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 origins, 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 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 have on the most disadvantaged people and social groups.

We might 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 an independent life project, thus preventing them from developing fully 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 that have been established throughout the history of humanity. And we must be aware that in 21st-century social structures composed of privileges and power relationships that include certain sectors and leave others out still prevail, to a greater or lesser extent. This happens on all levels and in all fields of social activity, and to a large extent, this inequality is structured from 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 inclusion structure.

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 all 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 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[9].

Closely related to this economic factor is another disruptive factor, highly associated with the second modernity or "liquid modernity" (Bauman): social links become fragile, leading to a significant risk of erosion and loss of affective, cognitive and normative points of contact between the individual and society. While a discussion of the causes of this complex and ambivalent phenomenon, both potentially liberating and devastating[10], falls outside the scope of this paper, we can mention its consequences: on the one hand, we see the questioning and a growing absence of benchmarks and *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 "misled" 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 faced by a series of possible causes of exclusion. We might distinguish between those derived from structural factors of inequality and those derived from individual conscious decisions that we might label as mistaken (for

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[9] An analysis of the fullest possible consequences of this phenomenon leads to talk 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 extinguibles", in Cimadamore & Cattani, pp. 147-190).

[10] Of all the words that have been proposed as possible names for this phenomena, the one that we like best is Swiss sociologist Pater Gross' "Multioptional society". 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).

example deciding not to pursue education, not to seek 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 the most significant?

It is obvious that the case for equality before the law has made significant progress in the world at large —to the extent that 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 forced by group or community rules.

However, a certain 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 in the heart of specific social structures subject to the aforementioned discriminatory logics[11].

In this new society, characterised by classical elements (weakened 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 more typical 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 nearly always appears in the context of the adjective "social", it is in fact considered a "total" phenomenon with multiple facets (economic, political, cultural, etc.), one which is extremely dynamic and which could potentially affect any person at any time in their lives.

So far, we have talked about the origin and the ultimate causes of exclusion, but now we want to mention its primary causes, what we would call "factors of 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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[11] For more on this topic, see Puyol, pp. 203-221. The most obvious proof of this phenomenon is that the main factor which 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.
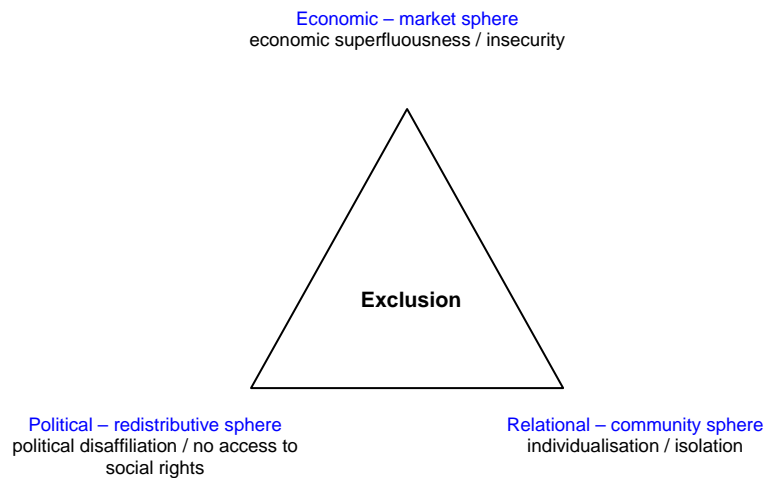
Table 1: An overview of social exclusion

Areas	Principal factors of exclusion	Axes of social inequality		
Economic	• Economic poverty • Financial difficulties • Dependence on social insurance • No social protection	Gender	Age	Ethnicity/country of origin/nationality
Occupational	• Unemployment • Underemployment • Lack of job qualifications / no qualifications • Cannot work • Job instability			
Educational	• No education / no access to compulsory education • Illiteracy / low level of education • Failure • Dropping out • Linguistic barriers			
Social and health	• No access to health care or basic social health resources • Addictions and related illnesses • Infectious diseases • Mental illness, disabilities or other chronic illnesses causing dependence			
Residential	• No home of one's own • Homes which lack basic services (water, electricity, etc.) • Precarious access to housing • Poor housing conditions • Poor living conditions (i.e. overcrowding) • Deteriorated urban areas lacking basic services			
Relational	• Breakdown of family networks (conflict or violence in the family) • Limited or weak family networks (single parenthood, loneliness, etc.) • Limited or weak social networks • Social rejection or stigmatisation			
Citizenship and participation	• No access to citizenship • Restricted access to citizenship • Deprivation of rights through criminal process • No political and social participation			

Source: Subirats (2004)

In order to better understand the system, 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

Economic – market sphere
economic superfluousness / insecurity

Exclusion

Political – redistributive sphere
political disaffiliation / no access to
social rights

Relational – community sphere
individualisation / isolation

Source: Fleury, Subirats, & Blanco, 2008.

So far, no one has managed to provide a satisfactory answer to a key question: 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 question of degree that admits shades and alternatives, it is then very difficult to establish a series of standard indicators valid for everyone. Nevertheless, when we talk about exclusion, we must refer generally to at least four 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 themselves is enormous. Of course, this diversity is strongly limited by the structural processes of inequality in each society; generally the people with the most economic resources are also those with the most social relations, the highest degree of education, the best health, etc. The same is true of the reverse case: fewer economic resources mean lesser education, health, and social relations. 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 illustrates each of these four categories and considers the conditions likely be found in each of the three principal spheres of exclusion.

Category	Economic sphere	Community sphere	Political sphere
People in a state of exclusion:	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.
People at risk of exclusion:	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.
People in a state of vulnerability:	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.
People in a state of more or less comfortable inclusion:	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 exceeded 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 change constantly (taking steps forward or backwards), 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 to be concerned, 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 dealt with simply through the classical tools of social policies (redistribution and universal public services); it requires us to envision new approaches and put them into practice.

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 differed in various parts of the world, it has unquestionably increased the vulnerability of both hundreds of millions of people and the democratic institutions whose responsibility is to represent and protect them 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 have lost their job since the beginning of the present economic crisis; the biggest job losses have occurred in the United States and Spain. Since 2007, numerous companies have gone bankrupt and there have been other closures or significant layoffs due to overproduction or partial or total relocation of production to other countries. A large number of the self-employed and small entrepreneurs, unable to manage such a significant, lasting drop in profit, have quit.

This situation has further intensified the segmentation of the job market. A group of people —a minority in most countries— has stable, well-paid jobs and social protection, while another, ever growing group of people has —in the best case— unstable, 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 (having exhausted Keynesian anti-cyclical stimuli) are considering is to try to increase national productivity's competitiveness and open new markets abroad. In other words, we are seeing a return to the strong, generalised economic growth model. However, given greater knowledge of the planet's biological and physical limitations and of the resulting true costs of a model based on unrestricted (but highly unequal) energy and materials 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 be 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 games 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 rather meagre 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 time these very same states found that they faced a quite complicated situation with regard to their finances, due to the explosive combination of growing expenditure and falling income, which often reached two-figure percentages.

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 which, though not at the hard core of basic services, played or could 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.[12]

We might therefore say that public capacity to promote social inclusion (specifically in local governments) has been reduced; and medium-term perspectives are not too rosy considering the structural deficits many of these administrations hold. The economic crisis and the tax and budgetary crisis which came about as a result of it are another reason to consider a 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 there. Dynamic cities in the globalized world are beset by constant flows of new people in search of opportunities, people who have 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 have their own (economic, family/social, and political) capital, 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

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

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 status which they considered guaranteed, fear that they might not be able to ensure their future well-being for themselves or their children. The extreme "status anxiety"[13] in certain social circles is certainly related to one of the true 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 is not of sufficient quality. In other words, *winner takes all* is 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 we lived made many people 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-commoditisite part of our lives and recover time and spaces in order to generate new solidarities and mobilisations which favour a stronger, 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, democratic politics based on dialogue, is 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 and generating social protection and bonds between people.

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[13] This subject was magnificently and concisely discussed by Alain de Botton in his work "Status Anxiety".

2.2 The dimensions of inclusion

Social inclusion is, logically at least as complex and multidimensional a concept 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 a certain 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 faculties, a significant social bond and, above all, 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, social contacts, motivation and self-esteem and a very high risk of suffering from depression.[14]

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 almost always include 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

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[14] On this point, see Amartya Sen.

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 almost everywhere 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 people or the direct exclusion of certain people 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 people's sense of dignity, which is fundamental for everyone to feel and act as a full member of the community. Sennet[15] has convincingly presented the relationship between the respect that society is capable of showing towards its weakest members and the capacity of the weakest to overcome their difficulties and keep growing.

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 social exclusion.

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[15] Sennet (2003).

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[16]. 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, on the one hand, young peoples' education takes longer and becomes more costly, and on the other hand, 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 independently in society? Given the size of the challenge, we feel 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 increase life efficiency and insurance, 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. This was brilliantly analysed by Robert Putnam, the American

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[16] 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.

political scientist who stated that relations forged with people beyond the family are a true element of social capital which generate and strengthen strategic values such as confidence and thus 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 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 roles but should not overshadow other valuable actions, such as actively taking part in organisations or groups who produce services of public value by 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 can not 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 message (we wouldn't dare say "discourse") of rejection or apathy towards 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 think that participation within a 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 we have 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 regulatory force to be considered the new paradigm for taking action when implementing social policies[17]. 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 to what extent the paradigm of inclusion can become economically biased, culturally homogenising, socially stigmatising and politically unaware and irrelevant.

2.3.1 Economically biased?

There's 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 but also other essential elements such as their sense of dignity and personal value depend on this. 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 essential, shouldn't we consider all people who receive income through their partners (normally through the husbands), their parents (in the case of unemployed youth), or other family members to be excluded?

- 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

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[17] For more on this issue, see Godàs.

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[18].

- Unemployment as a structural phenomenon: This is typical in a world characterised by highly technical industrial and agricultural production, where creating new quality jobs requires constantly increasingly 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[19]. 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[20]. We believe it is essential to bear this in mind in order to develop suitable policies.

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[18] See Jordan.

[19] 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.

[20] See Michael Walzer (1983) for a brilliant discussion of this topic.

2.3.2 Promoting social homogeneity and conformism?

As Rosetti points out, we still have not resolved the discussion around "what the counter-concept to exclusion is"[21]. 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 seeing it as equal access to rights and duties which trump ethnic, cultural, economic, and other 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.); this is 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 what is "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 they have to be helped. Often, however, this situation is less about helping a supposedly excluded person than reaffirming the status of the majorities which, in the "correct" mainstream, 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 that they are a part of are even more so, full of an ever-growing, unredeemable diversity. Basing our idea of inclusion on a highly constricted ideal of life unavoidably leads to misfocusing the problem and proposing mistaken 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 highly negatively-connoted stigma serves those in power in two ways: on the one hand it reinforces the attractive standard model of inclusion (which, in

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[21] Rosetti, p. 31.

contrast to these stigmatised individuals, is seen as the only desirable and true model) and on the other hand it makes easier to subject certain groups 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, a world where incomplete human beings who are incompetent and incapable of facing life exist. As such, these people seem 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", is nothing more than paternalism, preventing the most disadvantaged people and groups 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 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 we have seen, 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 once we look beside and beyond the cultural dimension, local contexts are often distinctive because of more essential things, like biological and geographical traits (e.g. climate, scenery, and 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")[22]. 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 are, indeed, becoming more exacerbated over time); rather, he believed that neither their genesis nor their structure could be explained primarily in terms of class[23]. 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 insensitiveness of the exclusion/inclusion paradigm has been connected to its holistic ambition; that is, to the tendency to group all existing situations of inequality and social conflict together under the exclusion banner. 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 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 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.

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[22] See Atkinson.

[23] See Beck.

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 its cost.

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 chance of developing professionally, acquiring a high social status and being fully "included", then the successful can be satisfied at their, fully legitimate, success, and the losers have to accept their bad luck, because they have not managed to use their skill, effort, dedication, etc. and have failed to take 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 thing about the endowments (physical and intellectual) that nature, and the capital (economic and cultural) that the family and the closest social make available to each individual? Obviously not, because many are the 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[24]. 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 tabled and analysed, and the possible political implications must also be considered. The enormous

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[24] Judt, p. 27.

inequalities of world income and wealth are "...*more than just bad luck or a certain combination of preferences, tastes, skills and personal effort*"[25].

People's attitude and behaviour are obviously important too; some know how to chance the system better 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, fail to advance and will succeed 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 universally 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*"[26]; 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.

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[25] Puyol, p. 205.

[26] Puyol, p. 203.

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 academics and politicians are totally convinced about the superiority of their respective paradigms, but others express more doubt on the fact that there might be one paradigm clearly superior to the others, which might therefore become the general rule in inclusion policies. Simple explanations are not convincing enough in such a complex phenomenon. 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,...), that takes in account both the theory (descriptive-explanatory) and the practice (regulatory-prescriptive) side of knowledge and also applying in it 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, in which the logic of exclusion/inclusion has taken over in all areas of human life. The most obvious sign is the growing segmentation and segregation in work, housing, school, sport, etc. Individualisation also seems to be clearly coupled with greater vulnerability with people now deprived of the family and community cushions that were previously available in a context in which the welfare state, which could compensate this loss, has stagnated or even tended to halter. Nor does it seem disputable to characterise social

exclusion as a dynamic, multidimensional and heterogeneous phenomenon, a process with 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. It 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 be able 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, the word that best reflects the ideal of social inclusion is autonomy.

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 concept was generated from multidisciplinary and transversal approaches, because this was the only way to understand the complex interrelationship of 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 founded in their speciality. We should think and work in an interdisciplinary way, although it is 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 assumed 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 also other factors that have a role to play.

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 an extreme situation, such as income of a person in a prison, it that does not have to mean, necessarily and automatically, her fall into social exclusion, because it is just a factor, certainly 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*"[27].

3. Fraternity, or more modern, co-responsibility, expressed in cooperation and solidarity. Living in society, and still more in our high-density, highly complex urban society, 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).

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[27] Puyol, p. 208.

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[28]. If the emblem of the first modernity was criticism of the traditional order, the emblem of the second modernity is "criticism of criticism" (Beck"); 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 society respectful of diversity, the routes to inclusion must be open, flexible and inevitably local. In other words, each specific place, which might be the district, the village or the city, has its specific biophysical, demographic, economic and social

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[28] Cleaver (p. 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")*".

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 be governed properly to express collective action through 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 lack of critical mass and essential resources that local governments might have when addressing problems, and above all due to the risk that the dispersion of political power should result in the public powers' smaller capacity to redistribute income and correct inequalities. There is no doubt that local autonomy may be inefficient and ineffective, and that it can also encourage or cover bad practices, such as certain well-to-do districts' more or less successful attempts to separate from the "mother" cities and become municipalities by themselves, in order to avoid resources being redistributed to the poorer districts through taxes.

These problems are not resolved with less local economy, but rather with a good regulation and structuring of it, one that guarantees suitable transparency and accountability, as well as suitable institutional dimensions 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, and also to adopt and defend a systemic, national, vision, of the territory; one that reflects the true dynamics of local economies and societies (especially in metropolitan areas), where we inevitably find a mixture of people of different origins, professions and status. It must be clear, however, that once the map has been drawn up, state 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. Local government should, however, have sufficient autonomy and resources to plan and develop its own inclusion policies.

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; call it 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 obviously 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, but with a global movement towards greater inclusion, despite fallbacks like that currently experienced in a large part of the planet.

Today, nothing is essentially different in this point. The fight against exclusion is waged on different fronts: in the economic area, in search of 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[29], but also one of its main objectives[30]. So are these two sides to the same coin? Two parts of a single

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[29] 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 (…)*".

[30] Sisk, p. 72: "*Mitigating segregation and fostering inclusion are key functions of democracy*".

process feeding themselves? These key questions lead us to the next point of the study.

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 majority 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[31] write 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

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[31] Anduiza, E. & Pardos, S: "Introduction: how to analyse the state of democracy?", in: Anduiza, pp. 15-46.