

DOES SOCIAL INCLUSION SAFEGUARD CITIZENS' RIGHTS TO CHOOSE?

- A celebration of best practice.
- A critique of bad practice.

SUBSTANTIVE CITIZENSHIP

- “The substantive part of citizenship ... entails membership of the person in the political community and the social and economic ability of that person to function reasonably well. That requires positive and specific government policies to redress disadvantages suffered by members of marginalized groups, so that they can participate and function as full members of the political community and of society” (Chesterman and Galligan, 1997, p.7).

RANN QUOTING DUNSTAN

- “If a person is to play a full part in the life of the community, a premium must be placed on the provision of secure and stable employment, income, housing, health, hospitals, education protection from exploitation and oppression, access to justice and the general freedom of self expression” (Dunstan, cited in Rann, 2008, p.12).

WHAT THE QUOTES ON SUBSTANTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL INCLUSION SHARE

- Both concepts orbit around this idea of citizens achieving the *freedom to function* in a manner which *expresses the way they choose to be.*

QUESTION

- But does the concept of social inclusion safeguard those rights to choose?

PROBLEMS WITH SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Social Integrationist discourses emphasise labour market participation.
- Workforce participation management often emphasises mutual obligation.
- This raises issues.

THE ISSUES

- Coercion.
- Assimilation.
- Value judgements.
- Paternalism.
- Imposing lifestyles on the poor.
- Moral policing.

A FOCUS ON SUBSTANTIVE CITIZENSHIP RATHER THAN SOCIAL INCLUSION ...

- Avoids these issues.
- Safeguards a self-determined citizenship.
- Avoids setting up two classes of citizens – those with and those without the right to determine and *expresses the way they choose to be*.
- Is empowering and fair.
- Is about equity and affirmative action rather than coercion and obligation.

CONCLUSION

- Distinguishing between good and bad social inclusion practice involves a focus on citizenship.
- Distinguishing between good and bad social inclusion practice involves a focus on *how many classes of citizens we want*.

I note, with interest, the comments which Peter Vaughan from Business SA made earlier at this forum. I interpret Peter as suggesting that disempowered individuals, as citizens, are *obliged* to pull their socks up and make a participatory contribution to society, whilst powerful corporate citizens ought to have their *rights* to be socially excluded - or their rights to socially exclude themselves and not contribute - protected. I'm not sure how that can be reconciled, but in any case, this idea of a double standard provides some context for my comments on social inclusion.

I take the term "social inclusion" as covering a whole lot of policies and practices. Taking the term broadly, I end up with a concept of social inclusion which ranges across the spectrum of what I'd call good to bad practice. So I end up with a concept that's both rich and progressive on the one hand, and problematic on the other.

What I do, to make a clean break from problematic practice, is hive off the best aspects of social inclusion practice and initiatives and bundle them under another term, which I'm far more comfortable celebrating. At one level, this exercise - the one that I'm engaging with today - is an issue of semantics and re-badging. But at another level, it's important to heed the kind of critiques which underpin the logic of my exercise.

That logic and those critiques, I would argue, put us in a position to distinguish best from worst practice, and help us to develop a sense, or *reinforce* a sense, of a coherent code of good practice around what constitutes desirable and undesirable social inclusion activities and initiatives.

Nothing I've got to say is complicated - I'm just saying that social inclusion initiatives should seek to optimise themselves in a way which is coherently principled.

I want to start by putting my preferred term on the table.

I want to focus on the idea of **substantive citizenship**, and I want to focus on the fulfilment of substantive citizenship as a first principle for social justice initiatives. Let me briefly define this idea of substantive citizenship. I've got a succinct quote which puts it this way:

The substantive part of citizenship ... entails membership of the person in the political community and the social and economic ability of that person to function reasonably well. That requires positive and specific government policies to redress disadvantages suffered by members of marginalized groups, so that they can participate and function as full members of the political community and of society (Chesterman and Galligan, 1997, p.7).

The idea of substantive citizenship entails the notion of full economic, social and political membership of the community. It entails the notion of the *rights* of citizens to empowered choice around how they express themselves politically, economically and otherwise.

It strikes me that the idea of fulfilling substantive citizenship is reasonable underpinning for the goal of achieving social justice for all. And it's very much in

tune with the way some commentators describe social inclusion initiatives and endeavours.

Take Mike Rann's speech to the Don Dunstan Foundation from April this year. Quoting Don Dunstan, the Premier said this in regards to social inclusion:

If a person is to play a full part in the life of the community, a premium must be placed on the provision of secure and stable employment, income, housing, health, hospitals, education protection from exploitation and oppression, access to justice and **the general freedom of self expression** (Dunstan, cited in Rann, 2008, p.12).

There's a real alignment there between the ideas of fulfilling substantive citizenship and achieving social inclusion. Both concepts orbit around this idea of citizens achieving the freedom to function in a manner which reasonably *expresses the way they choose to be*. And I think that's a really sound first principle for social inclusion initiatives and practices.

But my question is this: does the concept of social inclusion safeguard those rights to choose? And it's an important question when you think about it, because those ideas of choice and expression are just another way of saying "self-determination", and I think we all agree *that* serves as a pretty good central principle for social justice. After all, if your choices are determined by others - if the choices of the powerless are made for them - then there's no social justice in that at all: there's just a huge imbalance of power.

This brings up some of the problems with social inclusion as it's been deployed around the world. Of course, the concept of social inclusion has its origins in Anthony Giddens and the Third Way, and one of the ways those origins have been expressed is through so-called Social Integrationist discourses. Simply put, this is the interpretation of the idea of social inclusion which emphasises the importance of labour market participation as a road to equal opportunities and social integration.

That's a model of social inclusion which brings up a set of problems. Generally, the problems have arisen around Mutual Obligation models of workforce participation management, and given that the Commonwealth holds the welfare purse strings and therefore the power to enforce that kind of Mutual Obligation, the big issues for us here loom at a federal rather than state level. It's interesting to think about the establishment of a national Social Inclusion Board in that regard. But wherever governments have the ability to withhold or provide necessary services, there are potential issues.

When inclusion entails obligation, we encounter problems of coercion, assimilation and social blackmail. We also skirt close to old-school value judgements around who constitutes the deserving poor, and these judgements - these determinations and associated prescriptions - these things are at odds with the principles of self-determination and autonomy, which are integral to wellbeing.

When inclusion entails obligation, we run into the problem of imposing codes of behaviour or imposing lifestyles on the poor. And this imposition is totally at odds with principles of choice and self-determination and empowerment.

Imposition by coercion is a problem which can be part of the social inclusion equation. And there are other issues around coercion and assimilation too: there are a whole lot of questions about whose interests are actually being served.

Assimilationist impulses raise issues over whether social inclusion initiatives are underpinned by a desire for social justice *per se*, or by a compulsion to deal with the bothersome, be they bothersome as tax burdens or by virtue of some moral judgement around unsightliness.

A focus on substantive citizenship avoids social inclusion's problematic association with imposing inclusion on the excluded. Instead, it speaks to the need for a self-determined citizenship which safeguards rights of autonomy and choice. This is an approach which avoids the injustices of subjugation, the injustices of disempowerment and the injustices of exclusion which haunt the concept of coerced inclusion.

This is an approach which avoids setting up two classes of citizens – those with and those without the right to determine and *expresses the way they choose to be*.

It's *this* notion of empowered choice and self-determination which needs to be foregrounded as a first principle if social justice initiatives are to fulfil a role of facilitating a fair society.

This is where principles equity - principles of affirmative action - become more powerful than principles of coercion and obligation. The distinction is one in which the concept of citizenship is central. It's one which relates to how many classes of citizen we want. It may be one of semantics, but it's also one which distinguishes good from bad social inclusion practices.

Author's note

This paper is brief in its remit. For further sympathetic comments on progressive models of citizenship and mutuality, I recommend the following as a starting point:

Macintyre, C 1999, 'From entitlement to obligation in the Australian welfare state', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 103-118.

References

Chesterman, J & Galligan, B 1997, 'Introduction', in *Defining Australian citizenship: selected documents*, eds J Chesterman & B Galligan, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp. 1-17.

Rann, M 2008, 'Six years on: a review of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative', *Speech to the Don Dunstan Foundation*, Adelaide.

Macintyre, C 1999, 'From entitlement to obligation in the Australian welfare state', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 103-118.