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"[1].

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 true reason for being: 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 consolation in the fact that the case of Mexico City, referred to in the above quotation by Carlos San Juan, might seem us more likely 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 these developments are not sufficient 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, especially in those that count their inhabitants by the millions. In a volume focusing on the cases of Brazil and Spain, Fleury, Blanco and Subirats 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 still 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; these elements all become potential factors for discrimination. The economic crisis affecting large part of the

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

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[2].

Economic globalisation is neither the only cause nor the only visible manifestation of the changing times we are experiencing. 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, associated with phenomena such as mobility, flexibility and uncertainty, are other developments which interact with the economic transformations, mutually strengthening each other until they achieve an enormous power. We will not discuss which of these factors is the primary cause of this situation, nor draw connections to old discussions between idealism and materialism and its different variants[3]. What is important for us here is to see that all these factors, to a greater or lesser extent, present obvious opportunities for humanity to make progress as well as risks that may affect the health and well-being of individuals and which are very difficult to control.

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; to the contrary, it requires significant 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 much more quickly 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. Luttwak 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. In regard to this issue, we feel that the solution 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.

Though "*the subtle ideology of economicism*"[4] repeatedly conjures up in public opinion a perverse association between stability and stagnation, we know that certain levels of

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[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.

[4] Paehlke, pp. 141-147.

personal and social stability are necessary for well-being, progress and even for society's very reproduction[5]. 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 certainly part of life, but the way and the pace in which we adapt, individually and collectively, depend on human 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 might 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 smaller and more pronounced cycles of wealth creation and destruction. The most obvious example of this is the current global crisis, which started in real estate and finance but ended up contaminating the whole of the economy.

In fact, there are those who contend that the present crisis is three-pronged; that it is an economic, social and ecological crisis. As Paehlke first noted in 2003[6], 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, neither his nor our view is catastrophist; although the situation is serious, 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 situation, events that will pass and will allow us to go back to business as usual, to the previous balance between representative democracy, the welfare state and global capitalism. What is happening is nothing more than the reflection of changing times, a different scenario that requires new conceptual frameworks for understanding and new tools to act in ways that produce the right responses.

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[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, everyone (social groups, ideologies, etc.) wants to take it over and it begins to be linguistically used (and abused); with time, its original meaning or meanings can gradually be modified to the extent that the relationship between word and meaning ends up unrecognisable.

The paradigm of inclusion, for example, has managed to displace the previous paradigm of class conflict, inherited from historical materialism, in a large part of the 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 also includes the risk of being the object of diverse political uses whose goals that might even be in conflict with each other.

In the preceding decades, the concept of citizen participation also enjoyed similar success. The main political actors took it up, albeit superficially, as a way to improve a 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*"[7]. The very first sentence of the "Let's build the Inclusive Cities of the 21st Century" policy paper combines a disputable 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 the majority of people now live in them. Along with people, cities logically 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, something linear and focused on progress, 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 models 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[8].

In this vein, thinkers such as Castells, Borja, Le Galés 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 and more self-confident. The planet's large cities are not (yet) leading players on the world stage, but they do have more leeway to manoeuvre and 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.

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[7] Barcelona City Hall, p. 31.

[8] Proponents of this view, which we call "spatial turn" (Schlögel, introductory chapter), 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".

1.4 Approach and structure of the paper

This research stems primarily from the initiative and work done by UCLG's Social Inclusion and Participatory Democracy Commission. Taking its documents 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".

Our first question centres on 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 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.

As such, this paper 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 knowledge acquired in sections one and two, suggesting specific principles and steps to take in order to recover and reinforce participatory democracy and foster inclusion policies.