of social exclusion but also for people’s differential capacity to act. He sees these, effectively, as relational resources, such that “different types of people or households use different types of relations to gain access to resources and services” (Reimer 2004, 85). In some respects this echoes Bourdieu’s concept of capital, in that it is a resource used to gain access to further resources, though Bourdieu’s formulation of capital as both the means and object of struggle and as the basis of class formation offers a more overtly conflictual model and, of course, a much more comprehensive and developed theory of practice. Might we therefore move beyond social exclusion as a concept for investigating inequality by relying instead on Bourdieu? Rather than focusing narrowly on labour market inclusion (as much policy does), or on Reimer’s four systems of integration (helpful as they may be), might there be more potential in a focus on economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital as part of a Bourdieuvian class analysis employing related concepts of field, habitus, misrecognition and symbolic violence?

There was a flurry of research on the role of class in rural areas, especially in England in the late Twentieth Century (eg. Newby 1979; Newby et al 1978; Cloke and Thrift 1987, 1990; Phillips 1993, 1998a, 1998b; Murdoch and Marsden 1994; Murdoch 1995; Hoggart 1997), and in the US (Duncan 1996, 1999), but perhaps less in other European countries³. However there have been very few attempts at rural class analysis since 2000 aside from the work of Smith and Phillips

³ This may simply reflect its non-availability in the English language.

(2001) and Phillips (2005, 2007). A consequence is that rural research rarely reflects the recent developments in class analysis outlined above. Arguably there is potential to incorporate these theoretical developments into a refreshed research agenda to gain new insights into inequality, power and place in rural Europe.

Specifically 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. How does rurality itself become a vehicle for increasing and storing inequality and thence for its intergenerational transmission?

Some of the earlier research in England hinted in this direction. Most notably, Murdoch (1995) suggests that rural England is not simply a site of middle class colonisation but "a favoured site for the processes of middle-class formation" (Murdoch 1995, 1221). He argued that "little attention has been paid to middle-class formation in rural areas or to the role of rural space in the 'making' of the middle-class," (p. 1220) since earlier studies had conceived of rural areas as merely a stage on which the national class structure was played out. "What is lacking, therefore, is any consideration of class as an outcome of collective action. It is assumed that somehow the middle class is made *elsewhere* (in the workplace) and simply arrives in rural England already formed. So phenomena such as 'localism' or 'community' are treated as mere mystifications of underlying class relations. There is little consideration of these as being deeply constitutive of new sets of class (and non-class) relations" (p.1223). Moreover, the local specificity of class formation is suggested by variations in these studies' findings in relation to class formation between particular places and times.

This may be illustrated by considering Murdoch's analysis of rural England, in which he argued that "the social and physical shape of particular rural spaces can be seen as the outcome of attempts by collective actors to mould those spaces into forms which reflect and perpetuate class, gender and other forms of identity and difference. The imposition of particular versions of the rural in particular places must be assessed in relation to the dominant forms of collective action" (Murdoch 1995, 1226). For example, the formation of 'action groups' to oppose unwelcome development seeks not only to preserve a physical environment but also to make their environs "that little bit more socially exclusive. One consequence is likely to be an increase in the value of their property assets. In ways such as this, forms of collective action facilitate and reinforce local patterns of class formation. Rural England, with its supposed idyllic village communities, arcadian landscapes and 'timeless' social order, becomes a favoured site for the investment of middle-class economic and cultural capital" (Murdoch 1995, 1227).

"Furthermore, it is important to note that rural space is neither simply a 'reflection' of the middle class nor merely a 'stage' upon which certain middle-class actions are conducted; rather it is an integral part of the process of middle-class (trans)formation. Rurality itself is reconstituted as it becomes bound into the assets of the middle class. These assets may be rendered into the forms of culture or property... and will be defended through political action. Thus rurality becomes an expression of power relations, as certain forms of action allow the imposition and consolidation of certain social formations. New middle-class identities and actions may also emerge as new spatial formations" (ibid, 1227).

Murdoch's analysis highlights the reflexive and localised nature of class formation in society, and points to the role of class-infused social constructions of place (and rurality) in the accumulation and storing of assets and in relations of exploitation. This approach could be further enhanced by incorporating subsequent developments in class analysis and a more explicit foundation in Bourdieu's theory of practice, but Murdoch's work was already pointing in this direction (and indeed referenced Bourdieu and Savage). The role of discursive power, symbolic violence and misrecognition would add another dimension to the analysis, as suggested by Hoggart (1997, 254) who asked, but did not pursue, whether "the conceptual essence of the English countryside is fundamentally a 'construction' of the middle classes" such that, following Lukes, they "benefit disproportionately from this imagery and that other classes accept the 'wholesomeness' of this imagery even though it works against their best interests." These analytical developments would address many of Phillips' criticisms of Murdoch's analysis (Phillips 1998a).

Despite the promise of these suggestions, class analysis has been largely absent from rural studies since 2000, with few attempts to apply new Bourdieuvian approaches to class in rural contexts. One exception to this is Smith and Phillips' (2001) study of 'greentrifiers' migration into the rural environs of Hebden Bridge. This is particularly interesting as "an illustrative example of the new middle classes seeking to display different amounts of social, cultural and economic capital in a location which evokes diverse meanings of rurality" (p. 466), so ensuring cultural and class differentiation and self-preservation through varied cultural competencies. Specifically, Smith and Phillips found that "the collective agency of the greentrifiers aids the creation of distinct place-specific forms of 'rural' habitus" (p. 467), as "the differing socio-cultural representations of rurality expressed by the newcomers to the villages and moor-tops were closely associated with culture and lifestyle differences between them" (p. 461). The well-educated, articulate professionals who sought the solitude of the moor-tops had little sense of a collective identity, rarely belonging to any locally-based institution or group, and working and socialising elsewhere. However this 'class on paper' did become a 'real class', in Bourdieu's terms, when mobilising in a campaign to oppose a wind-farm which threatened the environment into which they had bought. Their lifestyle "is a pastiche, involving the appropriation of a redefined rural past of the location, financed by present day urban capital which insulates them from the harshest realities of moor-top life. The four wheel drive vehicle symbolises their lifeline to the city" (p. 464). This contrasted sharply with those artists, craft workers and teachers who moved to the villages, many working from home. Their search was for a better work-life balance in an alternative society - "an idyllic village lifestyle, based on idealised notions of an intimate and supportive community, with caring neighbours" (p. 465). These are two examples of Bourdieuvian classes in rural England. The authors suggest further work which might explore how these classes' emergence impacts on other social groups in the locality, and how constructions of place are enlisted and related to inequality and domination.

Indeed, the challenge in researching inequality, power and injustice in rural Europe is to go beyond identifying classes and class-habitus and to relate this to field. For it is only in the context of a field that habitus and capital may be understood in relational terms, as described in section 2 of this paper. It is the distribution of capitals in social relations of power which provides the basis for the class structure in Bourdieu's work, and which in turn allows us to reveal how power is exercised and inequality produced. Various models for such studies exist, though not in rural sociology, including the classic studies by Savage et al (2005) and by Skeggs (1997), primarily using qualitative and ethnographic methods, as well as Bourdieu's own empirical work.

One study of rural inequality which does employ Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic violence and misrecognition (but does not focus on distinguishing classes and class-habitus) is Sturzaker and Shucksmith's (2011) analysis of the field of planning and housing in rural England. This shows how the capture of the concept of 'sustainable communities' by dominant classes can be understood in terms of Bourdieu's misrecognition and symbolic violence, with the planning system becoming the crucial arena for the exercise of this form of power. "Constructing the meaning of sustainable communities as self-evidently those which have a broad range of services and frequent public transport masks the way in which the real objective is to prevent development in rural areas, and that those who benefit most from this are those who already have privilege and wealth. Bourdieu's analysis of symbolic violence thus offers an explanation of how the deployment in planning arenas of a partial concept of sustainable communities may be a means of not only furthering the interests of a dominant class (and so exacerbating inequalities and exclusion), but also of masking the power relations implicit in this process and making it appear legitimate to those who 'misrecognise' it" (Sturzaker and Shucksmith 2011, 177-8). This is indeed "the most effective and insidious use of power" (Lukes 2005, 27) because it is largely invisible. The need to protect the countryside from development is so taken-for-granted it has become *doxa*.

These studies by Smith and Phillips and by Sturzaker and Shucksmith offer two complementary instances of using Bourdieuvian class analysis to research inequality, power and injustice in rural areas, the former focusing on the delineation of classes and class-habitus and the latter focusing on the exercise of discursive power through symbolic violence and misrecognition. Further studies might seek to combine both these elements to reveal how class formation is bound up with place and rurality, in so far as place is implicated in the contested and fluid process of discursive construction, identity formation, mobilisation and class struggle.

5. Conclusion: towards a research agenda.

While helpful in focusing attention on underlying dynamic processes, the concept of social exclusion suffers from its implicit boundary formation suggesting exclusion from a cohesive society undifferentiated by class or social division. This paper has argued that we can move beyond these limiting aspects of the concept of social exclusion while retaining a focus on multidimensional dynamic processes, rooted in localities, by returning to class analysis in its new reinvigorated Bourdieuvian formulation. Bourdieu rejects earlier ideas of classes as exogenous and fixed, seeing these instead as contested and socially constructed, as a stake in symbolic struggles that are themselves part of the class struggle. Class formation for Bourdieu is therefore a continuous, contested and fluid process of discursive construction, identity formation, mobilisation 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, and these place-identities are themselves a source of advantage to dominant classes and conversely also a source of inequality and exclusion.

Much previous research has viewed rural England as a site of middle-class colonisation but, as Murdoch (1995) argued, these studies tended to see rural areas as simply a stage on which the exogenous, national class structure was played out. Following 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 intergenerational transmission? Devine et al (2005) collect together several helpful examples of Bourdieuvian class analysis, primarily qualitative or ethnographic in their methodologies, but these are located in urban or suburban areas. Two recent studies by Smith and Phillips (2001) and by Sturzaker and Shucksmith (2011) offer complementary instances of using Bourdieuvian class analysis to research inequality, power and injustice in rural areas, focusing on the delineation of classes and class-habitus and the exercise of discursive power through symbolic violence and misrecognition, respectively. Future studies might seek to combine these elements to reveal how class formation is bound up with place and rurality, and how in different places and at different times, this leads to inequality and injustice. Such an agenda focuses our attention on the variety of historically embedded and locally specific practices that serve to reinforce and reproduce inequality and marginalization, whether or not we call these processes of 'social exclusion'.

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