

# Social Inclusion and Participatory Democracy

From the conceptual discussion  
to local action



UCLG Committee  
on Social Inclusion,  
Participatory Democracy  
and Human Rights



**UAB**  
Universitat Autònoma  
de Barcelona



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to local action

**Ramon Canal**

With the collaboration of the  
Political Participation and Social Inclusion  
research groups of IGOP

**Coordination of the edition**

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Participatory Democracy and Human Rights

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On 30 November, 2008, during its World Council held in Istanbul, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) approved a policy paper entitled “Let’s build the inclusive cities of the 21st-century”.

This document, previously drawn up by UCLG’s Social Inclusion and Participative Democracy Commission, is a manifesto in favour of social inclusion policies, considered as a safeguard of citizens’ rights, necessary to achieve a vibrant and effective local democracy, respectful toward the growing diversity of urban societies. Ultimately, the manifesto depicts a global social policy, both pertinent and necessary in the context of globalized cities.

In order to delve further into the theoretical knowledge which underlies the relationship between social inclusion and participatory democracy, the UCLG’s Social Inclusion and Participative Democracy Commission called upon the Autonomous University of Barcelona’s Institute of Government and Public Policy to research the subject. The project counted on the financial support of the Department of

Citizen Participation of the Regional Government of Catalonia.

This document is the result of the commissioned research. We hope that its contents will be intellectually stimulating and help to open new paths, both in research and in implementing social inclusion and citizen participation policies.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Markets, democracy and exclusion: a Janus-faced globalization

**“The historical form of democracy consolidated in the city (...) favours the short-term; (...) it promotes the interests of a pluralist political class system and its associated power groups when the city (...) requires the reconstruction of general interest; it rewards the mercantile powers who haven’t prioritized an agenda of development and social inequality. (...) Pragmatically, it promotes electoral citizenship and leaves market dynamics to wear down social citizenship”<sup>1</sup>.**

When the market becomes the determining factor in establishing the scope and guarantees of social citizenship, it is pertinent to look at the political sphere and wonder to what extent democratic governments have renounced their initial mission and essential reason for existing in the first place; namely to represent the people, responding to the needs and demands of all citizens. This question is both relevant and necessary, and the consequences of abandoning it are enormous.

We might find certain consolation in the fact that the case of Mexico City, referred to in the above quotation by Carlos San Juan, might seem us to be situated at the negative end of the spectrum in terms of poverty, social inequality and corruption. But that portrayal is not exactly accurate. In certain aspects, Mexico is a modern country with remarkable economic growth, and its governmental institutions, led by those of its capital city, have made innovations in public management with regard to transparency and participation which were inconceivable until very recently. Nevertheless, it seems that these developments are not enough to offset the battering which comes at the hands of a globalisation expressed almost exclusively through the market and a democratic policy apparently incapable of overcoming certain structural faults.

Similar diagnoses could be made in a large number of world cities and the growing metropolitan areas that surround them. Departing from Brazilian and Spanish case studies, Fleury, Blanco and

Subirats (2008) touch a sore spot when they point out that a hyper-mobile and hyper-flexible global capitalism, along with economic growth and extraordinary opportunities for certain elites and certain regions of the world to become wealthier, produces economic dislocation, job insecurity, inequality, social fragmentation, criminality, insecurity and corruption, not to mention accelerated environmental destruction. The distribution of the profits and losses of globalisation is also strongly biased in terms of factors such as gender, age, country of origin, cultural and religious values, sexual orientation and, last but not least, place of residence; all these elements become potential factors for discrimination. The economic crisis affecting large part of the planet since 2007 hasn’t changed the basic features of the system, but it has reduced the circle of its beneficiaries and expanded the circle of its victims, in addition to limiting the capacity of governments on all levels to tackle economic and social problems through their own policies<sup>2</sup>.

Economic globalisation is neither the only cause nor the only visible manifestation of the changing times we are experiencing, characterised by sharp increases in mobility, flexibility and uncertainty. The development of scientific knowledge and the multiple technological applications derived from it, together with the deep social changes caused by the erosion of traditional authorities, as well as the acceptance of pluralism and the growing individualisation of life courses, interact with the economic transformations, mutually strengthening each other and reaching an enormous transformative power. We will neither discuss which of these factors the primary cause of this situation is, nor draw connections to old discussions between idealism and materialism and its different variants<sup>3</sup>. What is important for us here is to see that all these factors, to a greater or lesser extent, entail clear opportunities for human societies to progress as well as side-effects that might jeopardize their health and welfare in the long term.

1 San Juan a: Álvarez/San Juan/Sánchez M., p. 33.

2 For more on this topic, see UCLG’s report entitled “The Impact of the Global Crisis on Local Governments”.

3 See Harris for more on this topic.



The balance between opportunities and risks turning out positive depends to a large extent on society's ability to: 1. Become aware of the existence of these opportunities and risks; 2. Generate skills to take advantage of the former and prevent the latter; and 3. Redistribute costs and benefits to create a socially equitable result. This cannot be taken for granted; on the contrary, it requires a high degree of social awareness and political activity in all spheres of society. Expressing political processes through true democratic institutions (which involves defining problems, drawing up and discussing alternative actions, and making decisions) is a highly demanding task that consumes valuable resources (including skills, energy, and time, among others) which are not always available in sufficient quantities.

The time factor is particularly significant. Technological, economic and social changes take place at a much faster pace than politics is usually able to respond to them, and with such quickly moving targets, it is quite difficult to aim and actually hit the target. Luttwark (1999) brought to light the fact that the "turbo-capitalist" economy, which is more global than national, can move much faster than politics, which is still deeply tied to the concept of the Nation State. Taming turbo-capitalism requires two complementary paths: to make politics more able to respond to change in due time and to slow the pace of technological and economic transformations when society, through democratic discussion, considers this to be necessary.

Even though the "*subtle ideology of economicism*"<sup>4</sup> repeatedly conjures up in public opinion a perverse association between stability and stagnation, we know that certain levels of personal and social stability are necessary for well-being, progress and even for society's very reproduction<sup>5</sup>. Uncertainty is part of the human condition, but nevertheless people should be able to build their life courses with a certain perspective of the future, without being permanently anguished about losing their jobs, their homes or their pensions from one day to the next. Changes are inherent to life, but the way and the pace in which we (must) adapt, individually and collectively, should depend more on our own decisions.

The hypothesis that structural economic factors should bend to a certain political direction may seem aberrant after so many years of seeing a completely unrestricted, global expansion of productive and financial capital as the only possible model. It is nevertheless legitimate to consider this option from the moment we see that the transformations associated with globalisation may undermine the economic and social stability of a large majority of the world's population. Without ethical criteria and political leadership, economic globalisation leads us to ever shorter and more pronounced cycles of wealth creation and destruction. The most obvious example of this is the current global crisis, which started in the real estate and finance sectors but ended up damaging most whole of the economy.

In fact, the present crisis has three distinctive sides; it is an economic, a social and an ecological crisis. As Paehlke first noted in 2003<sup>6</sup>, the "race to the bottom" unleashed by unregulated market globalisation could lead to a three-dimensional disaster by means of social and ecological dumping. Nevertheless, we do not stick to a catastrophist worldview; although the situation in most countries ranges from tragedy to precariousness, we believe that humanity still has the leeway to manoeuvre and sufficient tools to correct things. To start to do this, however, we must first be clear about the fact that we are not facing a temporary crisis, something that will pass away and will allow us to go back to business as usual, to the previous balance between representative democracy, welfare state and global capitalism. We are approaching a new scenario, one that will require new conceptual frameworks for understanding and new tools to act in ways that produce more appropriate responses.

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4 Paehlke, pp. 141-147.

5 Stability is also necessary for the full exercise of democratic politics in all its dimensions, from a simple vote (which drops considerably in contexts of high residential mobility) to the participation in and of groups. This is even more important if we talk about generating collective leadership, which requires not only a solid contextual awareness, acquired over time, but also a certain degree of commitment.

6 Paehlke, pp. 141-147.

## 1.2 Social Inclusion and Participatory Democracy: two successful concepts lacking critical review

Social inclusion and participatory democracy are two successful buzzwords in today's political discourse. After centuries of autocratic, strongly non-participatory and exclusive regimes, we can only be happy about their apparently unquestionable triumph. A priori, social inclusion and participatory democracy could be the key building blocks on which to construct a new version of the ideal society adapted to the conditions of our new times; a plausible story with a clear normative underpinning. But things are not so simple. When a word becomes successful in the political sphere, it is taken over by contending groups, which make use of it, and eventually abuse it, until its original meaning or meanings become blurred. In some cases the relation between the word and the original concept can be deeply modified.

The paradigm of inclusion, for example, has managed to displace the previous paradigm of class conflict, inherited from historical materialism, from large parts of academy and politics. This new paradigm surely enables the new social realities to be explained better than through the theories rooted in Marxism, and it has a great potential for being a critical, transforming approach. However, the fact that in the discourse of inclusion the problem might be largely defined as the separation of certain people and groups from "normal" society, rather than as the existence of structural, class and group interests and conflicts, has made it attractive also to liberal and conservative thought and politics. All in all, social inclusion has triumphed as a political objective, jumping over ideological boundaries, thanks to a plasticity which entails the risk of being the object of diverse political uses, whose goals might even be in conflict with each other.

In the preceding decades, the concept of citizen participation has also enjoyed similar success. The main political actors took it up, albeit often superficially, as a way to improve a model of representative democracy that did not quite meet the expectations of the public in regard to the proximity and effectiveness of democratic institutions in dealing with citizens' problems and concerns. However, after a powerful participatory wave led to (especially local-level) proliferation of regulations, participative bodies and processes in almost every sphere of public policy, many doubts arose with regard to the impacts of citizen participation on the quality of public policy and democracy itself.

At their core, social inclusion and participatory democracy are concepts that were created to explain and help to transform the complex reality of our times. Operating in a complex system, it is logical that we should be faced by ambiguous definitions,

contradictory meanings and unexpected collateral effects. Therefore, before reflecting on the theoretical and practical relationship between both ideas, we must thoroughly examine their possibilities, criticisms and general validity.

## 1.3 The local perspective

*"Local governments play a key role in a globalised world where most of the population lives in cities and metropolitan areas"*<sup>7</sup>. The very first sentence of the "Let's build the Inclusive Cities of the 21st Century" policy paper combines a controversial statement halfway between desire and reality (the concept of local governments as leading political players) with a statement that is absolutely relevant and indisputable: cities throughout the world are experiencing continuous and (apparently) unstoppable growth, to the extent that already the majority of human population lives in them. Along with people, cities gather (material and symbolic) resources and social inequalities, memory and uprooting, risks and opportunities, and the constantly increasing circulation of people, goods and ideas. If the global world is Janus-faced, its cities even more so. Indeed, cities are the main battlefield in the fight for democracy, participation and inclusion.

The globalized world is also characterised by a clear reappraisal of space as an object of analysis. In the 20th century, at the peak of modernity, *time* –linear and progress-bringing– seemed to be the only relevant dimension in terms of historical, social and political analysis; this was reflected very well via the categorization of "advanced" vs. delayed (modern vs. ancient), which was equivalent to saying developed vs. underdeveloped. For both, capitalist and communist approaches to development, everything was "a question of time", whether talking about Honduras or Nicaragua, about Mozambique or Kenya. After the changes which started in 1989 and culminated in 2001, *space*, which is to say each place with its unique and non replicable context, recovered its lost protagonism<sup>8</sup>.

In this vein, thinkers such as Castells and Borja (2004), Le Galés (2002) and others have contributed to crafting and disseminating a discourse built around the dialectic between the local and the global, smartly captured in the neologism "glocal". In fact we are experiencing a *localised globalisation* in which old cities recover at least part of their past relevance, and new ones become more self-confident. The planet's large cities are not (yet) leading players on

<sup>7</sup> Barcelona City Hall, p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Proponents of this view, which we call "spatial turn" (Schlögel, 2003), see the U.S. government's "spatial blindness" as the principal cause of the failure of the operation to "bring democracy to the Middle East".

the world stage, but they do have more leeway to manoeuvre to develop their own strategies and policies than they did just 30 or 40 years ago.

To put it clearly, democracy, participation and inclusion must not only be conceived of abstractly but also be applied to specific spaces. Consequently, although the subjects of this paper are universally valid, we have tried to maintain a local (and specifically urban) perspective throughout the text. This is especially clear in its final section, which offers specific local policy proposals on the basis of previously drawn conclusions.

## 1.4 Approach and structure of the document

This research stems primarily from the initiative and work done by UCLG's Social Inclusion and Participatory Democracy Commission. Taking its published statements as a starting point, we proceeded to critically review the question of participation and democratic inclusion on the local level. Decided to avoid a merely administrative or managerial approach to the problem, which would make it possible to hide or relativise key aspects for improving democratic quality, we chose to broaden our focus, in order to track the very definition of inclusion and democracy as political problems writ large.

The first question we address is whether the existence of a more participatory democracy (which is assumed to be a better democracy) is an institutional precondition for making progress towards more inclusive cities. Our intuition says it is, but to somehow test our hypothesis we need to first consider some preliminary theoretical information about the concepts which underlie it. In other words, we need to evaluate the existing discourse on social inclusion and participatory democracy. After doing so we will be ready to answer a second, much more applied question about concrete ways to incorporate citizen participation in inclusion policies drawn up in a democratic framework, in order to make them more legitimate and effective.

The document is organised into three sections. Section one critically reviews inclusion, exploring the origins of the paradigm and assessing its pros and cons. This leads us to examine the different meanings attributed to it and discourses around it in greater detail, in order to arrive at a valid, feasible inclusion formula which suits the highly volatile, complex environment of contemporary urban societies. Section two analyzes the relationship between inclusion and democracy, stressing the participatory dimension of democracy. Finally, section three applies the theoretical insights of sections one and two to suggest specific principles and policies to foster participatory and inclusive societies.

## 2. Inclusion as a regulatory ideal and political project in 21st-century urban societies

The purpose of this study is to identify suitable institutional designs and lines of action to promote social inclusion. But what is social inclusion? What does it imply? And why do we have to make a political objective of it? To find the answers, we must first go to the origins of the problem and examine the concept that intends to explain it. We focus not on far-off origins (which would also be worth considering) but rather on much more recent developments, in the transition from the first to the second modernity, when exclusion began to replace poverty as the main social problem to be fought. The emergence of a new society makes it necessary to revise and update social inclusion as a normative benchmark and as a political project.

### 2.1 The concept of social exclusion

The concept of social exclusion appears in social sciences as a reply to the aforementioned structural transformation of urban societies, which came about as a result of economic globalisation, technological developments and the reconsideration of essential elements of the social structure such as family and class. In the 1970s, when the transition to this new period began, social scientists first started to speak of social exclusion as a concept allowing us to package and label the effects that such changes were having on the most disadvantaged people and social groups.

We may define social exclusion as refusing people and/or social groups' access to the resources which, in a specific place and at a specific historical time, are considered socially valuable and necessary for a dignified and autonomous life. Social exclusion hinders people to develop themselves in accordance with their wishes and abilities.

In fact, social exclusion is not a new phenomenon, but rather one which is found in the very processes of differentiation, distinction and stratification which have been present in the immense majority of societies across the history of mankind. And we must be aware that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century societies are still structured around unequal relationships and inclusion-exclusion patterns, at all levels and in all fields of activity. To a large extent inequality is justified on the

grounds of personal characteristics that have been negatively connoted and/or placed in a position of inferiority by groups holding a larger share of power; we refer to dimensions such as class or social caste, gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or certain physical or mental disabilities, amongst others. Unfortunately, the same diversity that is the basis of a complex and richly multifaceted society is used as a mechanism of discrimination and oppression.

Discrimination and oppression, however, cannot automatically be equated with exclusion. Historically, even the most disadvantaged social classes and groups have, under certain circumstances, been able to produce their own frameworks of inclusion, based on modes of subsistence and specific cultural features. Though precarious and often at the limit of subsistence, these milieux, such as the feudal peasantry or the industrial proletariat, gave sense and a certain coherence to both individual lives and struggles for emancipation. Nevertheless, modern times imply new elements that tend to break down this kind of inclusive structures and practices.

In this point, we must place the structural crisis affecting employment in a pre-eminent place. When technological developments allow us to do away with human work in most economic sectors, from agriculture to services, yet new manners of production are not able to provide new jobs to compensate for the losses caused by more and more intensive use of capital, the result in a large part of the world will be a big surplus on available workforce. Although this could change in the long term, due to overall population's aging, currently there are hundreds of millions of people who are apparently of no productive use for the global economic system. And given the centrality of the economy in the social organisation of capitalism, a lack of a clear, precise economic role easily gives way to the impossibility of assuming family and social roles<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> An analysis of the fullest possible consequences of this phenomenon leads to think of "extinguishable populations", something which the system achieves by denying citizens basic rights (see: Bialakowsky, López and Patrouilleau: "Prácticas gubernamentales en la regulación de poblaciones extinguidas", in Cimadamore & Cattani, pp. 147-190).

Closely related to this economic factor is another disruptive factor, highly associated with the second or “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2007): social links become fragile, leading to a significant risk of erosion and loss of affective, cognitive and normative points of contact between individuals and society. While a discussion of the causes of this complex and ambivalent phenomenon, both potentially liberating and devastating<sup>10</sup>, falls outside the scope of this work, we can mention its consequences: on the one hand, we see the deep crisis of *solid* models of behaviour (whether these stem from tradition, religion, or subcultures of class or professions) and on the other hand, even more importantly, we see the *precarisation* of personal and family relationships, friendships, workplace and neighbourhood acquaintances, etc. The scarcity or, in the worst cases, the prolonged absence of significant personal bonds and benchmarks may lead people—even those starting in somewhat privileged economic and social situations—to “mised” life courses, where they are expelled or excluded from access to the tangible and intangible resources that are the source of personal well-being.

We are therefore confronted to a series of possible causes of exclusion. We may distinguish between those derived from structural factors of inequality and those derived from individual conscious decisions that we might label as “wrong” (for example deciding not to pursue education, not to build social bonds, or not to take care of one’s health) in terms of the consequences they end up having on an individual. Which causes are more significant for explaining exclusion?

The case for equality before the law has certainly made significant progress in the world at large—to the extent that today the most extreme forms of discrimination and oppression are unacceptable in most countries. Furthermore, the aforementioned process of individualisation logically increases the number of key individual decisions (whether or not to study, get married, emigrate, participate in politics, etc.) not determined by group or community rules.

However, social stratification still exists in all countries, for example in social institutions and practices that favour (a greater or lesser

amount of) inequality in the job market, in access to basic services, in political decision-making or even in finding a partner. It is also true that the majority of seemingly individual decisions are strongly conditioned by the structure of opportunities perceived by each person when making them, and that these perceptions are generated within specific social structures prey to the aforementioned discriminatory logics<sup>11</sup>.

In the emerging globalised societies, characterised by classical elements (weakened and yet persistent stratification and discrimination) and new elements that gain relevance (the absence of direction and bonds) we consider that the inclusion/exclusion (inside/outside) duality, begs a more complete and accurate explanation of reality than the simple “up/down” duality (which would be a better depiction of an industrial class society where everyone has a place, though these places might be quite unequal). In the context of this theoretical framework, social exclusion is identified as the typical social pathology of the new society. Though exclusion is most often used in connection with the adjective “social”, it is in fact considered a “total” phenomenon with multiple facets (economic, political, cultural, etc.). Being extremely dynamic, exclusion could potentially affect any person at any time in her life.

So far, we have talked about the origin and the ultimate causes of exclusion, but now we want to address its primary causes, the factors favouring exclusion. The following table presents the numerous factors of exclusion which apply to different areas of life in combination with the structural “axes” of inequality. It should help us to contextualize the phenomenon’s true complexity.

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10 Of all the words that have been proposed as possible names for this phenomena, the one that fits us best is “Multioptional society”, proposed by Swiss sociologist Peter Gross (1994). This phenomenon surely includes the acceptance of the freedom of awareness and choice, the technological developments that break barriers and multiply options, and capitalism’s rapid commoditisation or “colonisation” of the spaces of daily life (Habermas, 2000).

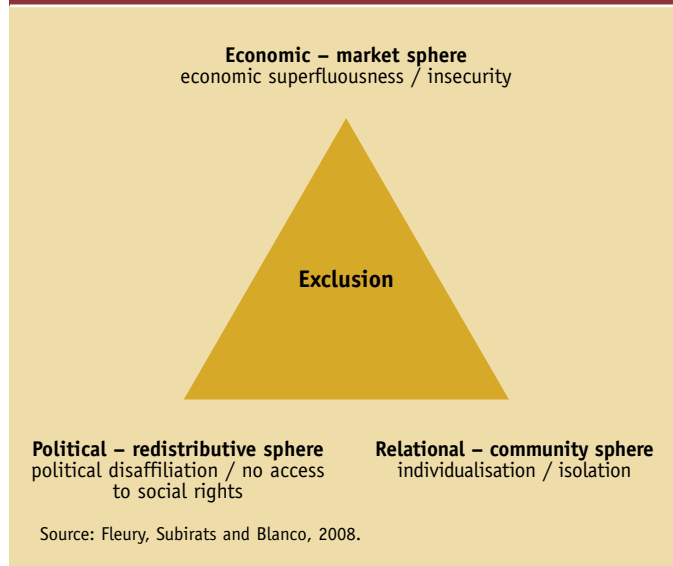
11 For more on this topic, see Puyol (2010, pp. 203-221). The most obvious proof of this phenomenon is that the main factor which statistically explains a young person’s choice of a specific educational or professional path is the combination of cultural capital and professional expectations passed on to this individual by his/her parents.

**Table 1: An overview of social exclusion**

Areas	Principal factors of exclusion	Axes of social inequality		
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic poverty</li> <li>• Financial difficulties</li> <li>• Dependence on social insurance</li> <li>• No social protection</li> </ul>	Gender	Age	Ethnicity / country of origin / nationality
Occupational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Underemployment</li> <li>• Lack of job qualifications / no qualifications</li> <li>• Cannot work</li> <li>• Job instability</li> </ul>			
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No education / no access to compulsory education</li> <li>• Illiteracy / low level of education</li> <li>• Failure</li> <li>• Dropping out</li> <li>• Linguistic barriers</li> </ul>			
Social and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No access to health care or basic social health resources</li> <li>• Addictions and related illnesses</li> <li>• Infectious diseases</li> <li>• Mental illness, disabilities or other chronic illnesses causing dependence</li> </ul>			
Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No home of one's own</li> <li>• Homes which lack basic services (water, electricity, etc.)</li> <li>• Precarious access to housing</li> <li>• Poor housing conditions</li> <li>• Poor living conditions (i.e. overcrowding)</li> <li>• Deteriorated urban areas lacking basic services</li> </ul>			
Relational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakdown of family networks (conflict or violence in the family)</li> <li>• Limited or weak family networks (single parenthood, loneliness, etc.)</li> <li>• Limited or weak social networks</li> <li>• Social rejection or stigmatisation</li> </ul>			
Citizenship and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No access to citizenship</li> <li>• Restricted access to citizenship</li> <li>• Deprivation of rights through criminal process</li> <li>• No political and social participation</li> </ul> <p>Source: Subirats (2004)</p>			

For a better understanding of the phenomenon the multiple causes of exclusion are usually grouped into three main areas which correspond to the three large dimensions or spheres of life: economic, political and relational.

**Figure 1. Exclusion and key spheres**



When is a person to be considered as “excluded”? The answer will logically depend on what we understand by social inclusion. If we assume that exclusion/inclusion is not a binary category, but rather a matter of degree that admits shades and alternatives, it is very difficult to establish a series of standard indicators valid for everyone. For the sake of simplicity we are going to divide the spectrum included/excluded in four distinctive categories:

1. People in a state of exclusion;
2. People at risk of exclusion;
3. People in a state of vulnerability;
4. People in a state of more or less comfortable inclusion.

Bearing in mind the large number of factors of exclusion, the diversity of situations in which each person can find herself is enormous. Of course, this diversity is strongly limited by the structural processes of inequality in each society; generally the people endowed with more economic resources are also those which enjoy more and more diverse social relations, higher degrees of education, better health and so on. Nevertheless, situations are not always homogeneous in all spheres and throughout a persons’ live. The “normality” of exclusion can also be broken; indeed, breaking it is one of the main goals (if not *the* main goal) of inclusion policies.

The following chart characterises each of the four categories and how they can be identified in each of the three principal spheres of exclusion.

Category	Economic sphere	Community sphere	Political sphere
<b>People in a state of exclusion:</b>	Do not have access to basic goods and services (and may not even have access to a home).	Do not have affective bonds and have very few or no significant bonds.	Do not have the right to vote. Politically they are only useful (or “used”) as scapegoats.
<b>People at risk of exclusion</b>	Run up debts; each additional debt makes it harder and harder for them to meet the payments, and everything can break down as soon as any new problem arises.	Have bonds limited to a very small core group of family members; relationships are often stressed due to bad experiences or economic or other difficulties.	Do rarely or never; they have long ignored politics and do not know what their rights are or what they can ask of the government.
<b>People in a state of vulnerability</b>	Find it difficult to get to the end of the month (or might soon be in this situation, e.g. if their employment contract is not extended, the interest rate on the mortgage rises, they fall ill or get a divorce, etc.).	Maintain more or less stable family bonds and some friendships and relationships with the community in their closest surroundings; these are limited and difficult to maintain due to lack of time. They do not have significant relationships outside their social surroundings	Follow politics with interest and normally vote, but do not have time to keep abreast of what is happening; when they do, they do not have the necessary information or contacts to enter the system and assume a more active role.
<b>People in a state of more or less comfortable inclusion</b>	Have no difficulty getting to the end of the month and are not likely to have any (at least in the short or medium term). If serious unexpected problems arise, they have the means (insurance, property, family and social networks) to limit their effects.	Have numerous, stable bonds on different levels: both core and extended family, friends, acquaintances and a wide social network. Relationships adapt to changes in family and professional life.	Take part in politics via various points of access; they know the system well and have connections to enter it. They are often part of a political organisation and may even run for office.

Source: Author

The threshold of social exclusion is reached when different factors generating exclusion are accumulated and reinforce each other. Research shows that this process can take place quite quickly or last for many years; that it can work both ways and that each person can experience it differently, according to the particular circumstances of his or her life (though in many cases the causes and determining factors are similar). Therefore, there are reasons for dealing with it, because exclusion is present and poses a threat, but also reasons to hope, since few situations of exclusion are totally “lost cases”: most of them can be improved. We must nevertheless acknowledge that exclusion cannot be fought solely by the classical tools of social policies (redistribution and universal public services); it requires also more nuanced and place-based approaches.

### **Bo1 1: Impacts of the global financial crisis on exclusion**

Since 2007 a financial crisis unprecedented in the last seventy-five years has significantly dragged down the growth of the productive economy and led to the loss of millions of jobs and a significant reduction in public income. While the duration and intensity of the crisis have been different in various parts of the world, it has unquestionably increased the vulnerability of both, the economic bases of non wealthy people and the democratic institutions whose responsibility is to represent and protect society in times of need.

#### **Crisis in the job market**

According to International Labour Organisation’s data from September 2010, thirty-four million people around the world had lost their job since the beginning of the present economic crisis; the biggest job losses had occurred in the United States and Spain. Since 2007, numerous companies had gone bankrupt and there had been other closures or significant layoffs due to overproduction or relocation of production to other countries. A large number of the self-employed and small entrepreneurs, unable to manage such a significant and lasting drop in profit, have quit.

This situation has further intensified the segmentation of the job market. Certain social groups—a minority in most countries—enjoy stable, well-paid jobs and social protection, while other, currently growing groups of people have—in the best case—unstable and poorly-paid jobs which lack social protection. Women, young people, immigrants and members of ethnic minorities are clearly overrepresented in this second

group, thus revealing the limitations of the meritocracy, in which opportunities theoretically are within every individual’s reach. Even in a meritocracy, two groups are missing: those at the two ends of the spectrum. In the highest part of the economic spectrum, a select, growing group of the very rich lives off of the work of others; at the bottom, people in an irregular situation are totally unprotected and seek to survive by means of sporadic or irregular work, in some cases resorting to criminal activities.

Given this, the only alternative that governments -exhausted after making heavy use of Keynesian anti-cyclical stimuli- are considering is to try to increase economic competitiveness and open new markets abroad. In other words, we are seeing an uncritical return to a model of strong economic growth. However, with awareness of the planet’s biological and physical limitations and of the resulting true costs of a model based on unrestricted (and highly unequal) energy and material consumption, the illusion of a market-based society in which (almost) everyone could achieve a (reasonably) paid job is disappearing.

Unless the rules are changed, in this reduced global playing field it will become more and more difficult to base social interaction on positive-sum games. The cruel reality of the crisis is that it has presented us with zero-sum games (when public budgets have to be balanced) or even with negative-sum ones (such as when viable companies are closed in order to achieve short-term financial benefit or when the environment is abused to obtain a rather meagre short-term profit).

#### **Crisis in public power**

Although States intervened in the initial phases of the crisis by using their credit reserves in order to avoid the collapse of markets and economic activity, after a short while those very same States were facing a rather complicated situation with regard to their finances, due to an explosive combination of growing expenditures and falling income, often resulting in two-digit public deficit rates.

This has affected the volume of public expenditure to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the circumstances of each country. Highly significant budget cuts have not impacted the structure of the budget equally. Although payments to public sector workers ended up being considerably reduced, we might say that so far cutbacks have particularly touched the programs and services that, though



not at the hard core of basic services, play an important role in inclusion policies.

In many cases, local governments have been even more affected by the crisis, seeing both their tax bases and state and regional governments' contributions reduced and having little leeway to gain external sources of finance. Aside from limiting investments, many town and city councils have had to eliminate programs which worked to create thriving public spaces, provide attention to diversity in schools and health centres, support extracurricular education and education and furnish economic aid to neighbourhood, cultural, sports and youth activities<sup>12</sup>.

We might therefore say that the capacity of the State to promote social inclusion (specifically in local governments) has been reduced; and medium-term perspectives are not good, considering the structural deficits many of these administrations hold. The economic downturn and the tax and budgetary reductions which came about as a result of it, are another reason to consider change in inclusion policies. It may not be the most important reason, but it is surely a trigger that could set off changes.

### **Crisis in society**

The crisis has also (sometimes brutally) revealed the fragility of the financial situations of many families and social projects. A slowing economy and resulting decreases in public sector spending were enough to reveal the precariousness of millions of people. Indeed, the flipside of the dynamism and flexibility of globalized cities is precisely the extreme vulnerability of many of the people living in them. Dynamic cities in the globalized world are beset by constant flows of new people in search of opportunities, people who often had to leave behind their belongings, their roots and the support networks provided by their families and friends.

Since these vulnerable "urbanites" do not bring their own (economic, family/social, and political) capital with them, they have to trust their luck and hope that they will obtain a continuous flow of income —earned on their own, or working for businesses, or provided to them by the state— which allows them to continue to pay for food, housing and other basic services. If this fails, they maintain their income by finding irregular income sources (undeclared work) or even by resorting to crime. It is not unusual for families to combine two or three regular and irregular sources of income. However,

what is surprising is that the public is apparently (or supposedly) shocked to discover the increase in the number of thefts and robberies three years after the start of the crisis, despite the insufficient levels of social protection which have been provided.

In terms of the majority of the middle class, whose means of living is not in danger, at least at the moment, the crisis has led to an increasing fear that they might lose a status which was taken for granted, fear that they might not be able to ensure their future well-being, for themselves and their children. The extreme "status anxiety" (de Botton, 2004) in certain social circles is certainly related to one of the key principles of globalisation: *winner takes all* (salaries, rewards, public image, etc.), which is a good thing for the system, since there can be no better stimulus than this for competitiveness. We find this phenomenon repeated in culture, sport and other social arenas, and in addition to focusing lives on a kind of ruthless, unceasing competition, it compounds the rejection of everything that is considered "inferior", because it doesn't meet the required standards. In other words, *winner takes all* works like a "massive weapon of exclusion" which acts through ignorance and belittling.

### **Can the crisis be an opportunity?**

Every crisis, including the current one, brings with it the potential for positive change. Systemic pathologies are not always obvious to the majority of the population until their effects break out virulently. We now see that the crisis has caused a rapid increase in situations of exclusion, but we know that the system was already strongly exclusive before the financial bubble burst. Growth experienced by Spain in the long prodigious decade between 1995-2007 shepherded in an unprecedented intensification of the commoditisation of society, since the mirage in which many lived made them think that everything was possible with money and that there always would be money for everything and for almost everyone; that is, for everyone apart from an unavoidable, small group of excluded people.

The sudden shock with the economic, ecological and social limits of reality present an opportunity to de-commoditise part of our lives and recover time and spaces in order to generate new solidarities and mobilisations, which favour a

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12 Paulais' (pp. 10-12) description of this point is particularly illustrative.

stronger and more sustainable society in all respects. Nevertheless, we also see an increase in the risk of selfish deviations, of closures and violent regressions in the face of the inevitability of change. Politics, that is, democratic politics based on dialogue, is now more important than ever, precisely at a point when it has suffered a strong loss of prestige.

If our intention is to climb out of this rut, it will be necessary to conceive and put into practice new, more inclusive forms of producing goods and services, able to generate both, social protection and bonds between people.

## 2.2 The dimensions of inclusion

Social inclusion is a concept at least as complex and multidimensional as the exclusion it intends to solve. We have identified five dimensions of inclusion, which are directly related to five basic human needs: occupation, protection, recognition, bonds and participation. We explore these concepts in the following sections.

### 2.2.1 Inclusion as occupation

In the immense majority of countries, paid work is the entrance door to essential resources that people need to become full members of society: stable income provides them with social protection and status, and allows them to afford primary goods and to set up in their own homes. Beyond providing the resources necessary for living, paid work gives people such essential things as the ability to refine and develop their own abilities, significant social bonds, self-esteem and a sense of personal dignity: individuals become responsible for themselves and jointly responsible for the society in which they live, a society to which they contribute with their taxes. The effects of unemployment on people, widely studied and described, include progressive loss of skills, of social contacts, of motivation and of self-esteem, thus having a very high risk of suffering from depression (Sen, 2000).

We can, however, talk about occupation in a broader sense, in terms of tasks that are meaningful, useful, or bring social recognition, tasks which can be developed outside the job market and within the family, group or community. This kind of occupation can provide the same benefits as paid work, but an essential factor, access to income, is missing. Therefore, the third sector's capacity to generate attractive activities which enhance inclusion will largely depend on

the existence of alternative paths to provide people a subsistence income, alternatives which can hardly be possible without some form or other of government intervention.

### 2.2.2 Inclusion as protection

Protection, in the sense of insurance, is an essential value for people's well-being and largely drives us to live in society. We join together to better protect our physical and mental integrity, and when this protection functions reasonably we feel part of the group and trust in it. The very concept of "social insurance" indicates the essence of what has become an inherent feature in contemporary advanced societies.

On this point, we therefore talk about access to resources (via income transfers) and public services (health, social services, insurance, etc.) that guarantee people a certain protection from largely unavoidable adversities. These include accidents, epidemics and crime, which can affect health and assets, as well as illness, accidents, forced unemployment and ageing, which can lead to a sudden or gradual loss of self-sustenance. We also talk about promoting public health and providing health services which are accessible to the whole of the population.

Social protection mechanisms have another equally important purpose: they reduce income and wealth inequalities generated by the unequal distribution of abilities among people and by the very logic of the capitalist economic system. It is well known that when a society does not have any social policies, a large number of people are forced to live on the fringe, fighting to survive in an unhealthy, miserable environment, using all legal or illegal means available to them. In this regard, the correlation between social inequality and criminality is obvious.

### 2.2.3 Inclusion as recognition

In contemporary societies, diversity has grown constantly for decades. This is due not only to the exponential increase in residential mobility which brings people from highly diverse ethnic groups, nationalities and language backgrounds into contact but also to the diversification of options in religion, politics, sex, food and other key aspects of life, as a result of an individualisation process which has broken down in many countries the barriers on freedom of conscience and choice. Finally we need to talk as well about diversities that are not the result of choice, but rather misfortune, such as those caused by growing economic and social inequalities and physical or mental disability. On the whole, we could say that the homogenous societies that fed the imagination of Nation States no longer exist.

Diversity simply reflects the enormous wealth and complexity of human life. It can be seen as an inexhaustible reserve of knowledge and experience, but also can be used for different economic, social or political purposes. It is commonplace, for example, for diversity to serve as a pretext to justify unequal treatment between persons or the direct exclusion of certain persons from access to places, goods or services that are considered valuable. These practices, which we call *discrimination*, have numerous personal and social costs. What is at risk here is not only equal opportunities, but also the person's sense of dignity, which is fundamental for everyone to feel and act as a full member of the community. Sennet (2003) has convincingly presented the relationship between the respect that society is capable of showing towards its weakest members and the capacity of these to overcome their difficulties and keep developing.

Societies have certainly shown an ability to adapt to changing realities, which has led to general progress towards recognition of diversity and non-discrimination. However, there is still a long way to go and we cannot afford to fall back in any way, unless we want to accept a large amount of pain and exclusion.

#### 2.2.4 Inclusion as education

Forming part of a society means having at least a basic knowledge of its codes of communication and the necessary information needed to be satisfactorily placed in those spheres of life that can satisfy the biological and psychological needs of each individual<sup>13</sup>. The process of socialisation basically consists of passing on and/or acquiring everything that the adult generations consider necessary for life. This starts within the family when we are born, and continues mainly but much less exclusively in those institutions created specifically to educate. As societies become more open, dynamic, complex and technologically-oriented, the educational requirements which are necessary to become and remain a part of productive society grow and diversify; consequently, young peoples' education takes longer and becomes more costly, and ongoing lifelong education is no longer an option but rather a need. In this sense, the case of new information and communication technologies is paradigmatic.

This is why we can say that, in present societies, inclusion is at stake principally in the scenarios of knowledge and value transmission. What are these scenarios and how do they look like? Are they formal or informal, public or private, prestigious or non-prestigious, integrative or segregated, free or inaccessible to those with modest incomes? In short, are they appropriate or inappropriate methods of giving everyone a real chance to receive the skills to live and develop autonomously in society? Given the size of the challenge, we may agree that an inclusive society requires many different kinds of educational scenarios, but that all of them must

include a common educational core which guarantees our ability to universally pass on an essential set of shared codes and values.

#### 2.2.5 Inclusion as bonding

Human beings are social beings. In addition to the fact that human children need a prolonged period of care in order to be able to survive, it is simply not possible for someone who is completely isolated to build a truly human life.

Both quantity and quality of social connections and networks are positively correlated with levels of income, education and well-being. In addition to allowing us to share resources and supports which make life safer and richer, social relations provide an essential good called information; above all, they contribute practical information that is useful in the many different areas of life in society.

Although this appears to be the least political dimension of all, social bonds are of enormous importance. The American political scientist Robert Putnam (Putnam, 2002), demonstrated that relations forged with people beyond the family constitute valuable social capital which, generating and strengthening the strategic value trust, enable economies and governments to function smoothly.

#### 2.2.6 Inclusion as participation

To talk about inclusion as participation is in fact another way of formulating our research question. Participation is qualitatively different from the other four dimensions we have considered; indeed, politics' stated goal is shaping social life through the discourse and the action of social actors. Participation gives individuals the chance to do something really meaningful and can create very powerful bonds; through participation one can fight against discrimination, or for the improvement of public services or for better working conditions. This is why, as we shall see, many thinkers have considered inclusion to be an essentially political phenomenon.

When we talk about participation, we do not limit its meaning to voting or running for office, being active in a political party, or

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13 Certainly, two or more almost parallel communities with different languages and cultural practices can exist in the same place and be connected only through the political community; that is, a shared State. In such cases, the game of inclusion is played on two, relatively independent levels: inclusion in the community (ethnic/cultural) and inclusion in society (political), in which formal and informal education plays an essential role.

taking part in areas of deliberative or direct democracy such as government boards or councils, public debates and public opinion surveys. These are all essential aspects of participation, but should not overshadow other actions, such as actively taking part in organisations or groups that generate public value when defending certain causes, putting on public events, or supporting groups in need, to give a few examples. We are convinced that all of these latter factors have, to a greater or lesser extent, a political impact, too.

Ultimately, we are talking about citizenship, of a dynamic concept of citizenship, founded on the values of equal opportunities, solidarity, democracy and personal autonomy. It is a citizenship that can only grow and be consolidated through its own exercise; it cannot longer be a simple receptacle or container of recognised rights, but must become a permanent exercise of joint responsibility and solidarity in the face of shared problems.

Nowadays, at a time when the discourse of denigration or outright rejection of politics has gained an undeniable strength in different layers of society, it becomes difficult to give any plausibility to the idea of participation as an essential requirement of citizenship and the basis for “everything else” (e.g. freedoms, services, cohesion, etc.). Nevertheless, we intuitively assume that participation within society is positively correlated with the quality of its democratic system and levels of social inclusion.

## 2.3 Contradictions and weaknesses in the discourse of inclusion

As already stated, the paradigm of inclusion has been assumed by a large portion of the academic community and has been included in the political discourse of both, parties and institutions. Apparently, the theory of social inclusion has sufficient explanatory and prescriptive force to be considered a new paradigm for social policy making. However, since the 1990s the notion of social exclusion has remained highly ambiguous, displaying different meanings depending on the academic discipline from which it is approached and the ideological currents and cultural and institutional contexts from which it is applied. Social inclusion has apparently been fostered from a wide range of political projects, some of which were even in open conflict with each other. Therefore we must consider numerous doubts and clarify some suspicions before deciding to assume (or not assume) that inclusion is a valid paradigm for progressive 21st-century urban societies. Specifically, we need to figure out if and to what extent the paradigm of inclusion is economically biased, culturally homogenising, socially stigmatising and politically irrelevant.

### 2.3.1 Economically biased?

There is a very influential strand of thought, endorsed by the most powerful political and economic institutions of the world that considers the paradigm of inclusion basically from an economic point of view. According to this approach, in a commoditised world the only people who are seen as included are those who have a certain economic independence, since not only the degree of consumption a person can afford depends on this, but also other essential elements such as their sense of dignity and personal value. Without these endowments it is impossible to be on an equal footing to act in society. And in the adult phase of life, only income from jobs or from property rents can finance economic independence. For the immense majority of the population, inclusion therefore requires effective integration into the job market. Those who are not integrated into the job market inevitably find themselves on the path to exclusion.

While we agree that employment holds a core position in the process of social inclusion, we also believe that all views focused exclusively on work and income fail when the model includes very real phenomena such as:

- Unpaid work: A large part of the population is engaged in unpaid work, particularly reproductive work. This should be seen, at all effects, as *work* even though it is not recognised or compensated. If economic independence is a sine qua non condition for inclusion, shouldn't we consider as “excluded” all people who receive their income through partners, relatives or friends?
- Precarious, poorly paid work (the so-called *working poor*): The existence of this class of work makes possible that a person, though fully integrated into the formal economy, can be excluded for all practical effects when subject to precarious conditions and low salaries which do not cover her basic needs. On this point it is worth asking what is worse for a person, to be excluded from the labour market (bearing in mind all of the consequences that come along with this) or included but in a very unfavourable job market, doing precarious and poorly paid work, devoid of social recognition? Everyone facing precarious working conditions considers this question, and many may conclude that under certain conditions it is better to give up a formal job and instead elect to receive (financial) support from the government or to do informal work and/or pursue criminal paths<sup>14</sup>.
- Unemployment as a structural phenomenon: This is typical in a world characterised by highly technical industrial and agricultural

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<sup>14</sup> See Jordan.

production, where creating new quality jobs requires constantly increasing levels of investment and education. In the post-Fordist economy, if a person fails to be included on an educational level, we cannot expect high levels of inclusion in the job market.

To sum up, if in times of economic bonanza the strategy based on (full) occupation runs short, it does so still more in times of crisis. Under such conditions, associating human dignity and happiness exclusively with employment and consumption seems to us to be at least irresponsible and more likely a purposeful tactic adopted by public and private institutions that control the bulk of the world's economy and have an objective interest in keeping the price of the workforce down. Indeed, for 30 or 40 years, these dominant social groups have pushed to condemn unemployment on a moral level and encourage workfare policies at any price, without bearing in mind the opportunity cost of other socially useful options, such as taking care of the family, being involved in the community or pursuing artistic endeavours.

We agree that the most important dimension of inclusion is the economic one, but we arrive to this point of view from rather different premises. For us, the key factor is not access to the job market but rather the levels of unequal distribution of wealth that the logic underlying the job market can generate. We accept that a certain level of economic inequality is an inevitable result of the unequal distribution of human abilities, but we must be aware that the structure, degree, and consequences of economic inequalities vary significantly between countries. On this point, it is important to realise that there is a clear relationship between economic inequality and social exclusion, which has been demonstrated empirically in numerous studies<sup>15</sup>. In the market societies of the globalized world, inclusion inevitably needs the correction of economic inequalities, and even more of the impact of these inequalities on the non-economic spheres of society<sup>16</sup>. We believe it is essential to bear this in mind in order to develop suitable policies.

### 2.3.2 Promoting social homogeneity and conformism?

As Rosetti points out (Rosetti, 2007:31), we still have not resolved the discussion around “what the counter-concept to exclusion is”. The problem is not that there are various possible names for it (in addition to inclusion, other terms frequently used to refer to the concept are integration, insertion, and cohesion) but rather that we have not reached any agreement on the meaning(s) of the concept. These range from fully accepting the idea of the dominant class' cultural superstructure without criticism (to put it in Marxist terms) to understanding it as equal access to rights and duties, beyond ethnic, cultural, economic and other possible differences.

Nevertheless, the most common view is that societies formulate ideals of inclusion based on very specific cultural traits. Though there are many diverse ways of living in different parts of the world, in modern societies the predominant ideal is based on the levels of consumption that one is capable of financing, whether material or immaterial (i.e. relationships, experiences, culture, etc.); definitely more important than, e.g., levels of social commitment and participation. This is the perfect reflection of a society based on the market, one which tends to look down on any living situation which deviates from the standard, in which a happily-included person or family has a (well) paid job (at least for the man of the household), owns a house, and consumes a significant amount of goods and services. The exception to this model is the outstanding icons of culture, art or sports, which are nevertheless expected to deviate in very specific ways.

There is therefore a tendency to call certain situations “exclusion” problems when they simply reflect different ways of understanding life. Although in recent decades most countries have broadened their concepts of what is socially admissible –and, to a certain extent, of what should be considered “normal”– there is still an excessive tendency to seek homogeneity. We often reject people and groups who are too different; if we see that they cannot achieve what we believe to be a “worthy” standard of living, we tend to think that they have to be helped. Often, however, this situation is less about helping a supposedly excluded person than reaffirming the status of the mainstream groups, which need confirmation that their way of living is the only valid one and that the privileges which come along with it are justified.

Yet people are diverse and the societies shaped by them even more so; they could be characterized by an ever-growing, unredeemable diversity. Basing our idea of inclusion on a highly constricted ideal of life, unavoidably leads to a poor understanding of social problems and to “solutions” that shoot down any and all initiatives that are not suitably conventional. Indeed, if you fall outside the standard model of what a citizen should be, you are more likely to be viewed with the stigma that society reserves for excluded people, a stigma directly associated with poverty in the broadest sense of the term and linked to marginality, desperation and failure.

Viewing exclusion as a heavily and negatively connoted term serves those in power in two ways: on the one hand it reinforces the attractive standard model of inclusion (which, in contrast to the stigmatised individuals, is seen as the only desirable and true

15 Judt (pp. 29-31.) In light of the links between economic inequality and criminality, morbidity and other social pathologies, Judt considers inequality to be a corrosive phenomenon of societies.

16 See Michael Walzer (1983) for a brilliant discussion of this topic.

model) and on the other hand it makes easier to subject individuals and groups established outside the norm (e.g. illegal immigrants, drug addicts, the homeless, prostitutes, etc.) to societal mechanisms of control. If we non-critically assign stigma, putting someone in the socially-excluded category allows us to see them as existing not in ours but in another world, the world of incomplete and incompetent human beings. As such, those individuals are assumed to be unable to participate as full members of the community and are seen as individuals who need to be protected.

Even when trying to help those who are in need, stigmatisation is so interiorised that it is usually unconscious. We must realise that this way of viewing the problem, this "well-meant stigmatisation" often hides deep rooted paternalism. When strong enough, paternalism can prevent the disadvantaged people across society from improving their situation via their own means, by trying routes which may be different but which could be equally valid. Pressure by the happily-included majority to assimilate minorities is exerted at the individual, group, and community levels. This suggests a tendency to search for solutions (inclusion policies) that are too homogenous and do not sufficiently consider the importance of the local context: the concrete, nearby space where the processes of exclusion and inclusion play out and develop every day.

As seen above, although the inclusion paradigm considers and values the local dimension, public powers have not borne it sufficiently in mind when formulating directives or action plans. There is still a very strong tendency to conceive social and political reality from the perspective of homogenous, closed categories. Governments which hold on to the classical concept of nation-state and the principle of national solidarity which results of it, have in many cases given precedence to state action plans; there has been no significant transfer of resources to regional and especially local entities. Furthermore, countries which do not sufficiently recognise internal plurality have insisted that individuals must adopt the linguistic and cultural traits of the country's majority group in order to be included in society. These approaches ignore the fact that, beside and beyond the narrow cultural dimension, local contexts are often distinctive because of other things, such as the biological and geographical traits (e.g. climate, landscape, resources), the economic base and the types of things people do to earn a living.

Individuals and communities react in the same way when they are not recognised as equal players and granted the possibility to make their own choices in life. Either they challenge the legitimacy of the system or, the more often, they opt for conformity, which results in a more or less devalued version of the standard model, apathy, and stagnation.

### 2.3.3 Politically unaware and irrelevant?

The discourse of inclusion has been strongly criticised by classical sociology, and especially by the so-called British class sociology, which questions two of its essential assumptions: 1. That individualisation and the overcoming of national frameworks are key factors of the current social transformation (because these issues tend only to concern certain minorities, normally mostly composed of well-to-do individuals) and 2. That class analysis has lost the capacity to fully explain inequalities between people. In accordance with this view, we are not facing a new era but rather updated versions of old inequalities and class conflicts. Indeed, in the most extreme version of this criticism, the defenders of the inclusion paradigm are accused of hiding, or at least minimising, the importance of class conflicts and of thus contributing to the process of deideologisation and of degradation of politics to simple management of a series of "inevitable" changes (e.g. the approach taken by the so-called "Third Way"; see Atkinson, 2007). Ulrich Beck, a conspicuous representative of the new approach, contested these accusations by saying that in no case did he deny the existence of inequalities (which he sees, indeed, becoming more exacerbated over time); rather, he states that neither the genesis nor the structure of inequalities could be explained primarily in terms of class (Beck, 2007).

On an institutional level, however, it is true that inclusion became fully visible in European and state policies under the so-called Lisbon Agenda, which basically reflected European state's desire to be the leading players in liberal globalisation and considered social inclusion from the perspective of "helping those who are unable to keep following (...)" the only valid, viable model. In no case did this represent either recognition of the social consequences of economic liberalisation or a possible correction of structural inequalities.

On the other side of the Atlantic, in the United States, the political insensitivity of the exclusion/inclusion dialectics has been linked to its holistic ambition; that is, to the tendency to group all existing situations of inequality and social conflict together under the exclusion paradigm. The problem with this, according to Iris M. Young, is that by doing so the concepts of exclusion and inclusion lose their meaning and are no longer useful in terms of critical analysis. In this vein, Young (Young, 2002) believes we should "call a spade a spade", and if the problems are racism, cultural intolerance, economic exploitation or the refusal to help people, we should name them so. In fact, both Young and Robert Dahl (Dahl, 2000) believe that inclusion is a concept which belongs essentially to the sphere of politics. According to them, we talk about (political) exclusion when

certain people or groups are excluded from the decision-making processes that affect them; this has obvious economic and social consequences which can be seen in poverty, few job opportunities, and other similar issues. Not only does this line of argument join democracy and inclusion, it considers them inseparable. To talk about “inclusive democracy” would therefore be a pleonasm, since a democratic society must be inherently inclusive in order to be truly democratic.

The allegation of political insensitivity and ineffectiveness is probably the most radical objection being put against the social inclusion theory. Does the exclusion/inclusion paradigm help to hide subjects which were and are still essential —such as inequality, class conflict or poverty— from the political debate and put them off the political agenda? According to this critical vision, the ideal of inclusion does nothing more than express the desire to overcome deep social conflicts, based on the unfair distribution of economic and political power, without privileged groups having to assume their due share.

Along this promising critical strain, a concept appears that has been used as a guideline for the inclusion policies from a strictly liberal view of social exclusion, that of “equal opportunities”. Equal opportunities are not only put forward as a way to resolve exclusion, with the meritocratic principle used as a basic criterion for distributing goods and honours in society, but also as a solution to equity and justice. If people have the same chances of developing professionally, thus acquiring a high status and being fully “included” in society, then the successful ones can be satisfied at their, fully legitimate, success. For their part, losers have to accept their fate because they have not managed to use properly their energy, their skills and other resources, and have thus failed to seize the opportunities that society offered them.

But to what extent can everyone be offered the same opportunities? Can a starting point under equal conditions realistically be considered, when we think about the widely differing endowments (physical and intellectual) and the capital (economic and cultural) that, respectively, nature and society make available to each individual? Obviously not, because there are many factors that produce inequality and render the ideal of equal opportunities impossible; some are derived from genetics, some from sheer hazard (good or bad luck). Nevertheless, another, the most substantial part of inequality stems from the social organisation itself.

The fact of a more heterogeneous, fragmented society and individualised life courses does not mean that there are no common, socially constructed processes that strongly condition

individual lives. We find the clearest example of this in the fact that the socio-economic position of the parents is still the strongest factor in predicting the position that the children will have, and in some countries, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom, social mobility has even decreased in the last three decades (Judd, 2010:27). Examples of other social phenomena associated with exclusion and highly frequent in post-industrial societies are immigrant discrimination (especially irregular immigrants), mental illnesses amongst the younger population, gender violence and increased work instability.

When many people experience the same phenomenon, and this grows and becomes frequent, there must be social causes behind it that have to be ascertained and analysed, and the possible political implications must also be considered. The enormous inequalities of world income and wealth are “...*more than just bad luck or a certain combination of preferences, tastes, skills and personal effort*” (Puyol, 2010:205).

People's attitude and behaviour are obviously important too; some individuals learn to know how to chance the system and move from a precarious start towards inclusion, other exceptional individuals even manage to reach the top of the social status. Nevertheless, no matter how spectacular these cases are, they are still the exceptions that confirm the rule repeatedly confirmed by the statistics: if the only thing we can offer is a weak view of equal opportunities, incapable of guaranteeing consistent redistribution policies, many people, the vast majority in the most discriminated groups, will fail to attain a decent quality of life, no matter how hard they try.

In the end, social inclusion shouldn't be devised as a supposedly fair individual race to sort out the capable, but rather as an ideal of universal validity, with a reasonable chance of everyone, or nearly everyone, being able to achieve it. From this perspective it does not seem possible to achieve significant progress in combating exclusion without “...*unmasking the way in which the institutions and social relations are structured in order to restrict some people's opportunities for developing and exercising their skills and achieving their goals*” (Puyol, 2010:203); unmasking in order to change them for something better.

The following table shows a series of paradigms that have tried to explain exclusion. They differ in the causes of exclusion, in its consequences and, logically, in the policy recommendations to fight against it. We can also see that each paradigm considers a certain correspondence and fits one form of democracy. This will be analysed in depth in the next chapter.

**Table 2: Paradigms explaining social exclusion**

Paradigm	Causes of exclusion	Responses to exclusion	Social model	Public policy model	Political field defending it
Individual attitudes	Misuse of market opportunities and wrong public interventions	Individualism: effort and motivation	Market model	Workfare policies; occupational deregulation	Neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism (Anglo-Saxon)
Social disconnection	Breakage and weakening of social bonds	Solidarity and cohesion	Social integration	Active inclusion policies	Republicanism (French)
Social inequalities	Monopoly and concentration of economic and political power	Redistribution and equality	Political and social rights	Welfare redistributing policies	Classical social democracy
Exploitation and domination	Capitalist and patriarchal inequalities. New labour "reserve army"	Social transformation	Equality in an alternative social model	Policies of emancipation and empowering actions	New radical perspectives

Adapted from: Rosetti (p. 36).

The four paradigms or views of the problem of exclusion compete with each other in both the academic and the political area. Some scholars and politicians are totally convinced about the superiority of their respective paradigms, but others express more doubts on the fact that there might be one paradigm clearly superior to the others, which might therefore become the general rule in inclusion policies. Facing such a complex phenomenon, simple explanations are not compelling enough. If we are to achieve better analysis and better responses, social science should devote more effort to researching exclusion and inclusion from a multidisciplinary approach (sociology, political science, economics, law, anthropology,...); an approach that takes in account both the theoretical (descriptive-explanatory) and the practical (regulatory-prescriptive) side of knowledge, and is able to apply it from a specifically local perspective (case studies, local observatories of exclusion).

## 2.4 For a complex, relational and dynamic view of inclusion

Though it is possible to make poor use of the paradigm of inclusion as rhetoric to conceal inequalities and social conflicts, there are undeniable signs of change, which point to the pervasiveness of the exclusion/inclusion logic. The most obvious

sign of it is the growing segmentation and segregation in work, housing, school, sport and other social domains. Individualisation also seems to be clearly coupled with greater vulnerability, because people now can count less on the family and community cushions that were previously available, and the Welfare State, which could compensate this loss, has stagnated or even tended to halter. There is also a broad agreement on the characterisation of social exclusion as a dynamic, multidimensional and heterogeneous phenomenon, that we may find in different stages and situations (from vulnerability to extreme exclusion) through which individuals of any class and condition can pass, depending on a wide variety of factors. Exclusion is a process that in principle could affect everyone, although to very different degrees, and which is not irreversible. The indeterminacy and plasticity of social exclusion make inclusion policies purposeful and necessary.

Nevertheless, the criticisms presented in the previous point force us to refine the concepts much better, to guarantee that the paradigm of social inclusion, and the policies derived from it, will be tools at the service of social progress. Work is needed on four very specific points: reaffirming multidimensionality, assuming diversity, building the social problem and foreseeing collective action. We will see that, from this perspective, *autonomy* is the word that best reflects the ideal of social inclusion.



### 2.4.1 Inclusion is always multidimensional

Both the essentially disciplinary organisation of scientific knowledge production and the essentially vertically divided structure of public administration tend to strongly fragment the problem of exclusion, while consciously or unconsciously forgetting that the very concept of exclusion was generated from multidisciplinary and transversal approaches, because this was the only way to understand the complex interrelationships between the different factors involved. There are therefore some who deal with the problem in strictly economic terms, as we have already seen, but others who do so in strictly political, or social, or cultural terms. The single dimensional approaches tell us that inclusion is only a matter of money, or political power, or interpersonal relationships, or values...

To be coherent with the theoretical and conceptual framework of inclusion, we should not get carried away by this kind of discourses, no matter how well they might be grounded in their speciality. We should think and work in an interdisciplinary way, although it may be slower and more complicated, because this is the only effective way to approach and deal with the problem. The interdisciplinary focus implies more intervention and coordination costs, because it is necessary to advance on all fronts at the same time. However, the positive side of it is that individuals and society can be more resilient, because all factors are interconnected but none of them is, by itself, truly essential to achieve an acceptable level of inclusion.

To put an example related to the economic dimension: although poverty is considered to be one of the most determining factors of exclusion, we can think of cases in which the correlation poverty-exclusion is not that evident. We refer to people who, while in a state of objective material poverty, take a full part in the life of their families and communities, regardless of whether they are workers with low salaries, unemployed or pensioners. At the other end of the economic scale, there are also people in a relatively comfortable economic and financial situation but who are immersed in situations of exclusion due to failing health or to a lack of family and social networks. The material factor is important, but there are other factors which play a role.

Other plausible situations, well known from many non-democratic regimes, are people suffering severe political exclusion, but who can compensate it with powerful group and community solidarity networks. Even considering extreme situations, such as imprisonment, it that does not have to mean, necessarily and automatically, that the affected person falls into social exclusion, because it is just a factor, although a very negative one, in a life path within the inclusion-exclusion continuum.

### 2.4.2 Inclusion is essentially autonomy

When we start thinking of a form of social inclusion that neither segregates nor assimilates or annihilates individual initiative, which is capable of accommodating diversity while enabling life in a shared social space, we come to the concept of autonomy; that is the person's capacity to develop her own life project, according to her desires and possibilities and cooperating on an equal footing with other members of society.

Autonomy is a highly demanding ideal that implies assuming three old principles that still hold in drawing out a horizon of human emancipation:

1. Freedom of being and acting in accordance on one's own conscience. Individuals and groups acting autonomously can and do produce different, often unexpected, results. There are different ways to integrate in working life, to form a family, to democratically govern a community, etc. which are the fruit of specific cultural conditions and other different factors. All of the life options that respect certain essential moral principles (non-violence, non-aggression non-discrimination...) are legitimate and, as such, must be accepted even though their social value might be the object of criticism.
2. Equality, that means we assume that the life of each and every one of the people is equally important and deserves an identical moral status. Society must be committed to the emancipation (or empowerment) *"of the disadvantaged classes until a society is achieved in which the only legitimate differences are those which reflect different, free, morally legitimate forms of understanding life"* (Puyol, 2010:208).
3. Fraternity, expressed in cooperation and solidarity. Living in society, and still more in our high-density, highly complex urban societies, life projects can only be developed openly and in collaboration. This logic of cooperation can and must occur in the different spheres of life (home, market, state...), each with criteria of rationality and specific norms and behaviours. The cities' origin lies in human beings' search for a better life by exchanging particularly goods and services (market), but also ideas (forum).

The model requires the three principles, but there is an underlying tension between them that must be made productive by seeking a suitable balance point, especially between freedom and equality, because freedom does not consider the collective dimension and equality doesn't take into account the individual dimension of the person. The principle of fraternity, which in a paradigm based on autonomy should be understood more as cooperation than solidarity, provides the necessary link between individual and community, an essential link to guarantee constant critical dialogue, adaptation and agreement between autonomous life projects, without which social progress, and not even life in common, would be possible.

Rejecting a model of inclusion based on paternalism does not force us to the other extreme, to the assumption that any option chosen autonomously will, for this sole reason, necessarily be good<sup>17</sup>. If the emblem of the first modernity was criticism of the traditional order, the emblem of the second modernity is “criticism of criticism” (Beck, 2007); all models and all projects, albeit traditional or progressive, from below or above, must pass through the same critical filter and have their validity pretension tested. Above all, criticism –systematic and constructive– should be seen as a way to connect and engage individuals in an exchange of views and arguments through which intellectual and social capital may be generated.

Because we know that inclusion through autonomy is dynamic, but also eminently relational. Everyone is invited to take part in society, because everyone is able to contribute, but no one can do entirely without the others. The more complex the societies, the more they depend on relationship and exchange for their economic, social and cultural progress.

The ideal of autonomy should be normative in all areas of life, starting with the home and family relationships and continuing with social groups, companies and institutions. It should also be normative in the territorial political organisation, from the local communities to a hypothetical and ever more necessary world government. The federal principle or the principle of subsidiarity also seems the most valid answer to us in accommodating people’s wish to be them in an ever more complex, interdependent world.

### Note: Inclusion and Local Autonomy

In a plural and diversity friendly society, the routes to inclusion must be open, flexible and inevitably local. In other words, each place, which might be the district, the village or the city, has its specific biophysical, demographic, economic and social cultural conditioners, and also a singular constellation of needs. For exclusion and inclusion materialise basically in proximity, in the structures and processes which shape and give meaning to people’s daily life. This local level has to enjoy proper self-government if it is to articulate collective action against inclusion.

It is not by chance that political-administrative decentralisation, mostly expressed in the existence of democratic local governments, is associated with an increase in institutional quality and human development. Institutions such as the United Nations and especially the Council of Europe have noted this demand and have put resources into its normative and technical development.

Local autonomy has also been criticised, due to the scarcity of critical mass and essential resources that many local governments may deploy when addressing big problems. It is also accused of provoking the dispersion of political power, resulting in a State’s overall smaller capacity to redistribute income and correct inequalities. Undoubtedly local governments may be even more inefficient and ineffective as their regional and national counterparts, and the claim for local autonomy can also encourage or cover sheer egoism, such as when well-to-do districts attempt (and often succeed) to separate from their core cities and become municipalities by themselves, in order to avoid resources being redistributed to the poorer districts through taxes.

However, these problems are not resolved with less local autonomy, but rather with better institutional designs and regulations. High levels of transparency and accountability are required, as well as suitable metropolitan institutions to guarantee both the institutional output and the redistribution policies. This makes necessary that the (traditional) local identity and/or residents’ political will cease to be considered the only factors in drawing up the map of local institutions. It is also important to apply a systemic –regional and national– vision, of the territory; one that reflects the true dynamics of urban economies and societies, where we find a growing mixture of people of different origins, professions and status. It must be clear, however, that once the map and the general framework have been drawn up, national governments should respect the democratic will of each local government in exercising its competencies.

In the countries with more powerful, consolidated local autonomy, local power is often built around a relatively small number of municipalities, with a certain critical mass of population and resources, and well provided with competencies and fiscal income. Nonetheless, the correct functioning of local autonomy doesn’t have to imply the suppression of small municipalities. There are other institutional arrangements that allow a circumstantial (associations, consortia...) or stable (supra-municipal entities such as local regions, cantons, provinces...) expression of cooperation between municipalities. Nonetheless, local governments should have sufficient autonomy and resources to plan and develop their own inclusion policies.

17 Cleaver (1999:605) wonders whether the fear of being labelled paternalists will repress any kind of criticism of the options and actions of the most vulnerable groups in the end. Here he sees the danger of “*swinging from one untenable position (“we know best”) to an equally untenable and damaging one (“they know best”)*”.

### 2.4.3 Inclusion is a social and political question

By definition, social exclusion is neither static nor irreversible; if we consider inclusion as a problem caused by society, and which society itself must address, the question that comes next is that of collective action; that is, of politics. Historically, the disadvantaged and excluded social groups have mobilised in some way or other in response to injustice to improve their situation with a wide range of strategies (protest, resistance, revolution, union, political party...), conditioned by many factors, such as the shape of the production structure, the existence of a powerful alternative ideology and of charismatic leaderships, the possibility of establishing alliances with other social groups, or the openness of institutions. The results of such mobilisations have been unequal, with responses that range from beneficence systems to legally regulated social protection, from group and inter-group solidarity to the recognition and inclusion of the groups oppressed by the social mainstream and the State, from progressive social reform to revolutionary rupture. However, despite recurrent fallbacks the overall trend moves towards greater inclusion.

Today, nothing is essentially different in this point. The fight against exclusion is waged on different fronts: in the economic area (striving for a more active presence of the excluded people in producing value, in and out of the market); in the social area, by reinforcing the group and community networks; and in the realm of the public institutions, through the active exercise of political rights. In fact, if the public powers manage to take on the mission of promoting inclusion, it is because certain people and groups have expressed the problem, transferred it to public opinion and pressed for it to be included in the local, national or global political agenda.

This collective action against social exclusion is citizen participation writ large. We identify also a very clear association between inclusion and participation, understood not only in political terms, but also as the ability and opportunities to “take part” in the different spheres of life. Public participation is possible in any kind of political regime, although it is only in democratic regimes that it has institutional channels for expression and is protected from the state’s arbitrariness. However, it remains to be seen to what extent the idea of citizen participation valid in the “real existing democracies” might promote social inclusion.

If inclusion requires participation and participation only flourishes in democracy, what is the relationship between inclusion and democracy? The different uses given to these concepts don’t help much to clarify the question. We find that, in a single academic paper, inclusion is considered an essential part of democracy<sup>18</sup>, but also one of its main objectives<sup>19</sup>. So are these two sides to the same coin? Two parts of a single process mutually feeding each other? These key questions lead us to the next part of the study, the one devoted to participation.

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18 Sisk, p. 15: “Inclusion and participation are essential to build the trust and accountability needed for citizen confidence in the quality of local democracy” ; p. 19: “(...) principles of democracy such as participation and inclusion (...)”.

19 Sisk, p. 72: “Mitigating segregation and fostering inclusion are key functions of democracy”.

## 3. Democracy and Inclusion: Assessing an ambivalent relationship

### 3.1 21st century democracy: From quantity to quality

Democracy has become the only desirable and even conceivable form of political regime in practice, almost unquestionable in public (and academic) debate, and called for even by its detractors. Democracy expanded on a global scale in the last third of the 20th century (Southern Europe in the 1970s, Latin America in the 80s, Eastern Europe and Africa in the 90s...), consolidating its success, but at the same time beckoning the end of the unequivocal western, liberal cultural framework in which the discourse had been born and extending the meaning of democracy to a wide range of new meanings, different from or even contrary to the liberal original.

In the last two decades, political science has therefore moved from studying the differences between democratic and non-democratic regimes towards a qualitative analysis of democracy that takes in consideration phenomena such as efficacy, corruption and participation. In this sense it has been particularly interesting to identify a category on which to place the ever more numerous regimes which formally present themselves as democracies, but have such serious structural faults and shortcomings that they end up being placed halfway between democracy and non democracy, leaning towards one or the other.

The paradigm of democratic quality is based on the conviction that democracy is the least harmful of the systems of government created by humankind, but that it has to be constantly revised and perfected, changing everything that doesn't work. We should be open to all possible forms of democracy, as far as they respect certain legitimacy and effectiveness standards, for each may be useful in one context or for a certain function, provided they are applied correctly. A rigid consideration is therefore not recommendable in the sense of believing, for example, that an electoral majoritarian system is always better than a proportional one; instead, we should always analyse the different factors in play.

In their introduction of the *Report on the state of Democracy in Catalonia 2007*, Anduiza and Pardos (Anduiza and Pardos, 2008:15-46) state that it is enormously difficult to assess the quality of the democratic system, considering the number of factors to be analysed and the need for normative criteria for all of them. Their analysis is very complete and bears in mind both the instrumental dimension (the procedures for taking decisions) and the substantive dimension (the results of the decisions) of democracy. The model they propose is structured through three different levels or areas of analysis: the government, the citizens and the intermediate players.

In addition to showing the large number of fronts that a democratic regime has to deal with simultaneously and satisfactorily if it wishes to attain quality, the Anduiza and Pardos model enables us to understand why participation is the key element for the existence of true democratic citizenship. In fact, it can be exercised only through participation, and the model shows us three principles that might be used to measure its quality: 1. There should be significant opportunities for taking part in the decision-making; 2. participation should be open to all citizens, and 3. The participation of each individual must receive the same consideration and the same weight in the event of voting.

Furthermore the model tells us that for participation to be feasible a series of requirements concerning rights and freedoms have to be met, among which we point out the existence of social rights. This is further evidence that, without strong social commitment, a democratic regime cannot achieve a high level of quality in its government institutions and processes. We will see how this relationship may be established empirically.

**Table 3: Framework for evaluating democratic quality**

Area	Aspects to be considered	Regulatory principles
Government	Representation. All citizens should be properly represented, without exclusions or discriminations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality between electors</li> <li>• Proportionality in the political preferences</li> <li>• Likeness between represented and representatives</li> </ul>
	Accomplishment. Institutions must be capable of taking decisions that meet the preferences of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The government has the capacity to take decisions with the most possible degree of support</li> <li>• The contents of the government decisions reflect the demands of the public</li> <li>• The government respects the electoral commitments of the party or parties that form it</li> </ul>
	Control. Institutions must be subject to controls to prevent abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence of the citizens in choosing and controlling their representatives</li> <li>• Capacity of action of the horizontal control mechanisms over de executive branch (Parliament, Ombudsman, Public Audit Office...)</li> </ul>
	Performance. The institutions' satisfactory performance must be reflected in a positive public assessment and in the quality of the public services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of quality public services</li> <li>• Good assessment of public institutions by the citizens</li> <li>• Low level of corruption</li> </ul>
Citizens	Rights and freedoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical security and legal efficacy</li> <li>• Respect for fundamental rights</li> <li>• Social rights and equal opportunities</li> </ul>
	Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure of political opportunities for participation</li> <li>• Extension</li> <li>• Equality in participation</li> </ul>
	Political culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest and awareness of the political sphere</li> <li>• Trust in democracy</li> <li>• Agreement on basic political questions</li> </ul>
Players acting as intermediaries between the government and the citizens	Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pluralismo y densidad asociativas</li> <li>• Internal democracy and performance</li> </ul>
	Political parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linkage between parties and society</li> <li>• Internal democracy</li> </ul>
	Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pluralism</li> <li>• Independence</li> <li>• Professional ethics</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Anduiza and Pardos (2008)

## 3.2 Democratic quality and human development

Although there is no official institution with enough recognised authority to define what a high (or low) quality democracy is and to evaluate the existing democracies, there are private institutions that carry out methodical, serious work on the subject. Two of them, the Freedom House and The Economist, each year prepare and publish rankings of democratic quality by countries, in which the large part of the world States are assessed and classified. The so-called Democracy Index, drawn up by the intelligence unit of the British weekly The Economist, is calculated from an extensive list of questions (60) distributed in five blocks: electoral process and pluralism, government operation, political participation, democratic political culture and civil rights, all interrelated and making up a coherent whole. Nevertheless, there are four aspects which are considered critical and score higher when making an overall evaluation of the democratic quality of a system: 1. whether the national elections are free and fair; 2. voter security; 3. the influence of foreign powers in the government, and 4. the public administration's capacity to implement policies. As we see, these are essential, almost foundational elements of democracy, without which it becomes impossible or loses its meaning.

Seeking empirical data to ascertain whether there is a significant, positive correlation between democracy and inclusion, another key reference, the Human Development Index<sup>20</sup> (HDI), drawn up by the United Nations Development Programme. The HDI had been repeatedly criticised for the fact that it failed to sufficiently contemplate the social equality variable, but when it was updated in November 2010, the authors for the first time calculated an inequality-adjusted HDI. This version of the HDI includes the losses of human development caused by inequalities that can be seen in the three basic dimensions considered in each country (life expectancy, education and income) and has logically caused movements with respect to the unadjusted ranking of the same year 2010, which are reflected in the table with green (position gain), or red arrows (position loss).

The following table, containing the 30 countries with the highest scores in each index reveals two important things: 1. the strong similarity between the results of both columns<sup>21</sup> and 2. The similarity between democratic quality and human development is more intense with the adjusted HDI, when inequalities in health, education and income are included in the equation.

We can see that the Scandinavian countries are in the top positions in both tables, whereas other countries with a similar or even greater economic power are relegated to considerably lower positions both in the Democracy Index and in the adjusted Human

**Table 4: Comparison between DI 2008 and adjusted HDI 2010 (top-30)**

Democracy Index 2008 (The Economist Intelligence Unit) top-30 of 167 states			Inequality-adjusted HD Index 2010 (United Nations Development Program) top-30 of 169 states		
1	Sweden	9.88	1	Norway	0.876 (—)
2	Norway	9.68	2	Australia	0.864 (—)
3	Iceland	9.65	3	Sweden	0.824 (▲6)
4	Netherlands	9.53	4	Netherlands	0.818 (▲3)
5	Denmark	9.52	5	Germany	0.814 (▲5)
6	Finland	9.25	6	Switzerland	0.813 (▲7)
7	New Zealand	9.19	7	Ireland	0.813 (▼2)
8	Switzerland	9.15	8	Canada	0.812 (—)
9	Luxembourg	9.10	9	Iceland	0.811 (▲8)
10	Australia	9.09	10	Denmark	0.810 (▲9)
11	Canada	9.07	11	Finland	0.806 (▲5)
12	Ireland	9.01	12	United States	0.799 (▼8)
13	Germany	8.82	13	Belgium	0.794 (▲5)
14	Austria	8.49	14	France	0.792 (—)
15	Spain	8.45	15	Czech Republic	0.790 (▲13)
16	Malta	8.39	16	Austria	0.787 (▲9)
17	Japan	8.25	17	Spain	0.779 (▲3)
18	United States	8.22	18	Luxembourg	0.775 (▲6)
19	Czech Republic	8.19	19	Slovenia	0.771 (▲10)
20	Belgium	8.16	20	Greece	0.768 (▲2)
21	United Kingdom	8.15	21	United Kingdom	0.766 (▲5)
22	Greece	8.13	22	Slovakia	0.764 (▲9)
23	Uruguay	8.08	23	Israel	0.763 (▼8)
24	France	8.07	24	Italy	0.752 (▼1)
25	Portugal	8.05	25	Hungary	0.736 (▲11)
26	Mauritius	8.04	26	Estonia	0.733 (▲8)
27	Costa Rica	8.04	27	South Korea	0.731 (▼15)
28	South Korea	8.01	28	Cyprus	0.716 (▲7)
29	Italy	7.98	29	Poland	0.709 (▲11)
30	Slovenia	7.96	30	Portugal	0.700 (▲10)

Source: Gabba in preparation from data provided by the official reports.

Development Index. We see a strong correlation between the two variables, but we don't have the statistical elements to assert the causal direction of the correlation, or in which direction the causality is stronger. However, it intuitively seems that democratic quality fosters a high level, egalitarian model of human development, just as a highly developed, egalitarian society provides perfect conditions for democratic quality. It is most likely that the two variables feed each other in a virtuous circle.

20 The HDI is obtained by calculating three dimensions: 1. a long healthy life (measured by life expectancy at birth); 2. Access to knowledge (measured by average and expected years of schooling) and 3. A good standard of living (measured by national gross per capita income). The complete report can be downloaded from: [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2010\\_EN\\_Complete.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Complete.pdf)

21 Japan does not appear on the adjusted HDI ranking; apparently because it failed to provide the required data.

### 3.3 The dark side: Excluding and exclusion producing democracies

If the relationship between democracy and inclusion was so perfect, and being most of the countries in the world under democratic regimes, some of which hundreds of years old, why is it that we are faced with a problem of large-scale social inclusion, also present in the most consolidated democracies? Something does not quite fit. Maybe democracy is not always inclusive, or not to the extent that would be desirable in countries that have joined the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Unfortunately, the world is full of political regimes, institutions and practices that consider themselves and are mainly seen as democracies and which, under close scrutiny, exclude a fair amount of the population. Exclusion is often obvious, and even legally sanctioned, but on many occasions it is more subtle and has to be sought between the lines.

This is a worrying question that cannot be skirted. Can a society only be constituted as democratic and inclusive of certain social groups, by excluding other groups and categories of people who *necessarily* have to be left out? Is exclusion/inclusion a zero-sum game, mediated by a democratic polity ruled by the social groups with more resources and power?

#### 3.3.1 The historical origins of democratic exclusion

According to the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor *“Democracy, particularly liberal democracy, is a great philosophy of inclusion. Rule of the people, by the people, for the people; and where the “people” is supposed to mean everybody. (...) Democracy offers the prospect of the most inclusive politics of human history. And yet, there is something in the dynamics of democracy which pushes to exclusion”* (Taylor, 1998). The first democracies in historical record, those of Athens and other Greek cities, were indeed profoundly excluding (women, slaves, foreigners...). Two thousand years later, the same North American democracy that dazzled the world was founded on the absolute political and social exclusion of the black population, and maintained its segregation well into the 20th century<sup>22</sup>. All European democracies started with some form of limiting suffrage, normally dependent on the ownership of material assets, and maintained women’s political exclusion for decades. In both cases, despite meeting the formal requirements of democratic participation, there was *de facto* exclusion which, through different segregation policies, deprived not a small part of the population of the right to effectively exercise democratic politics.

If the demos is defined in terms of participation and social inclusion, two types of fundamental tensions are posed: on the one hand, vertical tension brought in by the elitisation of participation, on the other hand, the horizontal tension resulting from its

territorialisation. In the first classical Greek democracies, the vertical tension was made explicit through the classification of the city’s populations into distinct groups, to whom different rights and freedoms were assigned. The horizontal tension, on its part, was articulated through mechanisms such as ostracism, that is, the temporary or permanent expulsion from the polis. In short, democracy was since its beginnings also a tool of social exclusion.

#### 3.3.2 Explicit and implicit exclusion in contemporary democracies

In modern times, the horizontal tensions in defining the demos have been revealed in the question of the inclusion of two specific groups: minorities and foreigners, which in some cases account for a large part or even the majority of the total population. The oldest question is that of the rights of non assimilated national minorities that were already present inside nation states when these were created; the processes of nation and State building were carried out, in no few cases, by excluding national minorities, and only recently has this characteristic tendency of the nation state towards uniformity been turned round with new policies of recognition and institutional designs better suited to the pluri-national nature of the majority of States in the world. The degree of complexity and diversification acquired by contemporary societies has made it ever more difficult to sustain a purely ethno-national concept of the people (the demos), without breaching the principles on which the state’s democratic procedures are based.

The second, more recent, kind of problem is caused by the large increase in the migrant population which has come along with the deepening of the economic globalisation process. Even in the most open democracies, the foreign population has found it very difficult to access political rights, and the proliferation of laws excluding foreigners from basic rights, or even directly sentencing them to illegality, is today one of the most important challenges of democracy and an unequivocal symptom of de-democratization<sup>23</sup>.

In regard to the vertical tension, in modern times democracy has sketched a much more appealing historical horizon, with the seemingly unstoppable extension of suffrage, overcoming class and gender barriers. The universal suffrage, introduced in practically all democratic regimes, although some even as late as the end of the 20th century, represented an enormous success in the process of inclusion through

22 Through the so-called Jim Crow Laws that consecrated the doctrine of “separate but equal”; a model which by the way was copied, enhanced and maintained for longer as Apartheid in South Africa.

23 The concept of “de-democratization” is borrowed of Charles Tilly (2007), who has theorized about the historical process of democratization as far-reaching, complex, ambiguous and reversible.

citizenship. However, the achievement of suffrage in many cases failed to immediately and effectively include the most disadvantaged social classes in democratic politics. By simplifying the pluralism of society, the very principle of political representation seems to be not very functional for social inclusion. But the most serious problem is that, in many places, electoral systems have been set up in such a way that certain ideological options are underrepresented or directly excluded from representation. The examples might range from the majority electoral systems with a single round voting, which discriminate third political forces and seriously hinder new parties entering the system, from the percentage barriers of some proportional systems, which have similar effects, to more subtle forms of manipulation, such as designing or redesigning the electoral districts with the intention of modifying the electoral map, often known as gerrymandering<sup>24</sup>. In a pure representative system of democracy, where participation is restricted to exercising one's vote every x years, the falsification of the representation systems means that large sectors or even the majority of society are, if not legally, in fact excluded from democratic politics.

Whether it is due to the endogamy of the political elites, or to the structural "shortcomings" in the representation systems, electoral abstention has risen in almost the entire world, and this, along with systematically leaving outside from the democratic process large social groups, turns the idea of universal suffrage into a chimera. In the context of the crisis of representative democracy, the discussions point at two clearly opposed types of response:

- Firstly, democracy should be deepened or *democratised* by rethinking the effective conditions for exercising citizenship and promoting political inclusion, not only from institutional policy, but through mobilisation and social policies to guarantee the material bases of participation.
- By contrast, and obviously banishing the democratic ideal, the decision-making should be transferred in key areas (monetary policy, employment regulation, education, technological development,...) to supposedly "independent" bodies formed by "experts" who are generally no more than representatives of each country's economic elites.

The demands for democratisation and de-democratisation coexist in the public debate, sometimes within the same government or the same ideological current, and this not only confuses citizens, but hinders changes that might improve the quality of the real existing democracy.

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<sup>24</sup> This practice is known by the name of gerrymandering. The term comes from Elbridge Gerry, governor of Massachusetts (USA). By 1812, Gerry, worried that his party, the Democratic-Republican, failed to win in districts north and west of the state, decided to unify all these districts into one, which thereby got less seats in the legislature. Reporters noticed that the district thus created had the shape of a salamander, which they named Gerry-Mander. The term was successful, moving to designate any form of manipulation of electoral districts for partisan purposes (a very complete explanation of the term and its contemporary uses can be found at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrymandering>).

## Note: Associations and exclusion: the dark side of civil society

The democratic State maintains a complex, ambivalent relationship with inclusion, but what happens to the organisations that, in principle, do represent social interests? The concept of "civil society" embodies an enormous range of players, with specific approaches and practices. As intermediate bodies between family and society, most are privileged spaces of participation and inclusion; an inclusion, however, that is selective in many cases. We cannot forget the fact that a large part of the formally constituted organisations operate along the lines of a club, which strictly limits the benefits of its activity to its members and exerts the right to decide over new admissions, regulated according to the composition and purpose of the institution. Furthermore, to be attractive to their potential members, organisations often try to maximise their members' benefits, logically at the expense of those excluded. This is how the classic, well-positioned organisations work, for instance the political parties, business organisations and unions. Although they might achieve general benefits which are reinvested in the whole of the population, the most attractive, tangible benefits are usually reserved for their members.

We can observe the growth of new phenomena of exclusion, as for example the so-called "gated communities", along with the modernisation of ancestral excluding practices, such as private "exclusive" schools, often promoted by groups of parents. There are other, apparently more inclusive organisations, such as co-operative firms, which also apply the logic of exclusion, in a more or less covered manner. According to some authors (see: Jordan, 1996), this is a growing phenomenon explained as a strategic response by individuals and families to the progressive dismantling of the structures and security networks provided by the Welfare State. As the public "umbrella" collapses, whoever is able will rush to form and enter ever more particularistic, and therefore excluding, groups.

To sum up, without pretending to question the need for strong and autonomous associations, we should be aware of the fact that any organization may stage excluding practices, sanctioned by the democratic will of its members. That is the reason why, while the democratic state requires civil society to counter possible excesses and respond to the public demands, civil society also requires a sufficiently strong, legitimised state to defend the public rights and to express a view of general interest, opposed to the excluding pulse of private interests.



### 3.4 Is it possible to achieve inclusion in an undemocratic country or in one with a low quality democracy?

Arguments and evidence point to the preliminary conclusion that democracy and inclusion are two associated phenomena that mutually condition and reinforce each other, but we have also seen that real existing democracies consent or actively promote varying degrees of political exclusion in their structures and procedures. The generalised crisis of the model of representative democracy is a fact that we cannot ignore.

In all processes of political exclusion, through either the electoral roll or the electoral system, not only do we see resistance to share power, but also strong mistrust on the part of the dominant elites, towards citizens in general and towards the most disadvantaged groups in particular. The criterion and capacity of the socially excluded or vulnerable to live autonomously and responsibly in a democracy is mistrusted, but the argument used to try to justify the exclusion is not this, for politically it would be unsustainable, but rather that the elites are better prepared. It is argued that the people or groups at the forefront of the institutions are the only ones that can provide the necessary (political) view and (technical) knowledge for drawing up the right policies.

The most consequent elitists claim that it is possible to advance towards social inclusion without a democratic polity, as shown by certain historical and modern examples such as the giddy development of the People's Republic of China and other Asiatic countries. Indeed, from a strictly economicist viewpoint, inclusion without participation might seem plausible. One of the most striking things about the new global economy is precisely the unequal relationship between democracy and market. While democracy seems to need the market (we do not have examples to contradict this for the moment), the market does not seem to need democracy in order to function reasonably well. Nonetheless, we have already seen that the economic variable in itself cannot entirely explain exclusion and therefore, to take it as the sole protagonist of inclusion policies opens the door to insufficient or wrong answers to the problem of exclusion.

The question that must be put is: Can the excluded people -and those whose strong vulnerability leaves them at risk of exclusion- advance towards inclusion without taking part in a meaningful way in the process of policy making?

Certainly, the cases of the so-called illustrated despotism; that is, of leaders and elites endorsed with enough social awareness and capacity to drive beneficial policies for the most vulnerable and excluded classes cannot be underrated or discarded right away. To mention a very well-known example, there are people in Spain who

defend the forty years lasting General Franco's regime, as it supposedly enabled an economic opening which generated growth and jobs in sufficient quantities to be able to bring millions of people into an urban consumer society. This is a highly idyllic view that hides the enormous costs and shortcomings of that dictatorship, for the people who emigrated to the cities (because life in the country was one of poverty and frequently outright misery) usually endured in their new accommodations long years of severe exclusion, getting subsistence salaries, precarious housing and deficient or non-existent services. This was all largely overcome thanks to a social and political activation, neither foreseen nor desired by the regime, through neighbours' and workers' unions and political parties that were initially clandestine, afterwards tolerated and finally protagonists of the transition to democracy. By extrapolating the Spanish experience to that of other societies that are changing fast to economic modernity in undemocratic contexts, we might consider the hypothesis that the inclusion achieved by non-democratic ways probably will be:

- **Precarious**, because it doesn't imply the incorporation of the person in society in a stable form, under equal rights and obligations, but it all depends rather on more or less temporary and volatile situations.
- **Spurious**, because in the best case inclusion is "graciously" granted by the well-off social groups, thus preventing awareness-raising and change in the side of the excluded individuals and groups, in the sense of acquiring skills for personal autonomy and social transformation.
- **Assimilating**, in the sense of denying individuality, for often the price of inclusion is to renounce the cultural and social bases of one's own identity and (to aim) at becoming a new "normal" and "integrated" person.
- We might say that this is a **subordinated inclusion**, subordinated to the State and to those that dominate it: the leader, the bureaucratic caste, the parties, the big industrials and landowners, etc. In a context of subordination, the routes for inclusion become clientele paths, where access to basic goods and services comes in exchange for party-political loyalty, thus opening broad areas for corruption.

If social exclusion/inclusion is understood as a plural, dynamic, open process subject to substantial modifications depending on the players' attitude, their participation in all spheres of daily life (neighbourly, school, cultural, economic...) must clearly play an important role. Public rights only materialise to the extent that social players make them real (for themselves and also in support of those objectively impeded due to their age, legal situation, etc.). Inclusion can therefore only be caused with the direct involvement of its beneficiaries. The short-term and reactive inclusion policies may briefly relieve extreme situations, but fail to confront the causes of the problem and they don't aim at the training and empowerment of the persons at risk.

## 4. Participation as a spearhead for inclusion in the democratic system: Promises, scope and limits

In the field of comparative politics we find many different typologies of democratic regimes: consociative or majority, presidential or parliamentary, representative or participative, etc. Models of democracy are often built and conceptualised around some defining trait, considered more relevant than any other. We have, among others, liberal democracies, parliamentary democracies, republican democracies and also, significantly, inclusive democracies (Fotopoulos, 2008) and participatory democracies (Pateman, 1970).

The question we have to deal with at this point is whether participatory democracy has the potential to develop and perfect democracy, in the sense of promoting inclusion and minimising the excluding logics we can see in all democratic systems.

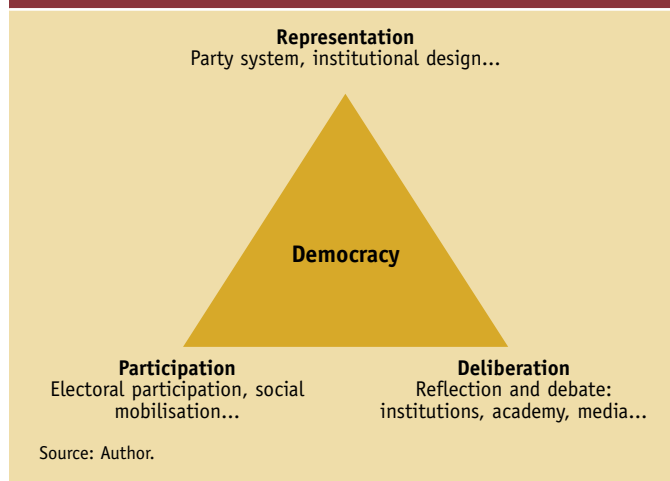
### 4.1 The model of participatory democracy

Participatory democracy has been one of the most successful types of democracy in recent decades, especially when applied to local governments. But, what do we mean by “participatory democracy”? Mostly it refers to a series of mechanisms enabling a direct involvement of the public in the affairs of government, which is conceived to complement and enrich the usual devices of representative democracy. Nevertheless, the coexistence of representative and participatory institutions and logics is not necessarily peaceful, but there are usually tensions. In fact, there is a powerful strand of thought which denies the possibility of this coexistence. The absence of academic consensus on the subject is also shown by the development of highly diverse models of participation –all of them under the “participatory” label–, different with respect to the type, scope and protagonists of the participation: direct democracy, associative democracy, deliberative democracy, etc.

The existence of a model known as participatory democracy does not suggest that the other models can do without participation. Democracy can be considered a set of three key elements in necessary coexistence: representation, deliberation and participation. The proportion, combination and specific position of

these elements might vary, but they can never completely disappear if a regime is to remain democratic. A democracy without participation would be illegitimate, a democracy without representation would be ungovernable and a democracy without deliberation would be completely unstable and unpredictable.

**Figure 2. Democracy as participation, representation and deliberation**



Taking the words literally, the name ‘participatory democracy’ would actually be tautological, because democracy is either participatory or is not democracy. However, we use this concept to designate a form of democracy that places the main stress on participation, over and above the other two elements of the equation (representation and deliberation).

Theoretically, participatory democracy not only favours public participation and social inclusion, but makes of them its own political foundations, because here political representation aspires to coincide fully with the whole of the social body considered in its complex plurality. For the model of democracy labelled as participatory, social inclusion is therefore an end in itself and the

exclusion of any group intrinsically means a lack of legitimacy. Therefore, the effective exercise of citizenship cannot be limited to the election of representatives every x years (as happens in representative democracy) nor to the representatives producing supposedly inclusive consensus without counting on public participation. On the contrary, the election of representatives or their deliberative practices should be considered no more than moments and parts of a wider democratic process which would always have to be subordinated to the principle that citizens must have the effective capacity to decisively intervene in the making of public decisions.

## 4.2 The values of participatory democracy

Until the 1960s, the prevailing theories and forms of democracy were based on the primacy of the elites and the limited, if not residual, role of the citizens in public decisions. Those adjusted better to a Fordist kind of industrial society, based on instrumental rationality and hierarchies, in a general context of remarkable social and cultural homogeneity. The change towards a new kind of society that started in the late 1960s and 1970s was accompanied by the vindication and revitalisation of a forgotten part of democratic tradition that started with Rousseau, Paine and Stuart Mill. Those authors shared the belief that, beyond a procedure for choosing governments and preventing tyranny, democracy was a value in itself, able to promote human development in the most positive sense of the term.

This idea of stronger democracy is based precisely on participation. Participation which is attributed all these public benefits in so far as *“it increases the sense of political efficacy, feeds concern for collective problems and contributes to form an active, informed citizenship”* (Gallego, 2008:6, quoting Pateman). Through participation, individuals, and especially those belonging to the most disadvantaged social groups, can learn to govern themselves by assessing and expressing their own interests and preferences and by taking the interests and preferences of others into account, thus becoming aware of the complexity of public questions. We can see in this process of learning and perfecting, of humanisation through political activity,

one of the purest expressions of human freedom because each person can decide on their future as a member of the community, with results that are always open and unpredictable (Gallego, 2008:7). At the end of the day, this ‘democratisation of democracy’ through greater participation should not only affect the public institutions, but also drive the transformation of the family and work, to make them less oppressive and more open to human creativity.

Having come this far, we can see that the similarities between the ideal of participatory democracy and the ideal of social inclusion understood as the kind of critical autonomy we considered in the previous section are strong, not only because participatory democracy requires the inclusion of all citizens in taking decisions, but also for their optimistic view of human nature. Nevertheless, as we will see later, in the real world participatory democracy has edges, contradictions and side-effects that remove it from the simplicity of the ideal.

## 4.3 The different views of participation

In the 1990s, participatory democracy achieved a high degree of acceptance, both in public institutions and outside of them, among certain scholars, public officials and practitioners. For a moment, the old school elitists seemed to be secluded to their winter quarters, i.e. the headquarters of the political parties and big employers’ organisations. Participation gains the overhand in discourse, but not all the authors, and less still all institutions and political players do speak the same language when speaking about participation. The discourse of participatory democracy might be said to be *adopted* and *adapted* by the main political ideologies of the time, and placed at the service of very different projects. Assuming the typology proposed by Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (2007)), we might identify four large discourses on participation:

- The responsible public discourse, which stresses the public duty towards others and towards the state for the democratic system to work correctly. An appeal is made to the decisive importance of the family and the non-governmental entities in

setting out society. To this comes a stress on the importance of self-government, understood in several ways: as individual self-discipline, as community self-government and/or as the individuals and communities' relationships with the public administrations, which should be based on autonomy.

- The consuming public discourse fixes its interest on individuals' expectations and experiences using public services. According to the premises of methodological individualism, this discourse conceptualises participation as the public capacity to choose in a free market of goods and services. Inheritor of the liberal tradition, the consuming public is not simply a passive receiver of the consumerist machinery, but aims to become an active player in choosing the public goods and services to which they are entitled as taxpayers.
- The stakeholder public discourse is based on a public which has (individually or collectively) an interest (material and/or ideal) in the good government of public matters. In this context, participation is valued and practised as a way to express one's opinions on public matters. From a pluralist conception of public interest, the discourse is concerned with identifying different individual and/or collective interests at stake and with establishing mechanisms to enable the effective incorporation of these interests in the decision-making processes.
- The empowered public discourse focuses on the disadvantaged or cast aside groups and communities, i.e. the excluded.

Considering that behind this exclusion we will find the institutionalisation of discrimination by reason of class, sex, origin or any other, the discourse of the empowered public claims the need to generate processes to collectively train the excluded, so that they might be able to act in their own name, that is, autonomously with respect to the beneficiaries of the status quo.

These are pure models of discourse, which are rare to find applied in institutions in their original form. Most frequently, elements are combined from the different discourses, with specific accents depending on the government's political colour and other national and local factors, for each discourse on participation is backed by different implicit normative frameworks (liberal, republican, autonomous, communitarian...) and their adjustments to (and congruence with) the models of democracy can vary significantly. The following table shows the basic features and implications of each model.

Beyond the ideological assumptions inherent to every discourse, there is nothing to make us think that these models exclude each other. To put an example, the fact that a city's rotary club organises a charity campaign does not prevent that in this very same city a participative process is organized to draw up a strategic plan, in which all relevant stakeholders are invited. This in turn does not impede that a local council of users of the health centre is set up, as this does not prevent the realization

**Table 5: the participation discourses and their implications**

Discourse	Player	Priority purpose	Preferential instrument(s)	Closest ideology
Responsible public	Individuals as members of society	Strengthening of the State through the traditional social structures (status quo)	Corporate based participation bodies; councils of nobles	Conservative
Consuming public	Individuals as consumers	Efficiency and efficacy of public services (value for money)	Councils of users, channels for making complaints and claims	Liberal
Stakeholder public	Organised groups and associations	Integration and equity (a cohesive and fair society)	Bodies and processes of deliberation; political and union activism	Social Democrat
Empowered public	Excluded groups and communities	Strengthening and emancipation	Community development plans; direct democracy (referendums)	Radical-democratic

Source: Author, departing from Barnes, Newman and Sullivan, 2007.

of a project for the self-organisation and skills-raising of the community of immigrant women. Obviously there may be points of friction and conflict between the different processes, when for instance the participants of the strategic plan process touch upon interests of some conspicuous Rotarians, or when the members of the council of users of the health centre require health issues to be given priority in the strategic plan, or when the immigrant women demand a chair (or two) in that council of users. But all this, far from being negative, would be a sign of the democratic health of the community.

We would therefore dare say that Barnes, Newman and Sullivan's four discourses of participation are not only mutually compatible, but it could be even positive that they exist together, for each addresses a type of public, has specific goals and uses specific instruments. If it is done properly, the interplay generated by the four models can provide a kind of checks and balances between the different institutions and groups, with a tendency towards new and better power equilibriums in each community.

#### Note: The role of the consuming public in improving social policies

The consuming public discourse, which at first might not seem very suitable in a progressive approach to inclusion, provides potential for improvement, too. In the case of social policies, the classical Welfare State has been characterised as working from a strongly technocratic logic, with well-known results: apparatuses capable of managing monetary transfers and certain basic homogenous public services with relative efficiency and efficacy, but, on the other hand, structurally quite incapable of receiving signals from the environment (personal, users, public) on the possible problems, shortcomings or chances for improvement, in order to be able to adapt to the changes through sophistication and quality. The constitutional principle of equality does not only mean "equal treatment for that which is equal", but also, through pure logic, "different treatment for that which is different", and in a society of accelerating differentiation, the State's effort for inclusion cannot be sustained on a few simple, homogenous and stable policies, but rather the actions have to be diversified, the target groups have to be segmented and provided with tools that enable the assessment of the results of the actions and the adaptation of the policies to the new needs. In this context, it might be entirely functional for beneficiaries/consumers to participate more in the social policies at are at the basis of inclusion.

Nevertheless, wherever participatory democracy has been driven from the institutions, as it has been in most cases, the most commonly used and applied discourse has been that of the shareholder public. Why? Given the intrinsically conservative drive of existing institutions set, and the prevalence of a system of representative democracy, we can consider the hypothesis that the discourse of the shareholder public has been chosen because it is universalist, aimed at all citizens, and above all, because it gives the State a large role without questioning its way of addressing problems, or not as radically as would be the case of the consuming or the empowered public discourses. The stakeholder public discourse is moderate and therefore easier to accommodate institutionally. The problem, however, as we will see below, is that excessive prioritisation of this kind of less risky and less transforming discourse to the detriment of others, has contributed to the progressive deterioration of the ideal of participatory democracy.

## 4.4 Difficulties and mistakes of participatory democracy

After the 1990s, and especially in Western Europe and Latin America, there was almost no political programme or city project that did not turn to public participation as a universal remedy, applicable to all kinds of public policies and especially the new and emerging ones. It was then that, alongside the regulations of participation, we began to see everywhere advisory committees constituted by citizens and organized around issues, territories or services, together with more elaborate concepts such as the Agenda 21, the *educative city* projects, the public councils, the participative integral plans, the participative strategic plans and even participative budgets, with almost mythical resonance in the case of the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre. These processes gave new wind to local governments and helped them to make the transition towards systems of local governance, build up, at least apparently, with more open, permeable and thus potentially more inclusive institutions.

However, with the years participatory democracy has accumulated not only successes, but also some disastrous failures. It has become obvious that public participation finds it difficult to deliver what it promises, and its application has lost force. Significantly, some of the accusations brought against participatory democracy are similar to those that the paradigm of social inclusion has had to face.

### 4.4.1 Which players? Participation for inclusion or exclusion?

The participation discourse based on the involvement of stakeholders in preparing public policies first of all poses the problem of who defines and grants to whom the status of stakeholder. As the public

institutions start these processes, it is normally the governments who reserve for themselves this key prerogative and use it to ensure that the participants' universe lies within parameters of "normality" defined from the institutional logic itself. This simple fact, which is usually presented as "logical" and "natural", opens the door to inequality and exclusion in participation.

Beyond this form of deliberate exclusion, there is another one which is implicit and acquires a specific weight if nothing is done to correct it. We refer to the fact that not all people make the same use of the participation opportunities offered by institutions. Participation is clearly unequal<sup>25</sup>, and the bias are socially structured: Men take part clearly more than women, the elderly more than the young, nationals more than immigrants and the middle-upper classes, usually people with high education levels, more than the middle-lower or low classes. This is a serious, structural problem that brings with it that the new mechanisms and processes of public participation too often end up reproducing the existing power structures, without promoting any kind of transformation; participation is supposedly made for inclusion but fails to reach the vulnerable persons, not to mention the excluded, with sufficient force.

Inequality in participation is a very serious threat for participatory democracy, because it undermines its legitimacy and support in the ranks of the people committed to inclusion. There is a progressive anti-participation discourse which, arguing from fully democratic positions, committed to equality and equity, doesn't admit that a weak and biased participation gains influence over the decisions of democratically elected governments. They believe that a representative democracy is better to guarantee equality for all citizens in their access to public resources and services.

### **Note: Selective exclusion as a tool of positive discrimination to improve participation**

Paradoxically, a certain kind of exclusion may sometimes be used in participatory processes to favour a more inclusive participation. Analysing the experience of participatory processes in Denmark, Agger and Larsen (Agger and Larsen, 2009) identify, alongside the structured exclusion of players (who defines and awards the category of "stakeholder") and the discursive exclusion of the subjects (who defines the agenda and what is open or closed to participation), a third kind of exclusion, temporary and instrumental, that the promoters of the process may use to increase participation. It is about silencing players who have an excessive role in the process, so that other players who normally get little or no attention can be listened to. This third kind of exclusion may

be a risky, but apparently effective, way to counter the tendency to the elitisation of participation.

Selective exclusion is also used in policies intended to promote the self organisation of minority social groups. One example of this would be the exclusion of men from women's groups in order to enhance their empowerment, by allowing the latter to define their own needs and demands, not intervened by the former. This clearly shows that certain temporary or partial exclusion may be functional to generate freer, fairer and more inclusive conditions of participation. The same could be said for indigenous minorities and other singular groups that require specific treatment, so that effective conditions can be guaranteed for their democratic participation.

#### **4.4.2 What purpose? Participation to make politics or to hide politics?**

The effective public use of instruments of participatory democracy very often does not come up to the initial expectations. Few people tend to take part in them and it is very difficult to keep them participating once they have tried. Apart from occupational and family difficulties, which reduce the amount of time that could be devoted to public affairs, probably many people who have time have decided not to take part because they are not sure what the purpose of participation is. Is it just to get informed personally by the decision makers? Providing feedback? Making real decisions? What should we understand by "participation"? We know that, in a representative democracy, the elected governments define the agenda and decide what will or will not be open to participation; and it's a fact that, in most cases, governments choose a low profile participation, one that is less risky for the State but also less attractive to the public.

Cleaver (Cleaver, 1999:598-600) hits the nail on the head by saying that the main cause of participatory democracy's loss of prestige has been the assumption of an excessively optimistic, a-critical discourse of participation, stripped of all kind of real vocation of social transformation. According to this naive view, participation is good in itself, and its success is only a question of choosing and correctly applying the right participative techniques in each kind of process, without considering the basic objectives and the meaning

25 By "participate", we refer both to the fact of taking part and, in the specific case of commissions, councils or discussion forums, to the fact of effectively present one's own positions and interests.

of the activity. Needless to say that, acting in institutions, these enthusiasts of participation have often been victims of *realpolitiker*, who have manipulated and used “participation” for all kinds of distraction and delay manoeuvres. This was certainly another way to understand participation, as a smokescreen for the better hiding of the real issues and decisions.

Beyond the error of considering a mechanical model of participation, based on constructions that are very neat but also rigid and incapable of taking society’s pulse, failure is accelerated by the sensation of deceit and/or waste of time. When the public realise that the proposed participation is false, because the institutional power is playing with marked cards, or that it is irrelevant, because what is put on the line in the participative processes is very small compared with the size of the basic problem or problems, or that it simply does not compensate in terms of cost-benefit (participation always entails, at least, opportunity costs), disappointment falls upon the participant public. Disappointment may be big or small, but most often it leads to a resigned or maybe furious “*I am not going to do it again*”.

#### **4.4.3 Consensus and Dissent: Why so much participation, if we don’t like conflict?**

Participation and inclusion affect the values, norms and procedures by which the political battle is regulated in pluralist societies. As a particular variant of democracy, participatory democracy is characterised by the fact that citizens take a direct part in producing, managing and resolving of conflicts of interest. Democracy is not the same as eradicating the conflict of interests, but rather the institutionalisation of its organised and peaceful treatment.

Unfortunately, the discourse on participation and inclusion in practically all variants and forms has tended to displace the conflict of interests from the core of its arguments, as though the point of democracy was to conjure it and not to express it institutionally. On the contrary, we think that, democracy today should turn to an agonistic model, a decision-making organisation that starts from the irreducibility of the interests inherent to pluralist societies, places the inevitable nature of the conflict at the centre of the discussion and confronts the viability of its resolution by means of democratic proceedings (Mouffe, 2000).

The proceedings of participatory democracy, especially in their application on the local level, have typically sought out and produced social consensus. This has linked the participative models directly with social inclusion, but only accepting one kind of resolution, namely a consensus that eradicates the existing conflict.

By stressing so much the consensual aspects, participatory democracy on a local scale has tended to be seen by authorities more as a way to legitimise their governmental action than as the institutional structure that makes possible a direct involvement of the public in the policy process.

#### **4.4.4 Building a stool with a single leg. Where are representation and deliberation?**

A final structural problem of participatory democracy comes from the lack of clearness concerning the rules and relationship between the three elements we have considered key for democracy: Participation, representation and deliberation. It is not clear whether participatory democracy was intended to complement and improve the representative system, or to overcome it. What has been seen on a fair number of occasions is how the stress placed on participation meant that less attention was paid to the other two, and their key role both in regulatory models and in the true operation of democratic politics was ignored.

There has been a tendency to underrate the logic of representation, as if the parties, programs, elections and the democratically elected governments were no more than secondary actors or figurants on the participative stage. Democratic governments actually still hold the main power devices, and their neglect has but reduced the quality of their composition and the consistency and transparency of their practices. What’s more, by presuming that it is enough to “do participation” for brilliant ideas and very powerful results to come out, the dimension of deliberation has been excessively ignored. Participative processes have therefore abounded which have ended up giving poor quality results through poor conception and execution.

### **4.5 The participatory democracy we need**

Many items should be taken into account when assessing the relationship between democracy and inclusion. Inclusion and exclusion seem to be two sides to the same coin; a coin that is tossed into the air when building a democratic regime. In this game, some individuals, the well-to-do men of the dominant ethnic group have always drawn heads, whereas others, poor and immigrant women or the members of minority ethnic groups have always drawn tails. History has revealed clear signs of progress in this sense, but much remains to be done to minimise this dark side of democracy. If the aim is to achieve inclusive participation, the institutions should check the exclusion generated in their constitutional framework, the electoral system and the administrations’ normal functioning, and should set up spaces and processes to offer participation also to the most disadvantaged, least powerful social groups.

By now we know that labelling an institution or policy “participatory” is no guarantee of anything. Be it with or without intention, the fact is that the best organised, most culturally developed public and private players know how to place these mechanisms at their service and to impose their objectives, often presented as solutions of consensus. And a participation which is poor in diversity, in methods and in results casts serious doubts on the democratic nature of participatory democracy.

However, the criticism of participatory democracy does not mean that we have to abandon it and return to a purely representative model that is suffering a still deeper crisis. Participatory democracy is still valid and necessary, but it has to be reconceived and restored in a broader context, that of a democracy that combines representative, deliberative and participative elements to achieve institutional quality and social inclusion.

To eradicate the styles and logics that separate individuals and groups from the political processes, the institutions committed to participatory democracy must take risks. They must give much more importance to the community, by particularly promoting self organisation and education among the people who are excluded and/or are at risk of being so. This means also overcoming the crude mechanisms of political “profitability” that have been habitual up to now, associated with individualistic and resolute leadership styles.

The argument used to deny the empowerment of the weakest, which is their supposed incapacity for discerning and deciding what is best for them, does not have a sufficient base. While accepting the limitations of the human condition, we also know that each person is the best qualified to identify her own true interests. We are also told that only specialists are sufficiently prepared to take decisions for the whole of the public; however, the complex problems that affect contemporary societies are particular and context-bound, in the sense that they do not entirely respond to the logic of a universal instrumental rationality. There are too many variables with multiple relationships between them and chains of causality that are very difficult to establish. Therefore, the role to be played by the specialists in resolving them is limited, and always insufficient. In a complex society democratic politics does not become superfluous, but rather more necessary still.

The argument of mistrust at the lower social classes’ capacity for judgment is even more suspicious when we compare it to the quite generalized, naive confidence in the leading elites, albeit traditional, patrimonial, party-based or technical-scientific. Normally it is presumed that their judgments will be more based on objective reasons, devoid of particular or class interests. While admitting that this phenomenon can be given in individual cases, historical experience shows that the elites, as a group or class, have made use

of ideology as a tool for defending their interests and have only made significant concessions to subordinated classes and groups when these have effectively mobilised and pressed for them. Civil, political and social rights have never been “awarded”; they have always been conquered by mobilisation.

At this point we can turn the argument of mistrust in a way that strengthens the case for participation. People should be mistrusted, yes, but especially those who hold and administer positions of power, because it is there where people take decisions for the whole of society and therefore can really do significant harm (or good). This approach, masterfully developed by the French historian Pierre Rosanvallon, leads us to the conclusion that participation of those who do not have power is necessary in order to monitor, control and assess the leading elites’ use of power, even though these governing elites have been chosen by democratic proceedings. He calls this current of mobilisation and participation, caused by a radical and permanent mistrust of democratic governments “counter democracy” (Rosanvallon, 2008). Well applied counter-democratic practices based on constructive mistrust can be a powerful weapon to force governments to implement truly substantive inclusion policies. The solution would be, therefore, to give a more powerful role to the public in preparing, monitoring and assessing policies.

Up to now, participatory democracy has operated as a complement to improve the democracies based on representation and deliberation. However, this extension of democracy, beyond the praiseworthy reinforcement of deliberation often induced by a greater participation, has revealed the limits of liberal democracy, marked by the autonomy of civil society and the negative conception of freedom as non-interference. It is no good that citizen participation be conceived as an exchange of legitimacy for occasional access to the decision-making arena, or worse still, as a tool for blaming the citizens for the contradictions of public management. If it is to reach fulfilment, participatory democracy must accept that social autonomy is inevitable and that the very complexity of pluralist societies cannot be satisfactorily represented. In this sense too, the participative discourse will also recover its credibility by honestly opening up to dissent and criticism.



## 5.5. Participatory democracy and Social inclusion: Proposals for action

No matter how deep and refined the knowledge on a social problem might be, its understanding is not sufficient for a socially relevant contribution. We know that what is truly interesting for practitioners in the political and technical administrations and for the public in general is to get hints about possible solutions to their most pressing problems. Unfortunately, social sciences have tended to focus on the problems and have found significant difficulty in drawing up alternatives for action. Fully aware of this shortcoming, in this final part of the report we will try to jump from the theory to the institutional designs.

We have defined inclusion as a political problem and have done so with a great deal of ambition, because it is not only a question of relieving the pain of those “who cannot follow”, but what we intend is to overcome the fracture between the included and excluded by pointing towards an (ideal) future society “*where deprivation in all its forms is no longer a viable factor*” (Gill, 2005:3). This utopian goal should not blinker a much simpler and urgent task: To work out principles and lines of action that enable inclusion policies to be turned and provided with sufficient force to be able to become promoters of true social transformation.

### 5.1 The tools of inclusion policies

We are not starting from scratch. Critical reflection on the concepts of inclusion has led to the formulation of several proposals aimed at rethinking the politics of inclusion in a line of greater openness towards more social and, above all, political considerations. In the following paragraphs we sketch two proposals that come closest to what we intend to develop.

Nancy Fraser (1996) considers that, at the present time, the policies of social inclusion (labelled “identity policies”), require the combination of three essential elements: Redistribution; recognition and participation. Her proposal is based also on correcting inequalities, suppressing discrimination mechanisms liable to block inclusion and activating the public by involving them in collective decision-making.

On a very different level, but with similar contents, we find the “active inclusion” model formulated and spread by the European Union (European Commission, 2008). Probably the severity of the crisis and its consequences on the jobs market has driven this supranational institution to abandon a previous model, which was much more focused on occupation. Active inclusion is based on three instruments:

1. Support for sufficient income to avoid social exclusion.  
This implies the right to get sufficient resources to be able to live according to human dignity, bearing in mind the person’s active availability for work or occupational education.
2. Access to inclusive job markets.  
Better access to the job market is to be promoted, favouring help for personalised professional guidance and financial incentives for job seekers and businesspeople.
3. Better access to quality social services.  
This refers to the financial and territorial accessibility to and the quality of the social services of general interest (support for people, activities intended to bring people back into society and the job market, and affordable childcare services).

In this case, activation does not refer to political participation, but rather to participation in the jobs market. However, it is significant the importance given to social policies, especially when implemented as income transfers and social services.

### 5.2 Normative and operative principles of the new inclusion policy

Our proposal stems from the criticism of a paradigm of inclusion, which we have considered excessively focused on economics, not well prepared for diversity and irrelevant from a political point of view. As we have seen, from the confrontation of these problems with a series of corrective elements, a new model of inclusion emerges, which closer to reality and more operational from the political viewpoint. This new understanding of the phenomenon of exclusion and the new approach to inclusion policies go hand in hand with certain normative and operative principles, displayed in the following table.

**Table 6: Participatory democracy as a response to the problems of inclusion**

Problems of the paradigm of inclusion	Corrective elements	Regulatory principles of inclusion	Implications for participation in inclusion policies	Operative principles of participation for inclusion
Economicist	<b>Considering all dimensions of life</b>	Integration	Participation of the administrative units and the social actors of the different sectors: economic, educational, cultural, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joined-up government</li> <li>• Multilevel government</li> <li>• Relational government</li> <li>• Strategic government</li> </ul>
Discriminatory	<b>Recognition of equality in diversity</b>	Equality	Levelling of real conditions of public participation in a high quality democratic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal recognition of full citizenship</li> <li>• Egalitarian Participation, Representation and Deliberation</li> <li>• Control, follow-up and participatory evaluation of public policies</li> </ul>
Insensitive to inequality and injustice  Source: Author.	<b>Social and political mobilisation for inclusion</b>	Empowerment	Increased participation of groups excluded or at risk of exclusion in the different spheres of collective life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsidiarity</li> <li>• Economic democracy</li> <li>• Democracy of knowledge</li> <li>• Network society</li> </ul>

Departing from this we set out three guidelines for discerning the type of participation we need in order to advance towards an inclusive society:

- The principle of integration requires **integral participation**, in the sense of not being limited to the commoditised sector of the economy (departments of economic promotion, business institutions, unions and professional guilds), but open to all sectors of society and all its constituent public, private and associative actors. Any government wishing to deal with integration must include interdepartmental work (joined-up government), interdepartmental work (multilevel government) and the social players (network government). The complexity of the social problems and of the corresponding integral policies brings forth the need for strategic planning.
- The principle of equality requires **egalitarian participation**, which does not simply offer equal opportunities for participation, but seeks equal results in participation, in the sense of the progressive reduction of socially constructed biases (of gender, age, class, origin,...) in the participation rates across the different areas of institutional democracy. This involves active and passive suffrage for all citizens, including foreigners, expression and defence of interests, control of institutional output, processes of deliberation, public consultation, etc.
- The principle of empowerment requires **empowering participation**, not controlled or principally sheltered by the institutions, but sought and promoted from below, from the very society's strength to organise and to give itself socially owned material and cognitive

resources, thus contributing to the capacity building of social groups in greater need. An empowering participation also contemplates collaboration with the institutions, but without waiving the critical perspective or the autonomy of the social actors.

### 5.2.1 Integral participation

Inclusion policies should foresee individualised and integral interventions, capable of understanding the effects of exclusion that might be caused by a certain interrelation of elements or factors on each specific person. However, the very fragmentation and sharing of public policies does not favour this kind of answer. Joined-up interventions are still scarce and networking in the administration is still an exception. There is a widespread belief that inclusion policies, in case they exist, are the sole responsibility of the social and occupational services.

It is not at all easy to take the path from an eminently vertical type of organisation to another that considers certain cross-cutting logics. The path historically followed by an institution has modelled a certain organisational culture, a way to see and do things that strongly conditions new decision-making and the adoption of changes. Therefore, a realistic model of organisational change will be one that considers the inclusion of joined-up government an open process, done in stages and looking in the long-term. To start with, we should assume that joined-up government is, first and foremost, a way of dealing work, based on certain habits that can be highly beneficial for the organisation: consideration of others, consultation, collaboration, sharing...

The incorporation of joined-up government involves the modernisation of the administration through a relational model that also has creativity and an enterprising spirit as its assets. This new model forces the basis of legitimacy and leadership to be redefined, distributing responsibilities and building more shared leaderships, with the management and political levels always working in a network, and without losing sight of the importance of substantive objectives. While preparing a substantive mainstreaming policy, as would be the case of the inclusion policy, it is advisable to move forward in building joined-up government through the base, through spaces and instruments that promote it (Brugué, Canal and Payà, 2010:170-171). This would be the case of:

- Committees or commissions that enable an effective and permanent coordination between the senior managers of the administrations.
- Human resource policies favouring mobility, flexibility and teamwork.
- Communication policies and collaborative work based in Web 2.0.
- Shared overview (area reports inserted in an overall corporate report) and evaluation (systems of indicators) tools. While a challenge, the joint creation of these tools might be a powerful generator of joined-up culture, too.
- Mayoral offices capable of exercising impulse, coordination and action overview (through strategic plans, mandate plans...), as well as producing and managing applied knowledge.
- Management by projects. Starting with specific objectives and a perfectly defined time and budgetary framework, projects allow us to test and train people from different areas in collaboration. A paradigmatic example of these kinds of projects would be those that aim at the integral regeneration of a district or neighbourhood, which imply intervention in urbanism, housing, social services, culture, education, work, security, etc.
- Citizen participation policies which, making a smart use of pressures exerted from outside, may foster joining-up among the most recalcitrant parts of the organisation.

However, joined-up government within each administration is not enough. Papademedriou touches a sore spot when he states that a question "(...) that must be answered in all instances is how public institutions -public schools, bureaucracies, public service delivery agencies, police and judicial systems, political parties- can promote inclusion (and reject exclusion) more effectively?" (Papademetriou, 2001:98). Some organisms and institutions with long experience in the subject have already realised that they cannot fight alone in the struggle against social inclusion, but that the complex local networks, the network of public powers, the economic network and

the public network must be suitably articulated through the leadership of the institution with most commitment and responsibility, which in a city would be in most cases the municipal government, provided there is one.

A good formula for building an integral, strategic response to the problem of social exclusion would be to draw up and approve a Local Plan of Social Inclusion. A plan of this kind requires an accurate diagnosis to identify both the existing problems in the community and the public, private or associative resources available to deal with them (map of resources), a very firm commitment to public participation designed to start up and feed the inclusion governance networks, and finally a powerful system of indicators to carefully monitor the evolution of exclusion and the impact of the measures taken to promote inclusion. Although the tools can be adapted in different ways, there are two key points which must be assured to make it work: first of all, to assume a truly integral perspective, both in work and with the players; secondly, to assume a relational perspective that considers all interdependencies and works to establish the necessary complicities, so that, beyond the expected discrepancies around certain measures, all important actors might share resources and information to achieve the best possible Plan.

**Figure 3. Network of players for social inclusion in the city**



## 5.2.2 Egalitarian participation

Egalitarian participation requires wider political reforms and budgetary commitments, which are not only in the hands of the local governments. Its achievement makes necessary to work at least on the following three fronts:

- First of all, any kind of discrimination in the community with regard to political rights would have to be eliminated, either immediately or within a reasonable time span. This universal recognition of full citizenship is particularly dependent on the suitable regulation of the right of foreigners to active and passive suffrage, which should only depend on the time they have been living in their host country, registered as residents.
- Secondly, mandates and procedures must be legally established to enable the control, monitoring and participatory assessment of public policy and also in the local area. These mandates should be very flexible and adapt to each local reality, but the decision on whether the governmental process is open to participation or not, or on the kind of participation that is promoted or allowed, should not be solely in the hands of the governments.
- Thirdly, changes must be promoted to allow more equal results to be achieved in all key dimensions of democracy:
  - In participation, aimed at eliminating the mentioned socio-demographic biases of participation.
  - In representation, with greater equality, in socio-demographic terms, between the representatives and the represented people.
  - In deliberation, guaranteeing that all important voices be heard in public debates.

It is not easy to advance in the terrain of equal results. We have already seen that the specific strategies and projects for nurturing participation can fail simply because of the strong social cultural and other types of biases that inevitably appear if there is no intentional intervention to make participation reach other people and other groups. Similarly to what happens in the process of social exclusion, in this case too, the factors which hinder participation are accumulative and progressively reduce the possibility of certain kinds of persons having the chance to be heard in public affairs.

At this point, the model proposed by a group of British researchers (Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker, 2006) aimed at reducing the inequalities produced in political participation, in line with the people's levels of economic and cultural capital, seems very interesting to us. The model is called CLEAR, an acronym of

- *Can do*. Having the resources and knowledge to be able to take part.
- *Like to*. Having a sense of belonging to the community (which makes participation sensible in the first place).
- *Enabled to*. Having effective opportunities for participation.
- *Asked to*. Being invited to take part by the administration and/or by the non-governmental actors.
- *Responded to*. Obtaining some kind of evidence that the opinions and proposals raised in the participatory process have received some kind of consideration by the administration.

The following table gives a series of measures for moving forward in the different dimensions proposed by the CLEAR model.

**Table 7: Policies for encouraging effective participation of the excluded or those at risk of exclusion**

Key factor	Policy Response
Can do	Community development, education and development, as well as practical support –by providing social centres and resources– for those groups and communities that might need a hand in finding and trusting their own voice.
Like to	Helping to build a sense of community or neighbourhood. People must feel part of the community if they wish to feel comfortable with participation.
Enabled to	Creating channels for participation where it is possible to critically monitor the public policies and actions of governments, where there might be representation from a wide range of interests and not only from certain privileged positions. Investing in civic infrastructures and community networks.
Asked to	Different systems of participation, reflective and capable of adapting, because each group will need a different kind of mobilisation.
Responded to	A political-administrative system with capacity to give an answer through specific products (e.g. reports of the participation processes), continuous learning and feedback.

Source: Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker (2006).

The type of participatory democracy implicit in the CLEAR model seeks greater political equality as well as a more flexible, efficient and effective approach to participation, so that the cost-benefit balance of taking part in it is positive for an ever larger part of society.

We see that in all of these changes the public institutions play a very important role, but alone they are unable to achieve the necessary transformations in society. To reach this point, it is necessary that the community, that the people and the groups that are not aware of their power and therefore do not exercise it, take a step forward; not only to take a share of the power of those who have too much of, but also to make it grow and use it differently.

**Table 8: Rethinking power**

Power is...	Power can be...
Zero-sum, strengthening some over others, dividing what already exists	Mutually expansive, enhancing the skills of all those involved. It is creative and generates new energies and possibilities
A one-way force: you either have it or you don't. Life is essentially a fight of the powerful against the weak	A dialectic relationship in both directions. Nobody is ever impotent because the actions of each person affect others
Limiting and intimidating; it causes fear	Freeing
Dominant and controlling	Collaborative
Rigid, static	Dynamic, always changing
Derived principally from laws, status, force and wealth	Derived from relations, knowledge, experience, number of people, organisation, creativity, vision, perseverance discipline, humour...
All I can do or achieve now	Sure of creating and maintaining relational power in time

Source: adapted from Moore Lappé, 2010:93.

### 5.2.3 Empowering participation

The concept of empowerment refers to people's ability to be able to become aware of their power, to assume, develop and to use it for their life projects, in accordance with their values and concerns, within a more extensive framework of social and community relations that binds the individual and the collective dimensions of life.

In aiming at inclusion, the excluded people, and also those at risk of exclusion or the highly vulnerable, need to gain power. However, not any kind power, but rather a power we understand in a wider sense as capacity (knowledge and skills of all kinds) useful for improving the quality of life of the individuals and communities that get it.

This is a new kind of power that is necessarily relational and shared, more cooperative than competitive, because the resources are usually disperse (everybody has their strengths and weaknesses). For its part, knowledge, even in such new areas as information and communication technologies, is generated through personal contact and exchange within the local system itself and between local systems<sup>26</sup>. We are talking about a power that must be soft in form but solid in its effects.

And how is this power to be generated? Basically it is to be done through society's self organisation, through all kinds of informal groups, collectives, entities, federations and networks. Public administrations have to promote it, they have to encourage it and, above all, they must not prevent it.

In the present context of crisis, we are seeing how the non-governmental organizations can respond effectively to more complicated social situations through commitment, innovation, efficiency and an enormous capacity to bring forth and value the community's resources, while generating cohesion among people and groups. They normally do all of this keeping a loyal collaboration with institutions in all kinds of social programs and services, but without losing the critical perspective on institutions and society, which often makes them one of the few public voices in defence of the rights of the excluded. The declaration of the institutions of the so-called Third Sector of Social Action of Spain is an example of this positive and proactive role that the NGOs are called to play<sup>27</sup>.

Exploring the endeavour of building a more powerful society, we acknowledge spaces that have been considered so far as a domain

<sup>26</sup> Zinnbauer's thoughts (Zinnbauer, 2007) are very stimulating on this point.  
<sup>27</sup> The full text of the declaration is in an annex at the end of the document.

of the market and therefore reserved for profit-making companies. While recognising the essential role of private business in generating wealth and jobs, we believe it is necessary to claim the concept of *social enterprise* to refer to all projects and initiatives that enable material and immaterial wealth to be generated from eminently social views, objectives and motivations.

Cities require social enterprises to delve into the potentials of the cooperative economy to generate alternative spaces and networks of production, distribution and consumption: alternative referring to ownership, referring to the distribution of burdens and benefits, and referring to the commitment towards society, too, defending and realising values such as work, equity, solidarity and sustainability.

One final aspect to be borne in mind in a strategy of empowerment is the creation of autonomous areas of communication in society, capable of channelling powerful flows of communication between people and groups, and of producing and disseminating an alternative way of seeing and making sense of reality. To achieve this, it will be necessary to use both the “traditional” channels that came in the first wave of modernity (community newspapers, radios and televisions) but adapted to current needs, and above all the new channels based on ICT that offer powerful and quite affordable tools to articulate participatory networks.

The concept of community empowerment refers, in short, to articulating the network society, putting value on its assets, seeking out what is lacking and linking it all together in a virtuous circle of individual and collective growth.

### 5.3 An inclusive democracy is a living democracy

We started this text in a pessimistic tone, by stating a series of global phenomena and tendencies that might endanger and spoil the cohesion, security and welfare of cities everywhere. Nevertheless, when considering alternatives, pessimism is not the recipe or the solution to anything; it does not mobilize, but quite the contrary, it can paralyse the social actors and kill off their initiatives. There are more and more people who call for the pressing problems of the world, dramatic in many cases, to be dealt with from optimism; not a kind of optimism based on disinformation and stupidity, but rather on the passionate conviction of the resilience of vital systems, including human communities.

In a very recent work that combines an original theoretical approach to the social and ecological questions with a strong practical sense, the North American author Frances Moore-Lappé

(Moore-Lappé, 2010) comes down on *abundance* as a means for changing the way we see our communities. The model of democracy she refers to is extraordinarily simple, a *living democracy*, built by autonomous people that are committed to the values of freedom and equality and are capable of acting together to make these values prevail.

#### Note: Checklist of a living democracy

##### 1. Am I expanding and extending power?

Does my action create greater awareness and new power that strengthens my own and others' skills?

Does my action reduce the imbalances of power? Is it contributing to making a merely punctual correction or ensuring that fairer, more effective decisions are taken?

Does the responsibility flow in a single direction or are there multiple parties that assume responsibility and are accountable?

##### 2. Am I relieving the fear of change and the fear of the other?

Am I giving an example that it is good to be fearful when we face something new?

Am I my helping to change the stereotypes, by receiving and enhancing diversity?

Am I contributing to building group links that strengthen courage, without excluding other people?

##### 3. Am I learning and teaching the arts of democracy?

Is my effort aimed at teaching and practising active listening, the creative use of conflicts, continuous evaluation, assessment and other essential habits for being effective?

##### 4. Am I creating a movement that is sustainable?

Is the initiative being intrinsically gratifying, with large doses of real learning, humour, beauty, celebration and companionship?

Is the initiative being sufficiently visible for those who are outside the circle to feel encouraged to act?

## 5. Am I replacing the limiting frame for one that gives us power?

Am I helping to replace the fundamental presumption of shortage for that of abundance?

Am I helping to replace the belief in fixed economic laws with confidence in human creativity?

Am I refocusing on the goodness of human nature, our needs for connection, justice and effectiveness, which we can use to heal the planet?

Source: Moore Lappé, 2010:165.

## 5.4 The positive impacts of democratic participation on the dimensions of social inclusion: an inventory of policies

In this last point, we want to give a range of specific inclusion policies that could be carried out from local governments and which include an integral, egalitarian and empowering participation<sup>29</sup>. These are actions which are largely within reach of local governments, and it essentially depends on the political will of their leaders to introduce them.

### 5.4.1 Local participative policies for active political citizenship

#### Justification

- Participation is essential for the exercise of citizenship. Local administration's proximity makes it a strong candidate for developing participation in all of its variants.
- Participation favours social inclusion in so far as: 1. in principle, it enables all voices to be heard; 2. it generates a sense of responsibility towards society; 3. it relates different people and groups and promotes mutual recognition.

#### Definition within models of democracy

- Representative: a political representation that is vocational, responsible, transparent and adapted to the will of the electoral body.
- Direct: mechanisms through which the citizens can decide on certain public questions, without mediators.
- Participatory: spaces for deliberation and dialogue, open to the social players and citizens in general.
- Communitarian: associations and groups created to defend the

common interest, ensuring that the democratic institutions work correctly by monitoring, complaint and, if necessary, denunciation.

#### Instruments for applying it at the local level

- Encouraging a modification of local legislation to: 1. Advance towards decentralisation, 2. Guarantee immigrants the right to vote, 3. Improve representation, and 4. Establish effective participative mechanisms of control and evaluation of the local government.
- Creating different spaces of participation applicable to all areas of local policy, but also considering criteria of economy, efficiency and efficacy. It must be remembered that participation is not an end in itself, but rather a means to personal and social development.

### 5.4.2 Local participative policies for access to employment

#### Justification

- The undemocratic essence of the capitalist corporation is the main cause of the unequal distribution of employment and income, as well as of workers' alienation towards their work.
- The same could be said of the difficulties people encounter in achieving credit if they fail to fall within a certain social profile.
- The centrality of paid work hinders recognition of the reality of unpaid reproductive work, which is basic for the well functioning of society. The lack of social recognition of this income-free work is an additional factor of exclusion for people doing it full-time.

#### Definition within models of democracy

- Participatory: availability of spaces that enable workers' voices to be brought into substantive aspects of the management of corporations, including the reconciliation between productive and reproductive work, to achieve a more equitable and socially efficient distribution.
- Communitarian: co-operative companies devoted to the production, distribution and consumption of basic goods and services; credit co-operatives to support the establishment of new companies, housing co-operatives, etc. managed and controlled by people with few resources; networks for the exchange of products, services or time.

#### Instruments for applying it at the local level

- Ensuring the proper functioning of collective bargain with the representatives of the public workers; pushing the agenda of inclusion beyond the habitual conflict on salaries.

<sup>29</sup> It is not our intention to make an inventory of all possible inclusion policies, but only those that explicitly relate inclusion to participation.

- Encouraging the participation of the workers in private companies, in application of the principle of corporate social responsibility.
- According supports and mutual obligations with the initiatives of co-operative production, credit and consumption emanating from the community, and other types of social networks related to people's paid or unpaid work.

#### 5.4.3 Local participative policies for recognition and non-discrimination

##### Justification

- The possibility of discriminating against someone is inversely proportional to the availability of political power for the person or group. Therefore, discrimination is often reflected in the prohibition or practical impossibility of exercising participation.
- Without suitable legal protection of the rights of minorities and a political representation that reflects approximately their weight in the total population, the situation of discrimination cannot be eradicated.

##### Definition within models of democracy

- Representative: recognition of active and passive suffrage for all persons born in the country, whatever their family's origin, and for all persons having resided in the country for reasonable amount of time.
- Participatory: availability of a place for the discriminated group's voice to be expressed and heard, to reinforce or compensate for the (provisional) absence of political rights.

##### Instruments for applying it at the local level

- Backing the reform of the electoral law, starting with the right to vote in municipal elections.
- Campaigns to encourage participation among the discriminated groups already entitled to vote, but which vote very little, either due to lack of knowledge or to a feeling of political inefficacy.
- Adoption of respect for diversity as a principle of the government's political action.
- Creation of municipal councils of participation that allow those groups to express themselves and watch out for their interests.

#### 5.4.4 Local participative policies for access to public services and social protection

##### Justification

- The degree of inclusiveness (which is equal to coverage plus intensity plus flexibility) of the public services depends largely on political decisions at the highest level, but also on how these decisions are applied and how the services are managed day by day. In this point, the participation of the users in monitoring,

controlling and assessing the services may be crucial.

- On the other hand, it is almost impossible to protect the whole of the population with State funds alone. In many circumstances, the involvement of family, group or community networks can be faster, more efficient and more effective.

##### Definition within models of democracy

- Participatory: availability of spaces allowing the citizens/users' voices to be brought into the monitoring, control and assessment of public services.
- Communitarian: strengthening of social entities and networks based on reciprocity, capable of offering protection and help, if needed.

##### Instruments for applying it at the local level

- Creating or encouraging the creation of councils of users to watch over the quality of the public services.
- Adapting the public services to the diversity of their potential users.
- According supports and mutual obligations with initiatives of social protection and aid emanating from the community.

#### 5.4.5 Local participative policies for the access to education and culture

##### Justification

- The school is the first vital experience of participation beyond the family.
- Education is something that regards the whole community (a well-known African proverb says that *"a whole village is needed to educate one child"*).
- Education and culture provide the basic resources to get along in life, adapting to the requirements of the knowledge economy and society.
- Culture is not something given and static that one has to assume blindly, but something created by people and therefore criticisable, modifiable and adaptable to new circumstances and needs. In this sense, participation is essential for culture to reflect the whole spiritual wealth of society and to prevent the creation of untouchable spaces, behind which crude particular interests might be hidden.

##### Definition within models of democracy

- Participatory: bodies for facilitating the participation of all players involved in the educational processes; at the level of the local educational community and in each school. Bodies for enhancing public participation in the public media to thus ensure their plurality.
- Community: generation, through associations and informal groups, of new educational and cultural projects, liable to



generate value, and alternative models that question the hegemonic values and models.

### Instruments for applying it at the local level

- Municipal school council with the involvement of all schools. Living, dynamic school councils.
- School zoning hindering practices that lead to school segregation.
- Specific support for those schools bringing a strong commitment to diversity within their classrooms.
- Specific supports for pupils with family and/or economic difficulties.
- Ensuring that schools adopt pedagogical objectives and practices (group work, student assemblies, etc.) favouring inclusion.
- Creating a body for the representation of the public in the media.
- According supports and mutual obligations with the educational and cultural initiatives arising from the community.

### 5.4.6 Local participative policies for producing social capital

#### Justification

- People do not find it easy to move beyond their personal (work, studies...) and family routines, which absorb their time and

energy. To generate a social network, extending the potential contacts and resources within reach, it is first necessary to break down the walls of indifference and suspicion of others.

- In this sense, few things are more effective for binding people of different origins than having a shared activity or working for a common purpose. However, someone has to lead and organise this and spaces and resources must be provided.

#### Definition within models of democracy

- Participatory: availability of public spaces where people can meet, share things and possibly establish lasting relationships.
- Community: associations or informal groups enabling experiences to be shared and projects to be carried out around a space or activity.

#### Instruments for applying it at the local level

- Creating public spaces in the open air (squares, parks...) and under cover (Civic Centres, old and young people's centres, swimming pools,...), to enable and encourage people to meet in shared activities (parties, markets, fairs, competitions,...) organised by the council or, preferably, by users themselves.
- According supports and mutual obligations with the community initiatives intended to strengthen links between people from the same district, of the same age or with the same hobby, sport, etc.

**Table 9: The positive impacts of public participation on the dimensions of social inclusion**

Inclusion dimension	Models of democracy	Instruments for applying it at the local level
Inclusion as <b>citizenship</b> (political rights; participation in public decisions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative: a political representation that is vocational, responsible, transparent and adapted to the will of the electoral body.</li> <li>• Direct: mechanisms through which the citizens can decide on certain public questions, without mediators.</li> <li>• Participatory: spaces for deliberation and dialogue, open to the social players and citizens in general.</li> <li>• Communitarian: associations and groups created to defend the common interest, ensuring that the democratic institutions work correctly by monitoring, complaint and, if necessary, denunciation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging a modification of local legislation to: 1. Advance towards decentralisation, 2. Guarantee immigrants the right to vote, 3. Improve representation, and 4. Establish effective participative mechanisms of control and evaluation of the municipal management.</li> <li>• Creating different spaces of participation applicable to all areas of local policy, but also considering criteria of economy, efficiency and efficacy. It must be remembered that participation is not an end in itself, but rather a means to personal and social development.</li> </ul>
Inclusion as <b>occupation</b> (access to paid work: occupation + income)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory: availability of spaces that enable workers' voices to be brought into substantive aspects of the management of corporations, including the reconciliation of productive work with the reproductive to achieve a more equitable, socially efficient distribution.</li> <li>• Communitarian: co-operative companies devoted to the production, distribution and consumption of basic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the proper functioning of collective bargaining with the representatives of the public workers, pushing the agenda of inclusion beyond the habitual conflict on salaries.</li> <li>• Encouraging the participation of the workers in private companies, in application of the principle of corporate social responsibility.</li> <li>• According supports and mutual obligations with the</li> </ul>

Inclusion dimension	Models of democracy	Instruments for applying it at the local level
	<p>goods and services; credit co-operatives to support the establishment of new companies, housing co-operatives, etc. managed and controlled by people with few resources; networks for the exchange of products, services or time.</p>	<p>initiatives of co-operative production, credit and consumption emanating from the community, and other types of social networks related to people's paid or unpaid work.</p>
<p>Inclusion as <b>recognition</b> (absence of discrimination)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative: recognition of active and passive suffrage for all people born in the country, whatever their family's origin, or having resided there for a time.</li> <li>• Participatory: availability of a place for the discriminated group's voice to be expressed and heard, to reinforce or compensate for the (provisional) absence of political rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backing the reform of the electoral law, starting with the right to vote in municipal elections.</li> <li>• Campaigns to encourage participation among the discriminated groups already entitled to vote, but which vote very little, either due to lack of knowledge or a feeling of political inefficacy.</li> <li>• Adoption of respect for diversity as a principle of the government's political action.</li> <li>• Creation of municipal councils of participation that allow these groups to express themselves and watch out for their interests.</li> </ul>
<p>Inclusion as <b>protection</b> (access to public services and social protection)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory: availability of spaces allowing the citizens/users' voices to be brought into the monitoring, control and assessment of public services.</li> <li>• Communitarian: strengthening of social entities and networks based on reciprocity, capable of offering protection and help, if needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating or encouraging the creation of councils of users that watch over the quality of the public services:</li> <li>• Adapting the public services to the diversity of their potential users.</li> <li>• According supports and mutual obligations with community initiatives of protection and social aid.</li> </ul>
<p>Inclusion as <b>education</b> (access to education and culture)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory: bodies for facilitating the participation of all players involved in the educational processes. From the educational community and each school. Bodies for enhancing public participation in the public media to thus ensure their plurality.</li> <li>• Community: generation, through associations and informal groups, of educational and cultural projects liable to generate value, and alternative models that question the hegemonic values and models.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal school council with the involvement of all schools. Living, dynamic school councils.</li> <li>• School zoning hindering practices that lead to school segregation.</li> <li>• Specific support for those schools bringing a strong commitment to diversity within their classrooms.</li> <li>• Specific supports for pupils with family and/or economic difficulties.</li> <li>• Ensuring that schools adopt pedagogical objectives and practices (group work, student assemblies, etc.) favouring inclusion.</li> <li>• Creating a body for the representation of the public in the media.</li> <li>• According supports and mutual obligations with the educational and cultural initiatives arising from the community.</li> </ul>
<p>Inclusion as <b>bonding</b> (links and social networks: social capital)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory: availability of public spaces where people can meet, share things and possibly establish lasting relationships.</li> <li>• Community: associations or informal groups enabling experiences to be shared and projects to be carried out around a space or activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating public spaces in the open air (squares, parks...) and under cover (Civic Centres, old and young people's centres, swimming pools,...), to enable and encourage people to meet in shared activities (parties, markets, fairs, competitions,...) organised by the council or, preferably, their own users.</li> <li>• According supports and mutual obligations with the community initiatives intended to strengthen links between people from the same district, of the same age or with the same hobby, sport...</li> </ul>

## 6. Conclusions

Social inclusion is a concept that has been very successful in redefining the objectives of social policy in the light of the challenges of new times, characterised by accelerated change, mobility, instability and fragmentation on all levels: in the economy, in society and in the life course of each individual. Citizen participation is also widely accepted, and is considered a form of saving democracy from its growing distancing and ineffectiveness regarding the problems and concerns of the citizens.

Progress has been made in the respect for human rights by incorporating the mentioned concepts in the discourses and, to a smaller extent, in governmental practices, but this has obviously not been sufficient to put an end to social exclusion or to do away with the deficits of democratic quality. Progress has been selective and has come with many situations of stagnation or even regression, shown for example in the deterioration of working conditions and basic services, or in the denial of political rights.

The situation cannot be attributed only to the present economic crisis. In addition to increasing the number of victims, the crisis has certainly reduced the government's capacities on all levels to deal with the problems through public policies. However, most policies had already been weakened by a lack of true commitment on the part of many governments and by approaches that see the market as the only possible valid form of social regulation.

How can we explain such a difference between discourses and realities? Maybe the problem has to be sought in the fact that we have taken for granted that the concepts of social inclusion and participatory democracy corresponded to unequivocal, obvious meanings for the whole world. This is clearly not the case. As we have seen, there are different ways of understanding democracy, and each one provides a different idea of exclusion and inclusion. Even public participation can obey very different focuses and motivations: from work for (re)generating the public sphere to the effective defence of private interests. The umbrella of social inclusion can also hide realities such as the stigmatisation of all those who fail to follow a person, family or community's "correct" (working/social/cultural) model, with such terrible consequences as assimilation, marginalization or elimination.

This is why we believe that social inclusion and participatory democracy only make sense as political objectives committed to the recognition of others (*of equality in difference*) and to civil, political and social rights for everyone. But these are objectives which also enable the application of highly diverse institutional and non-institutional instruments.

To the specific question of whether the existence of a more participatory democracy is a necessary condition for advancing towards more inclusive societies, we have reached the conclusion that this bond exists and is given in all spheres of social life (work, public services, education, neighbourhood's life...). What's more, there is no possible inclusion in urban societies without participation. There may be powerful social policies that achieve a certain, always weakened, redistribution of income and wealth on the basis of transfers; nevertheless, without true involvement of the excluded people in the process intended to lead to their inclusion, it will all be but a mirage. There will be no real transformation because it will not be based on people's autonomy.

How to ensure that the excluded or those at risk of exclusion take action? First of all, by recognising and accepting the differences in the framework of equality, secondly by eliminating the social structures causing inequality and thirdly, by not braking or discouraging the initiatives of these groups, even though they might not fully respond to the models of the dominant society. Furthermore, there are many community initiatives that generate public value and deserve to be encouraged and helped by the public authorities with economic and/or with technical support. It is also positive to engage into joint service production with the public authorities and also, logically, to channel collective demands and pressure for improving the services provided by the institutions. There must therefore be a double inclusion strategy: recognition of rights (social citizenship) and promotion of group and community self-organisation (empowerment).

By making a map of specific proposals for starting up this strategy in a local context, we find a constellation of alternatives where the solution is neither to apply a pure market-based model, which has been shown to fail, nor to return to the protective social State,

which is excessively rigid and stifles social autonomy, but rather to turn to a model that enhances the improvement of the public sector, the market and the third sector to strengthen what is public: public values, public services, public spaces... as a basis for social inclusion. For a public sphere must be created day by day, bringing in participation in different formats, adapted to the context and to the public, private and social actors that need to be involved.

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## Declaration of the Third Social Action Sector: For a Strategy of Social inclusion 2011 – 2020.

**The institutions of the Third Social Action Sector, represented on the NGO Platform of Social Action, the Spanish Volunteering Platform and the European Network for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Spanish state, meeting on 30 September and 1 October at the Third Social Action Sector Convention 2010:**

### WE HEREBY REPORT

The infringement by the member states of the targets set in the Lisbon Strategy 2000-2010, and especially regarding the eradication of poverty.

### WE NOTE

That the present crisis has not only alarmingly increased the rates of unemployment, but that its main consequence has been to increase poverty in our country. This translates into worse conditions of life for many people who were already in a state of exclusion, and the appearance of social insecurity affecting new groups of population and leaving them in a state of vulnerability. Everything also seems to indicate that if serious measures are not taken urgently, this tendency will get worse.

That the more than fifteen years of high rates of economic growth that we have enjoyed in the country have not only failed to reduce both relative and severe poverty rates, but have also increased the inequalities between the richer and poorer segments of the population. The greatest recent period of economic bonanza in our country has therefore been wasted without correcting the structural problems that are at the root of exclusion or making a suitable social distribution of wealth.

That the measures that are currently being taken to climb out of the

crisis, which are determined by control of the financial markets and cause a drastic reduction in social expenditure, not only clearly jeopardise the quality of life and well-being of many citizens, but also lead to a reduction in rights and more severe poverty and deprivation for people in a state of poverty, and are harmful to economic and financial recovery.

### WE REMIND

That inequality, poverty and social exclusion not only harm the quality of our democracy, but also cast doubt on the values and principles behind it, and therefore to have adequate social protection to guarantee all people's well-being and their dignity of life is an aspiration that cannot be cast aside for our society, but rather takes on yet more importance in times of crisis.

That it is the obligation of the public powers to effectively guarantee fundamental rights for all people. These rights include the right to a reasonable life, which requires sufficient income and services to be able to live adequately and protection to provide life expectancy and the capacity for free, independent decision-making.

That inequality has become the main characteristic of an unstable, globally unsustainable society. Economic development only makes sense if at the service of people's well-being; it is therefore essential to grow in a more equitable way, in search of the well-being that includes economic, political, social and environmental factors, in which priority is given not only on the level of the country's income but also on its distribution, and on the activity outside the market as well as on non economic aspects such as education, health, democratic quality, security and environment.

That an society is economically unsustainable, democratically unfair and socially immoral in which inequalities are not only aggravated but many groups of people, including children and young people, do not have the essential resources to be able to have reasonable lives.

That the role of the Third Social Action Sector is fundamental for containing the most negative effects of the crisis on the more vulnerable groups. The Third Sector can also play an essential role both in maintaining and developing social cohesion and in a sustainable recovery, provided its potential and added value are used correctly.

## WE CALL

For a State Agreement on Social Inclusion to be reached in the coming decade, in which all of the administrations are committed and which actively involves the social players, and especially the Third Sector, thus strengthening its role in society. This State Agreement, which must be led by the Central Government, requires broad social and political consensus and must fundamentally seek another model of development in which the structural tendencies causing exclusion are inverted.

For Social Inclusion Plans to be developed within the European Union Strategy 2020 both on the national level and in the regions and local areas which exceed the Strategy's targets. These plans must be a substantial improvement over those developed in the past decade, so that they have clearer objectives, suitable resources, information systems and pertinent monitoring, as well as suitable involvement on the part of the social organisations.

For them to be made effective, guarantee and delve further into the social rights for all people, recognised both in the European Union Treaty and in the Spanish Constitution and statutes of autonomy. Therefore, an agreement for social inclusion is proposed on the highest level of the state and with the commitment of all administrations to develop the general right to inclusion and guarantee that all people have their basic needs covered and have the necessary support for promotion. This agreement must contain the minimal services or portfolio of services that the different administrations must define and guarantee as part of their competencies. This agreement implies the commitment to have inclusion plans in which specific measures, quantifiable objectives and adequate resources are established, bearing in mind the needs and characteristics of each territory.

That within the framework of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion there should be a public commitment translating into the clear, determined will on the part of institutions to eradicate poverty in the next decade, at least in its extreme forms, and to achieve substantially lower inequalities, instability and vulnerability, making personal development and well-being a fundamental objective of the economic policies. This commitment must be translated into clear targets, sufficient budgets and suitable monitoring systems.

That the social budget percentage should be increased to 27%, so further funds will be needed following the constitutional principles of progressiveness and equality. This requires the elimination of the so-called frauds, especially by the least supportive, the privileged tax systems for high capitals and the rationalisation of expenditure based on social welfare criteria.

## WE PROMISE

To increase our efforts in working for a fairer society by defining the rights of the weakest, by reporting situations of injustice, discrimination and marginalization and solidly fighting to promote all people, and especially those who more largely suffer from exclusion.

To work closely with all public administrations and all economic and social players, taking an active part in the conception, performance, monitoring and assessment of inclusion policy, and providing all potential and assets of our entities and strengthening our role as a spokesperson and social player. We accept the joint responsibility in encouraging, monitoring and defending the measures that are the result of consensus with the Third Social Action Sector.

To work in conjunction and coordination both nationally and in the autonomic and local areas with the entities of the Third Social Action Sector, increasing our coordination and starting up the necessary processes for this collaboration to be close, coordinated and that it might strengthen each entity's work.

We are firmly convinced that in this way we will be able to improve our mission, for we move with the same values, we are involved in the same objectives and we can better develop our potential as a social player.





**UCLG Committee  
on Social Inclusion,  
Participatory Democracy  
and Human Rights**

**Commission Inclusion  
Sociale, Démocratie  
Participative et Droits  
Humains de CGLU**

**Comisión de Inclusión  
Social, Democracia  
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