The social Inclusion policy agenda in Australia: a case of old wine, new bottles?
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Abstract

The election of an Australian Labor Government in Australia in 2007 saw ‘social inclusion’ emerge as the official and overarching social policy agenda. Being ‘included’ was subsequently defined by the ALP Government as being able to ‘have the resources, opportunities and capabilities needed to learn, work, engage and have a voice’. Various researchers in Australia demonstrated an interest in social inclusion, as it enabled them to construct a multi-dimensional framework for measuring disadvantage. This research program resulted in various forms of statistical modelling based on some agreement about what it means to be included in society. The multi-dimensional approach taken by academic researchers, however, did not necessarily translate to a new model of social policy development or implementation. We argue that, similar to the experience of the UK, Australia’s social inclusion policy agenda was for the most part narrowly and individually defined by politicians and policy makers, particularly in terms of equating being employed with being included. We conclude with discussion about the need to strengthen the social inclusion framework by adopting an understanding of social inequality and social justice that is more relational and less categorical.

Keywords: social inclusion, social justice, income support policy, citizenship
Introduction

The term ‘social inclusion’ became a guiding concept for Australian social policy with the election of the Labor Government in Australia in 2007, which argued the need for a multidimensional approach to poverty and other forms of social disadvantage. Being ‘included’ was more specifically defined by the new government as being able to ‘have the resources, opportunities and capabilities needed to learn, work, engage and have a voice’ (ASIB 2010). This definition was based on advice from the Australian Social Inclusion Board, established soon after the election of the ALP Government. The definition draws on a human capital approach, which privileges an economic lens by equating participation in education and employment with the notion of being included in society. The language of social inclusion in official policy discourse was relatively short-lived in Australia, having been swept aside with the change in late 2013 to a federal Coalition Government, led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott. On the same day the new government was being sworn in, the Social Inclusion Unit and the Board were disbanded (Karvelas 2013). We agree with Peter Saunders (this volume) that the demise of the ALP Government has meant that social inclusion is no longer a guiding framework or policy priority at the political or departmental level. Our interest in this paper is in analysing the concept of social inclusion, particularly whether the approach taken by the ALP Government had the potential to deliver on the promise of a more inclusive society.

What we argue in the paper is that the ALP Government pursued a fairly narrow ‘welfare to work’ policy agenda under the social inclusion banner, an approach that offered an insufficient response to other factors that lead to social inequality and entrenched disadvantage, such as chronic health problems, incarceration, permanent disability, and discrimination. In this sense, the social inclusion framework represented a continuity with the existing institutional logic of the Australian welfare state (Bryson 1992; Jamrozik 2005), with its emphasis on paid work as the main engine of redistribution and principal marker of citizenship, despite the fact that the labour market in Australia is no longer able to offer the economic security that it was able to provide in the mid to late twentieth century (Howe 2012). Moreover, the anti-welfare populism and welfare paternalism that typically accompanies welfare-to-work policies in countries like Australia work against the principle of inclusion in a socio-cultural sense because they construct a separate and problematic ‘other’ that must be reformed, managed and disciplined (Hoggett et al. 2010). As such, the dynamics of the social exclusion discourse are always potentially perverse, in that the effect of the inclusion/exclusion binary is to exclude while simultaneously seeking to include (Scanlon & Adlam 2008). In the contemporary context, the social inclusion policy framework struggles to escape the broader social logic of a disciplinary state, exemplified by the convergence between the penal modality – security, surveillance, law and order, punishment – and a muted welfare modality, which is becoming more conditional, more risk conscious, and more focused on managing problem populations, rather than addressing social need (Garland 1999; Wacquant 2009; Standing 2011).

This conceptualisation of the ‘socially excluded’ as a threat to cultural norms and social inclusion as equated with market integration is dominant in countries that have a highly commodified welfare state. It is important to place the policy narrative of the Australian social inclusion agenda in an international context given the role that ‘policy transfer’ between countries plays in shaping national policy agendas. In this regard, Australia has been influenced by the UK experiment in using social inclusion to frame social policy interventions. UK social scientists have developed robust analysis of the social inclusion agenda. Ruth Levitas’s (1999) critique of the UK Labour Government’s implementation of the social inclusion policy agenda, for example, showed that in practice the government adopted a social integration approach to inclusion through privileging paid employment, while neglecting a more redistributive approach to addressing social inequality. Subsequent analyses of the UK Labour Government’s approach
found that in the last term of the Blair/Brown Labour government there was more income redistribution taking place, but there was a preference for using the tax system for redistribution, rather than the cash transfer system (Bradshaw 2011). Using the tax system rather than social welfare to redistribute resources and goods was politically motivated, as the government was trying to differentiate itself from the state-centric ideology of previous Labour administrations (Levitas 2005).

As we will show in the first part of this paper, Australia has followed a similar path in privileging paid work as the primary mechanism for promoting inclusion in both rhetoric and practice, particularly through its welfare-to-work policies and their associated compliance measures. It is for this reason that the paper will make various comparisons with the UK, given the influence that the UK Government has had on the conception of social inclusion-exclusion developed in Australia, particularly the emphasis on market integration as the main marker of ‘inclusion’. In our view, a market integrationist approach to inclusion has three main problems, which we outline in the paper. The first is that this approach conceives of inclusion-exclusion in categorical, rather than relational terms, a conception that can be inadvertently promoted by the use of ‘objective’ research measures for monitoring the degree of social exclusion in Australia. The second problem is that the main thrust of the national policy agenda remains silent on other ways in which people become social citizens, as in participation in care, education, and volunteering activities. And the third problem is that the Australian social inclusion policy agenda focus on ‘welfare-to-work’ is decidedly utilitarian, with its emphasis on making various categories of ‘excluded’ conform to the norms of the majority through sanctions, nudges, and surveillance (Standing 2011: 154).

In examining these tensions our aim in this paper is to engage in critical review of the Australian social inclusion agenda policy narrative – rather than detailed analysis of policy agenda and implementation – a task that we hope will contribute to a more imaginative and well-rounded set of policy principles and programs that are able to respond adequately to growing income inequality, entrenched disadvantage, and economic insecurity. In the paper we will make reference to various social policy initiatives introduced under the banner of social inclusion, but we will not undertake a detailed evaluation of any one program, as that is beyond the scope of this paper. In prioritising the policy narrative in our analysis we take our analytical cue from the work of Carol Lee Bacchi (2009), who argues that it is important to interrogate critically the representations of social problems, as they inevitably contain assumptions that inform the policy solutions proposed and implemented. In the case of social inclusion policy discourse several of these assumptions are relevant: that unemployment equals exclusion; that paid work equals inclusion; and that non-paid work by itself cannot achieve inclusion (van Berkel & Moller 2002). In a similar vein, we note the added degree of nuance afforded by Lister’s notion of ‘diminished inclusion’ (1999: 47), whereby being in low-paid work offers few real opportunities for full inclusion; and with much the same effect, Sen’s point concerning ‘unfavourable inclusion’, by which the price exacted for being included is high, leading to ‘adverse participation’ (Sen 2000: 29).

A brief history of the idea of social exclusion-inclusion

The origins of the term social exclusion can be found in the French socialist governments of the 1980s, where it showed much promise as a tool for conceptualising the diverse sources of poverty and exclusion from society (Percy-Smith 2000: 1). It was a term used to refer to a disparate group of people living on the margins of society without access to social protection. Later manifestations of the term, evident in the formative treaties establishing the European Economic Community and especially negotiations around the Maastricht Treaty, marked a shift from early conceptualisations in their emphasis on social and economic cohesion (Percy-Smith...
2000: 1). The European Union (EU) poverty programs in existence since 1974 were brought to a halt in 1994 and social exclusion, defined primarily in terms of labour market exclusion rather than poverty, became the main focus of social policy in the EU. While continuing to endorse the importance of social inclusion measures and monitoring, EU member states have also struggled to ‘mainstream’ social inclusion objectives into public policy development and implementation (Atkinson et al. 2007).

The UK Government became an enthusiastic proponent of the social inclusion-exclusion framework in the late 1990s. In the UK, social exclusion was endorsed as a policy concept in 1997 when the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, set up the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) and loosely defined it as a ‘shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown’ (Blair 1997: 3). This multi-dimensional definition equates social exclusion with marginalisation. When pressed to explain what social exclusion actually meant, Blair responded that ‘everyone knows what social exclusion is’ and uttered the now infamous mantra calling for ‘joined-up solutions to joined-up problems’ (Blair 1997: 4). Here is an example of one of the central problems in discussing the concepts of social inclusion-exclusion. As Levitas (1999; 2005; 2006; 2012) notes, the terms are widely used interchangeably and are entirely fluid in their definition. Social-inclusion-exclusion are not merely two sides of the same coin, as policies associated with social inclusion can be narrowly framed around paid employment. Indeed many of the key features of social exclusion, such as being left out of ‘social relations and patterns of sociability’ are ignored or reconstructed as matters for individual choice making and responsibility (Levitas 2005: 123).

Clearly, there is a difference between academic understandings of inclusion and the implementation of social inclusion policies by government. The different but complementary work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum on the human capabilities framework, for example, does not privilege economic participation and importantly it rests upon the moral significance of individuals’ capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value, which may include time to cultivate loving relationships, to play, and to develop political freedom (Sen 1981; 2000). This ethical valuation differs from utilitarianism, which is more concerned with the best means for achieving the ‘good life’ for the greatest number. The policy implication from the capabilities moral framework is that the means and ends should be democratically debated by any given society and that whatever is decided there are likely to be a range of inclusion signifiers and integration measures that will need to be recognised – beyond paid employment. Citizens can be excluded from political processes, from education, from informal social networks, from secure housing and from cultural, sporting and recreational activities. Accordingly, there is no reason to assume that paid employment is the right solution, particularly given recent changes in the labour market. As Whiteford (2013: 65) suggests:

...encouraging participation in the paid labour market is of crucial importance. But not everyone can benefit from paid work. Moreover, widening wage disparities and high levels of underemployment – particularly for women – in combination with changes to family payments – raise the risk that in-work poverty could become more salient in future.

Despite the critique of simplistic ‘work-first’ solutions, the political commitment for implementing a multi-dimensional social inclusion agenda has been lacking in Australia. There has been a mix of contradictory political messages attached to the social inclusion agenda, which is further complicated by the federal system of government, as the next section illustrates.

Recent social policy developments in Australia
The concepts of social inclusion and social exclusion gained increasing prominence in Australian social policy from the early 2000s. The idea came into practice – at least initially – at a state government, rather than a federal government level. Following New Labour’s lead in the UK, the South Australian Labor government established the Social Inclusion Unit in 2002 with the expressed commitment of tackling social exclusion by examining ‘the complex and interrelated causes of disadvantage and adopting a whole of government, and more importantly, whole of community response’ (Government of South Australia 2009: 2). The unit was discontinued by the new state (ALP) Premier Jay Wetherall after he succeeded Mike Rann in 2011 and its social policy functions returned to mainstream welfare departments. In Victoria, a broader vision of social disadvantage beyond narrow economic poverty measures contributed to the 2005 development of Victoria’s Neighbourhood renewal and broader ‘A Fairer Victoria’ framework, with $5 billion available to ‘address disadvantage and promote inclusion’ (Victorian Government 2005). This framing of welfare policies in Victoria lasted five years until late 2010 when the state Labor Government failed to win its re-election bid.

At the national level, the incoming Labor Government in 2007 announced its social inclusion agenda and shortly thereafter established a Social Inclusion ministerial portfolio – initially held by then Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard – and the Australian Social Inclusion Board in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in December 2007. According to the first annual report of the Social Inclusion Board, the Government was committed to a social inclusion agenda that is ‘about building a stronger, fairer nation in which every Australian gets a fair go at the things that make for an active and fulfilling life’. Being socially included was said to mean:

...that people have the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to:
learn (participate in education and training); work (participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities); engage (connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities); and, have a voice (influence decisions that affect them) (ASIB 2010: 15).

Similar to Europe, the emphasis in the above definition is on rights and responsibilities, and the need to be active in either learning or earning, which stands in opposition to the construction of social assistance as ‘passive welfare’. The above definition also makes reference to the right of citizens to have a voice – to be involved in decisions that affect them – which partly reflects the growing strength of the consumer rights movement in health and welfare policy in Australia (Ramon et al. 2007).

What was given most attention by the Australian Labor Government in its first and second term – as evidenced by policy announcements and federal budget priorities – was reviewing eligibility for rebates for private health insurance, changes to parenting payments, continuation of income support management in the Northern Territory for Indigenous Australians, and maintaining the disparity between pensions and unemployment benefits (Newstart). In his research, Peter Whiteford (2011) showed that, since 1996, social security payments for the single unemployed had fallen from 23.5 per cent of the average wage for men to 19.5 per cent. The level of Newstart for a single person had also fallen from around 54 per cent to 45 per cent of the after-tax minimum wage. Newstart has fallen from 46 per cent of median family income in 1996 to 36 per cent in 2009–10, and shows the degree of income loss over time as a result of different indexation figures. Compulsory Income Management (CIM) was introduced by the conservative Howard government in 2007 and was initially targeted at Aboriginal communities and trialled in the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). In this context, income management meant restrictions on social security payments so that parents would spend their money on food and other necessities, rather than on alcohol. Around fifty to seventy per cent of a person’s payments (administered by Centrelink on behalf of the Australian Federal
Government’s Department of Human Services) was quarantined in the form of a ‘BasicsCard’, which could only be used to buy groceries and other essential items at designated stores. Family welfare payments were also linked to children’s school attendance in the School Enrolment and School Attendance Measure (SEAM). The Income Management policy was continued under Labour, but extended beyond Indigenous communities in 2012 to five trial sites across Australia, in Place Based Income Management (PBIM) to 2017 (Mendes et al. 2013).

Focus on the deserving and undeserving poor, a suspicion of recipients ‘cheating the system’ was also evident in other aspects of income support policy changes. A 2012 Federal Budget announcement, for example, included a cost saving provision that around 83,000 single parents be moved from Parenting Payment Single to the lower rate of Newstart Allowance when their youngest child turns eight. The policy was justified as a form of motivation for inclusion in the workforce (Australian Council of Social Service 2012; 2013), conveniently ignoring the evidence that many single mothers are highly motivated and already working, possibly in multiple jobs (Grahame & Marston 2012). In this policy framework the work ethic is deployed to chastise the unemployed, even though the scenario of enough secure and decently paid work for all has ceased and is unlikely to return in any concrete way (Howe 2012). The one-sided policy focus on labour market demand, rather than supply, minimises ways in which labour market opportunities could be more fairly distributed. This is not only a problem relevant to the Australian context, As Bauman (1998:80) argues:

> For the affluent part of the world and the affluent sections of well-off societies, the work ethic is a one-sided affair. It spells out the duties of those who struggle with survival; it says nothing about the duties of those who rose above mere survival and went on to more elevated, loftier concerns. In particular, it denies the dependency of the first upon the second, and so releases the second from responsibility for the first.

The main policy assumption here is that being unemployed means one is not participating socially or economically – thus the equation of paid work with inclusion and the marginalisation of an ethic of care in the formation of social citizenship. It needs to be acknowledged that some announcements late in the term of the ALP government laid the foundations for non-paid work-based inclusion measures, such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme and a national paid maternity leave scheme. These more recent initiatives were less explicitly about paid work, though they are not completely divorced from this policy goal either, given that paid maternity leave is in one sense about ensuring mothers retain their attachment to the paid workforce.

The dominant approach promoted by Australian policy makers during this period of government is best captured by what Veit-Wilson (1998: 45 in Byrne 1999: 4) describes as a weak version of inclusion:

> In the weak version of the discourse, the solutions lie in altering these excluded people's handicapping characteristics and enhancing their integration into dominant society. 'Stronger' forms of this discourse may also emphasise the role of those who are doing the excluding and therefore aim for solutions, which reduce the powers of exclusion.

The weak version resonates with what Levitas (1999) defines as the social integrationist and moral 'underclass' discourses of social inclusion, while the strong version reflects a redistributive egalitarian discourse that embraces notions of social justice and social citizenship. Levitas explains that social inclusion is a ‘powerful concept, not because of its analytical clarity which is conspicuously lacking, but because of its flexibility’ (2005: 178). This means it is used in widely different, often interchangeable ways:
The term social exclusion is intrinsically problematic. It represents the primary significant division in society as one between an included majority and an excluded minority. Exclusion appears as an essentially peripheral problem, existing at the boundary of society, rather than a feature of society, which characteristically delivers massive inequalities across the board and chronic deprivation for a large minority. The solution implied by a discourse of social exclusion is a minimalistic one: a transition across the boundary to become an insider rather than an outsider in a society whose structural inequalities remain largely un-interrogated (Levitas 2005: 7).

The endorsement of a 'weak version' of social inclusion promoted by the ALP Government undermined the political potential of the concept to provide a comprehensive account of the sources of disadvantage and exclusion. The approach to social inclusion adopted by the government added little value to understanding or acting on the mechanisms and institutions that sustain privilege, inequality and disadvantage. In part, this soft version of social inclusion may reflect the political context in Australia during this period, such as minority government, short-term decision making, and an increasing reliance on poll-driven policy development. And in terms of public administration, despite the Social Inclusion Board being part of the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, actual decisions about welfare, health and education were still driven by line agencies and their Ministers. And as noted by Peter Saunders in this volume, there were signs in the federal bureaucracy that government departments resisted the breaking down of silos that the inclusion agenda demanded.

What these examples illustrate is that the Australian social inclusion policy agenda and governance has for the most part been a case of continuity, rather than discontinuity. In short, the political mantra that 'work is the best form of welfare' continues to ignore the fact that labour markets in advanced capitalist countries are increasingly unable to deliver jobs that offer economic security (Karvelas 2014). On the flip side of equating labour market dependency with self-reliance is the notion that so-called 'welfare dependency' is pervasive - which legitimates an individualist construction of the problem of poverty as being associated with the receipt of income support by the state. This 'moral hazard' argument, coupled with a strong association between social inclusion and labour market integration reinforces an individualised conception of unemployment. As Saunders (2005: 5) points out about the concept of social inclusion-exclusion, when placed in the wrong hands, social exclusion can become a vehicle for vilifying those who do not conform and an excuse for seeing their problems as caused by their own 'aberrant behaviour'. Used in this sense, the term social exclusion becomes little more than a new expression for the 'underclass', 'the dangerous class', or 'human waste' associated with global capitalism and excess of population. As Bauman (2007: 31) notes:

Those who escape transportation (unlike refugees) and remain inside the enclosure are earmarked for recycling and rehabilitation; their state of exclusion is an abnormality which demands a cure and musters a therapy; they clearly need to be helped ‘back in’ as soon as possible.

The division between 'them' and 'us' remains sharp in this policy narrative. Moreover, the moral binaries reinforce a categorical rather than a relational approach to social inclusion. In contrast, Silver and Miller (2003) use a relational approach in conceptualising inclusion-exclusion, in the sense that it is not enough to focus on the unemployed, the homeless or the poor. They argue we must use the concept to focus also on the so-called 'included', as this brings into the frame the way in which dominant groups in society benefit from low wages, unemployment, and inflated rents in capital city housing markets. Tilly's (1999) contribution on understanding social inequality around income and opportunity is relevant here. According to Tilly (1999), two powerful social processes are fundamental to reproducing inequality: exploitation and
opportunity hoarding. *Exploitation* is the process by which powerful connected people have control over resources and use those resources to enlist others in the production of value while excluding them from the full value added by their efforts, using *any* of a number of means, such as legislation, work rules, and outright repression. *Opportunity hoarding* occurs when members of a categorically based network confine the use of the value-producing resource to others in the in-group (Voss 2010). This view of power relations is not that dissimilar to Weber’s (1985: 42) concept of ‘social closure’, which reflects efforts by the powerful to exclude less powerful groups from the benefits of joint enterprises. Importantly these conceptions of exclusion/inclusion move the level of analysis away from ‘deficient’ individuals and illuminate class, gender and ethnic relations as struggles over material and symbolic resources.

If the political and policy gaze is on the ‘excluded’ then we miss the possibility of seeing the dynamic between the insiders and outsiders, the dominant and dominated and the power struggles between different groups. Moreover, in political terms we reduce the capacity to develop a ‘sociological imagination’ around addressing public problems because we miss analysing the institutional organisational mechanisms that produce and sustain enduring inequalities and anti-democratic practices (Tilly 1999; Sen 2000). As Nevile (2006: 88) argues in her distinction between active and passive exclusion, active exclusion is the result of a deliberate decision to deny certain people or groups of people particular opportunities – as in the Commonwealth Government’s decision to restrict refugees access to a range of benefits, depending on their mode of arrival. Passive inclusion may be understood as the unintended consequences of policy initiatives that do not seek to exclude, but because of attendant factors such as lack of affordable child care, a sub-optimal level of inclusion may be all that can be achieved (Nevile 2006: 88). A relational approach also invites a critique of ‘mainstream’ values and practices, rather than simply accepting that the individualisation of economic risk is a positive social norm. This point about the need to problematise the role of the state and the hazards of market-based risk management is acknowledged by Zizek (2008: 32) when he argues that: ‘society itself is responsible for the calamity against which it then offers itself as the remedy’. These contradictions need to be acknowledged in discussions about integration and differentiation, as does a more honest appraisal of the way in which capitalist economies generate economic inequalities and multiple forms of marginalisation.

**Recent research directions in Australia around the concept of social exclusion**

A categorical approach to inclusion/exclusion has been inadvertently reinforced through national research measuring the population defined as ‘socially excluded’, some undertaken by government and others by university researchers. Regardless of important differences in what measures are used for the indicators, they all share a similar purpose, that is, to track what proportion of the population can be considered ‘socially excluded’. One example of this work is the Social Exclusion Monitor developed by the Brotherhood of Saint Laurence in conjunction with Melbourne University (Horn et al. 2011). One aim of the monitor is to track over time what proportion of the population suffers from varying degrees of social exclusion, based on analyses of secondary survey data compiled into a set of indicators. Another aim of the monitor is to benchmark how well the Australian Government’s social inclusion policy was progressing. As such it seeks to promote further inquiry into the dynamics and processes that lead to inclusion or exclusion. The indicators used in Australia are similar to those used in western European countries, which all accept that social exclusion is multi-dimensional, but beyond that there is no agreement about which indicators are more salient or causal (Silver & Miller 2003). While this approach is certainly an advance on simply relying on income poverty as a measure of social and economic deprivation, the framework can inadvertently reinforce a technical and categorical
approach to understanding and addressing complex social, political, economic and cultural processes. Peter Saunders (this volume) provides more detailed analysis and discussion of the pros and cons of the different conceptions and measures of social exclusion in Australia, including the framework and indicators developed by the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales.

Certainly there is a place for measurement in understanding the scale and significance of a given social problem, but we need to ensure that this does not become a substitute for understanding how processes of discrimination, rejection, isolation and poverty are produced and experienced. As Saunders notes (this volume), there has been a relative neglect of subjective indicators in the frameworks used to determine whether and how people are excluded. In general, a degree of reflexivity is required, as Fraser (2010: 68) notes in her caution about the prominence given to ‘justice technocrats’ and ‘scientistic presumptions’, ‘[w]hat passes in the mainstream for social science may well reflect the perspectives, and entrench the blind spots of the privileged’.

In terms of broadening the social inclusion research agenda, this means being specific about multiple exclusions that can accentuate each other. Each form of inclusion within tightly conceived and narrowly drawn policy models is accompanied by excluding forces that need to be mapped and carefully analysed. For example, having limited access to fair forms of financial credit is a form of financial exclusion in capitalist societies that can be the result of geographical location, household indebtedness, precarious employment, or the lending practices of mainstream financial institutions. Collapsing this problem under the banner of ‘social exclusion’ can have the effect of blunting these interlocking economic realities. Similarly, we need to insist on a spatial understanding of relations of advantage and disadvantage, given the marginalisation of poorer communities on the fringes of major metropolitan cities, away from jobs and affordable transport options. While the research community is now much more sophisticated in analysing the importance of space and location in relation to economic opportunity (Vinson 2007; 2010), policy makers have tended to respond narrowly to the spatial challenge by targeting punitive policy measures at poorer locations – e.g., place-based income management – rather than looking at what sort of mechanisms would improve social and economic integration in cities. Taking spatial analysis more seriously would mean considering how the design of modern cities in capitalist economies promotes private consumption, private transport and property rights (Peck 2001). Insisting on decent public infrastructure, such as public libraries, free public transport, accessible public parks and community gardens can ameliorate some of these effects, but it requires political leadership that refuses to be unduly influenced by private and corporate interests. And it requires urban planners, community leaders and architects being on social policy advisory committees, not only welfare experts, business leaders, academics and economists.

Equally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to ensure that any policy development or research measurement exercise does not discount the ways in which those citizens placed in researcher-defined categories of ‘excluded’ have their own understanding of processes of exclusion, and what might be done to improve their wellbeing. This point reflects a more general ethical sentiment about being careful that we do not simply construct low-income citizens and households in terms of their deficits, or abstract lives into statistical categories that make an arbitrary distinction between the included and excluded without appreciation of the subjective dimensions of inclusion and exclusion. While these unintended outcomes are not the intention of well-meaning social researchers, it is always a risk that research subjects become ‘othered’ through abstraction and reification, which in itself goes against the emphasis on ‘people having voice’ in the ALP Government’s definition of social inclusion (ASIB 2010). In overcoming this limitation we need to insist on multi-disciplinary research approaches that research up as well as down the income ladder, and which include a variety of methods to ensure that there is a
greater relational understanding of the processes that produce exclusion. In the next and final section of the paper we attempt to sketch a conceptual framework that would strengthen the social inclusion discourse in Australia by arguing for an approach that is more consistent with a relational view of social inequality and social injustice.

**Strengthening the discourse of social inclusion-exclusion**

To get beyond a 'weak discourse' version of social inclusion we want to suggest that governments might do well to revisit and refurbish some of their guiding social policy principles from the twentieth century, such as social citizenship and social justice. Here, we propose an approach that captures the relational and stratified nature of divisions within society by acknowledging the relations of power that underlie the divisions between social groups. A broad account of social welfare and social justice, such as that advocated by Titmuss (1958), Townsend (1979), and Jamrozik (2005), point to general trends in society and the distribution of advantage and disadvantage, while also signalling the influence of power and dominant interests. In this sense we want to marry a revitalised conception of social citizenship with a relational view of power relations within society in order to strengthen approaches to conceptualising inclusion-exclusion.

T.H. Marshall (1950) is the usual starting point for discussing citizenship rights. He theorises citizenship as comprising three stages of broad historical evolution towards civil, political and social rights. Civil citizenship, from the eighteenth century onwards, is the right to personal freedom in the form of speech, movement, and assembly. Political citizenship, emerging in the nineteenth century, is the right to vote and stand for public office. Social citizenship, a creation of the twentieth century, includes economic security and equal access to health, education and employment opportunities (Marshall 1950). Citizenship is closely tied to the enjoyment of rights and may be understood at a quintessential level as 'the right to have rights' (McNeely 1998: 9). In this sense, Marshall's treatment of citizenship refers to a complex, multi-layered entity that traverses legally based rights and obligations and also 'natural' or human rights. This is particularly the case for social citizenship, with its aspirations for participation, greater social equality and access to the benefits of health and education. Civil and political rights to due legal process and to vote are written into established law, conferring citizenship with legal status (McNeely 1998), and are capable of recognition and definition 'with some precision' (Heater 2004: 114–115).

Social citizenship as considered by Marshall, connects closely with the United Nations Human Rights enactments of the 1940s, contemporaneous with and helping to shape the background to when he was writing *Citizenship and Social Class* (Heater 2004). Social citizenship may be understood as:

> The whole range from a right to a modicum of economic welfare and security, to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being, according to the standards prevailing in a civilized society (Marshall 1950: 12).

Social citizenship is also about human dignity, guaranteed by the welfare state to ensure that individuals have the material wherewithal to take part in society. The centrality of a state guarantee of adequate resources is key to being human (Kincaid 1973). This perception of humanity is linked to concepts of liberty and freedom that have been refined in the twenty-first century, notably in the work of Sen (1981; 2000; 2006), Standing (2001; 2002; 2011) and Weil (1988). Personal development and liberty are interrelated in a complex way around the
concepts of capabilities and functioning. The central issue is that of personal freedom to realise fully one's human capacities. A well enforced 'structure of rights' affords each person the greatest possible opportunity to do whatever she might want to do (Sen 1981: 45).

For Standing (2001: 30), real freedom 'requires a system of social protection that allows people of all backgrounds to be able to make choices'. It might also be said that 'real' choices can only be made when essential resources are available to all. Marshall's trilogy of citizenship categories is extended by Standing in arguing for a definition of work far removed from the narrow confines of paid employment, or the strictures of welfare-to-work schemes as gateways to social security benefits. Instead, in capturing the notion of human potential implicit in Marshall's social citizenship, he suggests that 'work in its rich sense is what defines the human being, conveying a restless, creative, reproductive energy', termed 'occupation' (Standing 2001: 4).

Here then is a fuller version of citizenship than that offered by the 'industrial citizenship' of welfare-to-work policies and the associated instrumental approach to the value of education in human capital terms. At the heart of these earlier approaches to citizenship is a respect for moral adulthood, autonomy and fairness in terms of the distribution of national goods and resources, and an acknowledgement that respectful recognition of people's choices and contributions is itself a matter of justice. Devalued social identities makes denying citizens a fair share of resources politically palatable (Fraser 2010). We need a relational approach to social justice that not only makes the connection between cultural and economic justice explicit, but which also makes the connection between privilege and poverty immediately tangible, rather than 'natural' and acceptable.

Recent developments in political philosophy offer a model of social justice focused on seeing connections between privilege and poverty in a way that seeks to uncover structural injustice and implies a moral imperative that justice is everyone's responsibility, standing in stark contrast to a liberal discourse of self-sufficiency, productivity, reward, and individual blame. Iris Marion Young's (2011) work on a 'social connection model' of justice is one such example:

The social connection model of responsibility says that individuals bear responsibility for structural justice because they contribute by their actions to the processes that produce unjust outcomes (Marion Young 2011: 103).

From this perspective it is disingenuous to suggest that persons living in neighbourhoods with poor schools, few shops and dilapidated housing, miles from the closest job opportunity have an equal opportunity with other persons in the same city. From a 'social connections model' of justice, we would conclude that any worry about irresponsibility ought to be directed to all citizens, not just to those who are made more visible by state surveillance. We might also conclude that those citizens who are not poor, at least at this point in time, participate in the same structure of advantage and disadvantage, constraint and enablement as those who fall below the poverty line at some point. After arriving at this conclusion it becomes that much harder to absolve ourselves from having no responsibility for social injustice (Young 2011). This relational approach to social justice also acknowledges that the line between vulnerable and resilient or included and excluded can change very quickly, particularly in times of personal illness, acquired disability, or widespread global economic uncertainty. In short, this social connections model of social justice would resist the 'blame welfare' (Handler & Hasenfield 2006) discourse that is dominant in countries such as the UK and Australia, and it would help to promote the human capability to see 'the them in us and the us in them' (Levitas 2005).

We do not have the space to articulate the multiple implications of this approach for policy implementation and human service delivery, beyond restating the importance of the connection between dominant policy frames and policy action and the importance of responding to the
contradictions in the inclusion-exclusion dynamic in practice. For example, in terms of policy frames it is important to acknowledge that the contemporary exclusion-inclusion dynamic around welfare-to-work and employment policies has a much longer history in the binary category of ‘deserving’ and ‘underserving poor’. Indeed, worklessness remains perhaps the most powerful engine of social exclusion, justifying the continual violence of societal responses to an attributed ‘intentional refusal to work’, as there are few ways of causing more societal offence than refusing the moral imperative to ‘earn one’s crust’ (Scanlon & Adlam 2011: 246). And in terms of local service delivery in the provision of employment assistance, care and other social services there is a need to acknowledge the contradictions within the exclusion-inclusion dynamic, particularly the need to understand, or at least respect the decisions of those ‘that refuse to come in from the cold’ and join ‘mainstream society’. As Scanlon & Adlam (2011: 244) argue in their critique of the symbolic violence of a normative society:

We consider the plight of the individual who refuses to rejoin, or indeed who may never have felt included in the first place; and we seek to understand this problematic social refusal in the context of failures of hospitality and citizenship, and the denying of membership of the metropolitan societal in-group in relation to which the antisocial individual must then stand in opposition.

The challenge is to avoid scapegoating tendencies in how refusals to join are framed and understood, even when those who express their opposition do so in ways that may be harmful to themselves or others. What we have tried to do in this final section is suggest some alternative first principles for designing a different institutional response to marginalisation and disadvantage – one that would go beyond a simplistic inclusion-exclusion dichotomy (Neville 2006), implicating all citizens in the project of creating a fairer, more genuinely inclusive society.

**Conclusion**

This paper has discussed the concept and practice of social inclusion policy in Australia from a critical standpoint where substantial differences are seen to exist between multi-dimensional government pronouncements on social inclusion-exclusion and a rather more narrow emphasis on paid employment in major social policy initiatives. What we have argued is that the social inclusion policy agenda pursued by the previous ALP Government failed to escape the moral imperative around paid employment enshrined in the institutional legacy of the exclusionary tendencies within the ‘male wage earner’s welfare state’ (Bryson 1992: 89). As such the policy agenda is likely to have suffered from similar shortcomings and unequal outcomes, particularly for women, Indigenous Australians, low-skilled workers, and the long-term unemployed. It is too early to tell whether the National Disability Insurance Scheme, paid maternity leave, and school education reforms will mute the productivist paradigm. At this stage, our assessment is that despite much initial fanfare about the social inclusion policy agenda, the policy frames and reforms introduced during this period were often a case of old wine in new bottles.

In part, this critical account highlights the importance of the connection between politics, public administration, and policy outcomes. Unlike the UK, Australia did not embed social inclusion targets in all federal government departments and the now defunct Social Inclusion Board was not central to social policy decision making (Saunders 2013). And despite some sophisticated developments in social and economic indicators of disadvantage, the social inclusion policy agenda did not fully embrace the multiple dimensions of exclusion/inclusion put forward by researchers. All of this is not to say that the ‘weak’ policy discourse of social inclusion could not be refashioned into a framework that has the analytical and practical capacity to address the structural inequalities that create and contribute to various forms of social and economic marginalisation. First, we need more public debate and deliberation about the quality and depth of inclusion that acknowledges the harsh realities of the working poor who ‘earn’ their poverty
with multiple low-paid and insecure jobs (Novak 1997). In a labour market with a significant share of casual and insecure work, it is income that is in fact the key material measure of inclusion, not whether someone has a paid job. However, even this recognition does not get us far enough in acknowledging the important role that non-market forms of inclusion play in creating the security and human flourishing.

Refurbishing a connected and embedded model of social citizenship and social justice is a worthwhile aim as it acknowledges the dialectical relationship between political and social rights (Scott 2006). Addressing social inequality requires clarifying value debates, mobilising collective agents, and expanding opportunities for voice in the public polity. This in turn will help to define and shape a form of citizenship that is authentically connected to social, cultural and economic modes of participation, not a model whereby people are forced into being one-dimensional ‘responsibilised risk managers’ in a narrowly defined ‘job holder’ society. In contrast, the social citizenship and social justice envisaged here is, as Tilly (1999: 56) notes, ‘thick’ in terms of rights and equal status – as opposed to ‘thin’ citizenship, loaded with responsibilities and conditional allowances.

Constructing and implementing a vision for a more inclusive society requires acknowledging the contradictions of the present, such as the way in which the welfare state is both an enabling and disabling political-economic force and the fact that in cultural terms ‘included’ groups have always required ‘excluded’ groups in order to defend social norms that preserve established economic interests. We also need to acknowledge that conflict, inequality and competition are integral features of capitalist economies. These structural dynamics cannot be wished away by weak social inclusion talk that both reflects and reinforces unquestioned truths. We need policy metaphors and research that is able to sharpen, rather than blunt social realities in order to transcend the present and envision what Erik Olin Wright (2010) calls ‘real utopias’, which means not only articulating the architecture of a fairer future, but also developing a more fully fledged social diagnosis of problems in the present.

Notes

1 Rhetorical claims about passive welfare have been greatly exaggerated; given that the receipt of benefits in countries with highly ‘targeted’ income support policies have always had an element of conditionality (Marston, 2008). What has changed in the past two decades, in Australia and the UK, is the linking of conditionality to broadly defined ‘activities’, rather than to a specific work test.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the AJSI reviewers for their comments and helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of this article.

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