A CASE FOR RECONSIDERING THE INCLUSIVE URBAN DESIGN DEBATE

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Abstract

Mainstream theory and practice of inclusive urban design focus predominantly on the free access and use of the built environment. This becomes problematic when set against the homonymous theory which argues for places for all, under what appears to be a holistic, yet vague definition of 'inclusivity'. Moreover, a design focus on physical accessibility leaves unaddressed questions on users who are to benefit from inclusive design practices, to what extent and how that is to be achieved.

The present paper argues that in order to legitimately discuss issues of inclusivity in an urban design context, the discipline needs to consider not only urban design process and outcome, but also mechanisms behind exclusion/ inclusion processes and how these are embedded in everyday urban practices, artefacts and spaces.

This can only be attained by re-considering and re-phrasing the very concept of inclusive urban design. Building on a critique of the purpose and the function of the discipline, the paper challenges in-place notions of inclusive urban design and explores its limitations against taken-for-granted notions of everyday urban reality. This is done by drawing on sociological theories of socio-cultural production of space/place and of the body in space, with the aim to outline a more comprehensive and, potentially, more effective understanding of inclusive urban design.

Keywords: inclusive urban design, (urban) reality as a socio-cultural construct

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, the discipline of urban design has aimed to step away from traditionally architectural concerns with the purely built form (Le Corbusier, W. Morris, F. L. Wright). Instead, attempts have been made to account for urban experiences as part of the design process (Jacobs, 1961; Lefebvre, 1991; Lynch, 1960). These endeavours have picked up in recent years with emerging reflections on urban design as a potential catalyst for urban (social) change (Boano in Carmona, 2014a; Harvey, 2003; Madanipour, 2006; Mayer, 2009).

These ideals feed into the contemporary debate of inclusive urban design. Although with a relatively vague theoretical base and a methodology inadequate for its declared purpose, the discussion on inclusive urban environments is gaining momentum on policy agendas (Gov.UK, OECD). Moreover, it reflects disciplinary (urban design) changes in understanding city-making processes with implications on the urban design process itself (Carmona,2010; Gehl, 2010; Healey, 1997). For these reasons it is opportune to critically assess the principles and framework of the inclusive urban design debate, if inclusivity is to be not a mere buzz-word, but an effectively working concept.

In its current form, the theory of inclusive urban design has a number of limitations, namely that it targets a narrow segment of end users and it engages only partially with principles of urban design. As a result, in practice, solutions of inclusion by (urban) design are predominantly ineffective, while the public realm remains, to a large extent, exclusionary of certain social groups.

Therefore, this paper explores an alternative conceptual framework for inclusive urban design with the purpose of informing both theory and practice towards more inclusive built environments. The alternative conceptual framework considers the urban design process and its outcome alike; the paper starts from challenging the existing limitations within the inclusive urban design debate and continues by building on social theories of socio-

cultural construction of reality/identity and phenomenology. This is done in order to better understand the mechanisms behind processes of exclusion and the potential pre-sets of inclusive practices. It is hereby suggested that exclusion from the built environment is not only physical as proposed by the mainstream literature on the subject, but also experiential. Consequently, it is argued that exclusion processes materialise in hindered access and use of the public space, as well as in design features which further re-enforce and reproduce social stigma – the central driver of exclusion practices. By understanding how the latter practices come into being and take a spatial form, it becomes possible to outline design tools and methods likely to counteract the inaccessibility of the public realm to certain social groups.

2. Emerging critique to the inclusive urban design debate

The on-going inclusive urban design debate focuses predominantly on the physical accessibility of the built environment. As a result of this, the available body of literature (CABE, 2006; Goldsmith, 2000; Dong et. al, 2000) and policy recommendations on the topic (GOV.UK) center on issues of mobility within public space and engage only marginally with other forms of physical exclusion from public space. It can therefore be argued that the inclusive urban design theory and practice engages only marginally with notions of inclusivity. In doing so, the inclusive urban design debate reproduces exclusionary practices which overlook (lived-in) experiences of the urban (Relph, 2008; Tuan, 1977; Rodaway, 1994).

The purely physical approach to inclusive urban design attracted a number of criticisms (Hanson, 2004; Imrie & Hall, 2001, 2003) and led to a re-evaluation of the relationship between users with disabilities and space, and its implications on urban design theory and practice.

The ideal behind the inclusive urban design (InUD) debate, as suggested by the available literature, is design devoid of barriers to access and use public space, a design which facilitates '*users having the ability to take control over their environments'* (Hatch, 1984, p. 4 in Imrie & Hall, 2003, p. 18). S. Goldsmith's 'Universal design' (2000), the Department of Transport's publication on 'Inclusive mobility' (2005), CABE's 'The principles of Inclusive Design' (2006) or Part M of the Building Regulations, are all referential documents for the practice of inclusive urban design. The principal argument behind contemporary InUD is that of a universal design (Goldsmith, 2000) that promotes the '*flexibility, adaptability and interchangeability of fittings and fixtures'* (Imrie & Hall, 2003, p. 16). Notwithstanding, this approach to inclusive design has been extensively criticized for being vague as to how user differences – of gender, race, physical needs - are to be accommodated (Hanson, 2004; Imrie & Hall, 2003). The principal issue arising from here is that inclusive (urban) design targets a rather limited number of excluded groups (the non-able bodied) while overlooking a diversity of other groups excluded from the free use of public space. This is mostly due to a unilateral understanding of inclusion/exclusion processes within the city. In its current form, the InUD debate lacks a conceptual framework which could potentially lead to a more comprehensive theory of inclusive urban design to inform more effectively inclusive practices.

Complementary to the theoretical limitation, a secondary critique takes form regarding the practice of inclusive urban design. The latter is aimed at the barriers in implementing features of inclusive urban design. The documents listed above, although intended to inform more inclusive urban design practices, remain simple guidelines with no design monitoring structure in place. Furthermore, with designers' tendency to overlook a large number of end users and with developers' prime interest in profit and cost margins of new projects (Imrie & Hall, 2001), there is a limited concern in investing in inclusive design solutions. Consequently, '*most places are bereft of basic design features, such as tactile paving, colour contrasts, clear signage and induction loops*' (Imrie & Hall, 2001, p. 233). This state of fact is supported by the lack of incentives in investing in inclusive solutions, by the particularities of the urban design theory, as argued above, and by the downfalls of operationalising notions of InUD when implementing inclusive urban design solutions. Although explorations of inclusive design are still incipient in the context of the built environment, there is a strong argument for broadening the field of this endeavour. '*[T]he focus (of inclusive design) to date has been on products, buildings and physical access to*

buildings. Now it needs to broaden to whole neighbourhoods, villages and towns.' (Burton and Mitchell, 2006, p.9).

Drawing on the above, it could be argued that a truly inclusive urban design is yet far from being attained, given the limitations of both theory and practice of InUD. Inclusive design '*is as much about process as products*' (Imrie & Hall, 2003, p. 24), which is why the present paper aims to challenge notions of inclusive urban design both in terms of process and outcomes with the aim of re-conceptualising the theory and practice of InUD. The three limitations to be hereby explored, as identified in the previous sections are first, the narrow segment of targeted end users, second, the inclusive urban design conceptual framework and third, the operationalisation of 'inclusive urban design' as a concept translated into tools and methods specific to the urban design discipline.

3. Outcasts of the public realm

The question of *who* is to be included in/by the inclusive urban design process is at the heart of emerging critical thinking in the field (CABE, web archives; Hanson, 2004; Imrie & Hall, 2003).

Recent endeavours to theorise the inclusion of marginalised individuals (disabled or elderly) within the design of public space propose a change in traditional understandings of disability (Hanson, 2004; Imrie & Hall, 2003). Previously regarded as an inability to use the built environment due to personal constraints/ restrictions, disability is nowadays reviewed from a socio-cultural perspective, by adopting models '*which propose that the environment itself actively produces disability. According to these models, a person becomes disabled by the barriers they face, not by their impairment'* (Hanson, 2004, p. 5).

In an attempt to move beyond existing stereotypes of disability associated predominantly with wheelchair users (Goldsmith, 2000; Imrie & Hall, 2003), studies of inclusive design broaden their scope and consider a wider range of dis-abilities, such as motion, sensory and cognitive related capabilities (Dong et. al, 2000, p. 47). The main purpose of this is to understand the users' specificities and respond to them rather than over impose a universal solution to all contexts. This approach led to researches more broken down into user requirements. For example, adding to an increasing body of literature on elderly experience in public space, E. Burton and L. Mitchell (2006) give special attention to a group segment suffering from dementia.

The underlining argument behind the socio-cultural model is that disability is socially defined, where the 'disabled' is labelled as such when set against the 'ideal' of the full-bodied space user. '*[A] focus on disabled people necessarily draws attention to the body and the diverse ways in which it is entwined with socio-spatial practices*' (Imrie, 2001, p. 233) is a different manner of describing the normative able-body, a body which is socially accepted and redefined. Discussions on the inclusion of bodily disabled users are often framed by socio-cultural notions of abnormality, dirt and disorder (Douglas, 2003; Foucault, 1977; Parr, 2000, 2006). '*[T]he (re)production of barriered and bounded spaces [...] reinforce the efficacy of <civilised and normal bodies>*' (Imrie, 2001, p. 233), thus the out of place character of an element is given by its deviant or disruptive nature. *'"Normality" is defined, to a significant degree, geographically, and deviance from this normality is also shot through with geographical assumptions concerning what and who belongs where*' (Cresswell, 1996, p.27).

There can be no discussion of the 'normal' in the absence of the 'deviant'; space and place as such have no inherent connotation of either concept but they are, nonetheless, '*used to structure a normative landscape*' (Cresswell, 1996, p.3) both in theory and practice. Moreover, they feed into larger notions of individuals referred to as being in and out-of-place.

The recurrent themes in the existing literature on the topic indicates that a debate on inclusion by (urban) design cannot be carried out outside social theories of socially-constructed notions of the normative and the body (Butler, 1999; Douglas, 2003) all falling under the wider concept of 'stigma' (Goffman, 2009). E. Goffman theorised three categories of social stigma: physically visible (noticeable deformations such as scars or certain disabilities),

deviations in some traits of character (mental illness or forms of addiction) and 'tribal' (cultural notions of ethnicity, nationality or religion). What all three forms have in common is that they are socially agreed upon as deviances from 'normality'. C. de Albuquerque (2012) writes about 'stigma' as an instrument of social differentiation and re-enactment of the social norm; it has an informative, reiterative and controlling role. In everyday life, stigma acts as a means to define the socially deviant, the unwanted 'other'.
Understanding the mechanisms behind stigma and, therefore, behind processes of exclusion is a pre-requisite, given that in-place stereotypes of the abnormal inform social and attitudinal barriers to inclusive design (Imrie & Hall, 2003).

Because from an urban design perspective, inclusion/exclusion processes are fundamentally spatial (Cresswell, 1996) and they are regarded as forms of physical accessibility to the built environment, partly explains the fact that the main approach to inclusion by urban design is centred around the able-body. This basic premise of urban design is further validated by more general approaches which frame social exclusion structurally – around employment, housing, minority (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000, 2001, 2004).

However, forms of social exclusion, other than those of the physically/ mentally disabled, are spatial as well, although little discussed in these terms (Power & Wilson, 2000; Wacquant, 2008). The reason for this is that the socially excluded are, although physically capable of using public space, refused access.
Experience has shown repeatedly that their bodies, associated with different forms of stigma, are labelled as out-of-place elements and denied opportunities of being in one place or another. This is the case of, for example, racially and gender exclusive spaces where space and place become *'useful surrogates for more direct forms of power*' (Cresswell, 1996, p.163) and elements of design are often '*used to control people and things*' (idem).

Within the inclusive urban design debate, scarce attempts have been made to explore social exclusion in the context of the city and thus anchoring it spatially. This is the case of C. de Albuquerques's (2012) report on the stigmatisation of Dalits and women with fistulas, of D. H. Nadal's (in Pancetti et al., 2012) study on the marginalised Rocinha favela, of M. C. Loschiavo dos Santos' (2007) project on integrating scavengers in Sao Paulo in a local economy cycle and C. Rishbeth's (2010) work on designing for ethnic diversity. The above studies are noteworthy because they make the link between the socially excluded and their spatial-cultural context. They illustrate that marginalisation is first, socio-culturally constructed, determined by the social norms/ values of the place where it takes form and second, spatially articulated in the design of places which they occupy/ appropriate or from which they are excluded.

In the case of disabled individuals, it has been argued that the lack of access ramps or tactile paving prevents them from freely using public space. Similarly, the lack of public seating or the presence of control signage prevents particular users from safe and comfortable access. *'[W]e are all potential or actual victims of architectural discrimination as a result of conventional building design*' (Hanson, 2004, p. 10) and the best example of this is that of the 'away from home toilets'; the absence of this element of street furniture is associated with discrimination by design on different accounts – able-bodied, age, gender (Greed, 2003; Hanson, 2004). It can therefore be concurred that an inclusive urban design, aimed at removing barriers to uses of public space, ought to engage with a diversity of socially excluded groups which are either overlooked or even banned from different public spaces.

Broadening the InUD target groups onto the socially excluded in more general terms is not here an argument for a built environment equally accessible to all users in the traditional understanding of inclusive urban design (CABE, 2006; Hanson, 2004). The claim is to acknowledge the diversity and plurality of urban users as part of the urban design process and to pursue a non-hindering built environment; a built environment which does not aim to re-produce and validate existing stereotypes that re-enforce stigmas and lead to the further marginalisation of certain social groups.

4. Re-assessing the urban design principles behind the 'inclusive' debate

As the existing body of literature indicates, current theory of inclusive urban design has looked extensively into questions of physical use/ access of the built environment. However, from an urban design perspective, this approach responds only partially to the core principles of the discipline. Questions of human (excluded) experiences in the city are not accounted for by mainstream InUD discussions.

This constitutes an inherent limitation to the quest for a more inclusive urban environment, all the more so as physical exclusion is always accompanied by an experiential exclusion. In other words, marginalised individuals are not merely denied the use of public space, but also a range of urban experiences, of enjoying the public realm, of appropriating it and of developing feelings of identity and belonging.

Understanding the mechanisms behind exclusion processes and how these processes become spatial is essential for developing a comprising theory and a capable practice of inclusive urban design.
The physical – experiential binary of being in the city is rooted in the urban design concept of 'place' as an ultimately social space (Cresswell, 1996; Lefebvre, 1991). Therefore, arguably, the city is simultaneously built form, everyday practices - 'performativity' and lived-in experiences – 'lifeworld'. This triad is fundamental for understanding processes of inclusion/ exclusion in the public realm. The reason for this is that it accounts for the co-contruction of the excluded subject, who is both created and creates himself and the (urban) reality which he inhabits.

If the 'built form' has fairly clear references to the materiality of the urban environment, the two latter notions, 'performativity' and 'lifeworld', require somewhat of a more detailed understanding before moving forward with re-conceptualising InUD. Both 'performativity' and 'lifeworld' are concepts traditionally anchored in the social sciences. However, they provide a twofold understanding of city-making processes which is fundamental to any discussion on cities inclusive of a diversity of end users. While ''performativity'' accounts for the socio-cultural (re)construction of (urban) reality and of social identities, the 'lifeworld' encompasses the phenomenological human experience of being bodily and emotionally immersed in (urban) places (Seamon, 1979).
Performance is theorised as the enactment of everyday practices which reinforce accepted uses and ways of being in place (Butler, 1990, 1999; Goffman, 1959). If for E. Goffman practices are scripted, played out and consequently consumed, for J. Butler they are the enactment of identity – the social 'self'. By performing the everyday – through actions, gestures and habits - we aim to add meaning to our lives and to define our place in the world.

> *'The city is soft, shapeable, moldable, like clay. It 'awaits the imprint of an identity'. It invites the individual to remake it, and the 'self' too; this process, of the formation of identity and the shaping/remaking of the city, is a dialogic process [. . .] in which the formation of identity is simultaneously the shaping of the city*.' (Nentwick, 2004, cited in Makeham, 2005, p. 152)

Building on the idea of performing the everyday, J. Butler phrased her own concept of 'performativity' as a way of being in the world. She defines it as *'that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains'* (Butler, 1993, p.4) and uses 'performativity' to argue for a socio-culturally constructed notion of the gendered body – i.e. being a *woman* means taking on a particular behaviour, values and presentation of the self as socially prescribed and accepted for a woman.

> '*The universal conception of the person, however, is displaced as a point of departure for a social theory of gender by those historical and anthropological positions that understand gender as a relation among socially constituted subjects in specifiable contexts. This relational or contextual point of view suggests that what the person< is>, and, indeed, what gender <is>, is always relative to the constructed relations in which it is determined*' (Butler, 1999, p. 15).

Analogously, if the female body can thus be defined and enacted, so can other types of (excluded) bodies, be produced socio-culturally, as argued previously. It could therefore be inferred that social identities as such are partly socio-culturally produced. J. Butler herself links her theory of 'performativity' to the deviant, stigmatised body: '*The abject for me is in no way restricted to sex and hetero-normativity. It relates to all kinds of bodies whose lives are not considered to be 'lives' and whose materiality is understood not to matter*' (Butler in Meijer & Prins, 1998, p. 281). The rationale applies to different categories potentially subject to social exclusion – i.e. disability (Hanson, 2004), race and ethnicity (Smaje, 1997). These identities are reproduced through performances of the everyday – gestures, actions, enactments. This performance of identity is simultaneously a performance of being 'the other' and it is both an expression and reiteration of identity, of *being oneself*, through repetition of manifestations by which one is discursively (self)defined (Urbinati & Warren, 2008). As spaces are moulded into places precisely through the agency of these performances, the attributes that they are invested with in turn re-shape users resulting into a city in a continuous process of spatial transformation (Shaftoe, 2008; Wylie, 2009; Gehl, 2010 etc.). This dialectical relation is considered here to be inherent to re-producing stereotypes of social stigma by means of exclusionary urban design practices.

The second concept in need of clarity for the purpose of the present paper is that of 'lifeworld' which, together with 'performativity', co-creates the urban experience and accounts for being-in-place in the city. 'Lifeworld' is the expression of phenomenologically inhabited (urban) space. While phenomenology is theorised as exploring *'the things and events of daily experience*' (Seamon, 1979, p. 9), one's 'lifeworld' is defined as the '*daily world of taken-for-grantedness*' (Seamon, 1979, p. 91), '*a concept developed in order to grasp the horizon of understanding the everyday, as well as life's threshold events, and thus also life's different perspectives'* (Madsen & Plunz, 2005). 'Lifeworlds' are characterised by memories, affect, personal values and sensorial experience; in other words, 'lifeworlds' are immersions in the surrounding physical environment.

Traditionally, the city was regarded as a container for everyday activities and experiences of the urban were understood as behavioural patterns that the urban design professionals could observe and integrate in good quality design solutions (Lynch, 1960; Whyte, 2001). In more recent decades, the post-modernist approach to social sciences has unveiled a narrow understanding of the human experience per se within the built environment. Including layers of experiencing the urban within the urban design process accounts more accurately for urban diversity and is likely to lead to a richer range of urban solutions and a good quality of public space. Consequently, by introducing the concept of 'lifeworld' next to the built environment and 'performativity' when discussing city processes, accounts for the lived-in experience of urban users (Buttimer, 2010; Seamon, 1979).

Both concepts of 'performativity' and that of 'lifeworld' are relevant to the inclusive urban design debate because they help understand processes of exclusion by design – where they take place, who is excluded and by what means – and subsequently to inform more inclusive urban design solutions – how to counteract, in InUD practice, social stereotypes and denied access to the public realm. If 'performativity' accounts for the socio-cultural construction of reality, 'lifeworlds' explain being in place as an immersion (Rodaway, 1994; May & Thrift, 2003) where individuals are understood as inhabiting '*the world before they represent that world to themselves and others*' (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, p. 10), as being '*part of the on-going becoming of worlds*' (idem, p. 11). Although 'performativity' is somewhat captured in InUD theory when discussing excluded identities as socio-culturally constructed, notions of 'lifeworld' are entirely absent from the debate. This is reflected in Gleeson's (2001) critique of existing solutions for disabled individuals, solutions which reflect no understanding and recognition of disabled experiential knowledge. As the inclusive projects discussed previously (de Albuquerque, 2012; Pancetti et al., 2012; Loschiavo dos Santos, 2007) illustrate, working with target individuals , rather than treating them as passive users, can potentially lead to successful inclusive solutions.

A concept that partially incorporates the built environment – 'performativity' – 'lifeworld' triad is R. Shields (1991) 'imaginary geographies'. Defined as a '*purely discursive (i.e. ideational, symbolic, and linguistic)*' (Shields, 1991, p.64) concept, the term of 'imaginary geographies is used by R. Shields to denote images or 'myths' of what/ how places are like, of self and of community identity. The argument is that the image a place

acquires in the eyes of the general public is dictated by the typical users encountered there and the specific form of activities with which they are to engage. '*The world is cognitively territorialised so that on the datum of physical geographic knowledge, the world is recoded as a set of spaces and places which are infinitely shaded with connotative characteristics and emotive associations*' (idem, p.264). According to this frame of thought, it is argued that the image the public holds of a particular place appears to be a discursive construction, product of collective and individual processes of signification alike. *'[I]n these recordings of geographic space, sites become associated with particular values, historical events and feelings'* (idem, p.29).These associated meanings inform socio-spatial practices and are being enacted by means of everyday performances. The latter are interlinked with lived-in experiences which further consolidate the constructed image of what a place is; in doing so, locally established spatial and social norms are being continuously re-enforced.

R. Shields suggests that 'imaginary geographies' incorporate the different facets of the place-making process where places, as 'centers of meanings' (Cresswell, 1996, p.13) have both physical and mental coordinates. The first takes the spatial form of the built environment, while the latter encompasses the subject's association with a multitude of urban places – such as accepted behaviour, customs, habits, memories, affect, attached meaning. For R. Shields the experienced 'reality' of the built environment remains subject to imagined, taken-for-granted 'truths' of where, when and how is space to be occupied or used (Butler, 1999; Gowan, 2010; Lefebvre, 1996), what makes it in post-structuralism terms a socio-cultural construct.

Overimposed to this generally accepted understanding of a place is the lived-in experience (Relph, 2008; Tuan, 1977), the subjective notions which each individual is likely to attach to a particular place; '*[b]ecause places are meaningful and because we always exist and act in places, we are constantly engaged in acts of interpretation'* (Cresswell, 1996, p.13). Normative in nature, this censorship of *being* in public space is reflective not only of accepted ways of appropriating space. As such, there is always a subject – the producer and an object – the product in every discursive urban reality of what a place/the city is, of how to behave in it or who is allowed to be there. The imaginary duality extends beyond the user – space dialectic, to that of the 'self' and 'other' as defined at both collective and individual levels. As discussed in the previous section, this is in line with contemporary theories of social identity – gender, race, class – being themselves socio-cultural constructs (Goffman, 1959; Butler, 1999) enacted through (self) performances of the body in place. As space is being reconfigured so as to correspond to mainstream notions of a good public space it becomes a means to delineate the norm-al from the deviant.

'Imaginary geographies' have also a spatial component which is the physical form of an enacted image of reality. '*Place is produced by practice that adheres to (ideological) beliefs about what is the appropriate thing to do'* (Cresswell, 1996, p.16), '*place reproduces the beliefs that produce it*' (idem). In other words, performing space by conforming to rooted ideas about them assigns each place with taken-for-granted characteristics, characteristics which in turn reproduce and regulate ways of performing place (Cresswell, 1996; Hetherington, 1997; Shields, 1991). Common understandings of who is to go, how to behave and what is accepted to do in Brighton or in a high luxury sea resort are very different. By subscribing to unwritten 'rules' of conduct and attitudes individuals further validate the image that the resort has for the general public – they 'construct' it as the type of resort that it is thought to be. Analogous, in the specific case of excluded groups, the accepted social norm operates with opposing notions of 'normality' vs 'deviance'. *'<Normality> is defined, to a significant degree, geographically, and deviance from this normality is also shot through with geographical assumptions concerning what and who belongs where*' (Cresswell, 1996, p.27). There can be no discussion of the 'normal' in the absence of the 'deviant'; space and place as such have no inherent connotation of either concept but they are, nonetheless, '*used to structure a normative landscape*' (Cresswell, 1996, p.3) and feed into larger notions of in and out-of-place.

The concept of 'imaginary geographies' is valuable for a potentially more comprehensive conceptual framework of inclusive urban design. Its relevance lies in the fact that it successfully bridges over social theories of understanding and inhabiting the world and the actual spatial reality of the built environment. This bridge is essential in the context of wider principles of urban design which are concerned with the physical form as much as

with experiencing the city – feelings of safety and security, community and belonging. Consequently, 'imaginary geographies' can be understood as records and narratives of place, deeply rooted in a physical setting. In the context of InUD, they could be used to describe and understand the particularities of place and place-experience where the quality of exclusion/inclusion is considered.

These are strong arguments for borrowing the concept of 'imaginary geographies' from the social sciences into the inclusive urban design debate.

Nevertheless, in order for this concept to respond adequately to the discipline's pursuits, an additional dimension is required. The reason for this is that while processes of constructing place by both socio-cultural and phenomenological means are accounted for, the built environment is dealt with as a passive container for everyday activities and meanings to be attached. However, '*places encompass the physical setting, as well as human experience and interpretation'* (Stedman, 2011, p. 672). Empirical evidence and InUD critique (Hanson, 2004; Imrie, 2001) suggest that characteristics of the built environment condition everyday performances in public space. Moreover, the same broader design characteristics (i.e. the absence of certain artefacts, spatial layouts, aesthetics, discouraged/preferred uses, processes of management and shaping the physical environment) contribute to the type and quality of experience of place and, as a result of this, to what could be referred to as exclusive/inclusive spaces. Drawing on this, it can be argued that features of the physical environment influence the type of urban experience users have (Stedman, 2011). Whether these are aesthetic qualities intrinsic to the architectural/ urban landscape object (Norberg-Schulz, 1980) or over imposed by means of the design process (Joerges, 1999), the built environment plays an active role in constructing experiences of exclusion/ inclusion from the public realm.

Understanding this particular aspect is essential because there can be little efficacy stemming from a well-defined inclusive urban design theory, if its products debilitate public space users while simultaneously re-enforcing social stereotypes and reproducing practices of exclusion.

5. Operationalising the 'inclusive' in inclusive urban design

The emerging critique of current inclusive urban design solutions extends from product to producers of public spaces. '*[D]evelopers, architects and designers tend to operate in ways which are inattentive to end users'* (Imrie & Hall, 2001, p. 3) partly because they '*have limited knowledge of disabled people and their needs*' (Imrie & Hall, 2001, p. 347), partly because the focus is on construction costs and development profit (Imrie & Hall, 2001, 2003). Arguably however, these are symptoms of a professional frame of thought deeply rooted in taken-for-granted social understandings of good quality public space and its users (idem). In practice, this leads to a widespread assumption across professionals of '*<sameness>, of normality, amongst the people*' (Imrie & Hall, 2003) with inherent repercussions on different forms of designing the urban.

This professional frame of thought is a key barrier to achieving a more inclusive public realm, as in urban design practice '[s]*pace [is] often used to control people and things'* T. Cresswell (1996, p.163). For this reason, a more inclusive urban design is likely to start from revising basic urban design principles – such as safety and security - that feed into notions of unwanted behaviour/ users in public space (Cresswell, 1996; Hanson, 2004) and, subsequently, into behaviour-controlling architecture (Savicic & Savic, 2013). Is hereby suggested that this essentially implies a review of the socio-culturally constructed border between the 'normal' and the 'deviant' within the urban design discipline. In other words, an inclusive public space comes with no pre-requisites of who is intended to use it and in what way this should be done. Rather than thinking of everyday performances and ways of experiencing the city in terms of 'right' versus 'wrong', design of would-be inclusive spaces can be looked upon as a mode of ordering space alternative to traditional forms of public spaces where designers and users alike conform to normative ideas of 'normality'(Douglas, 2003).

A different mode of ordering space is a pre-set of most urban spaces occupied by often socially excluded groups who have '*their own codes, rules, and symbols and they generate their own relations of power*' (Hetherington, 1997, p.54). As '*modern forms of social ordering*' (Hetherington, 1997, p.54) spaces occupied by the excluded become '*spaces apart, defined by the ambivalence or difference of their modes of ordering'* (idem, p.68). By no longer distinguishing between the 'normal' and the 'deviant' in urban design, disappears also the duality of behaviours, action and people being out of place for not complying with generally accepted social norms.
A separation of design theory and practice from established social norms is worthwhile discussing particularly in the context on inclusive urban design given the fact that given that certain discussions around extensively excluded groups (such as the urban homeless) are particularly hard to tackle in the current market-oriented design framework. Whether it lies within the urban design discipline's responsibility and resources to reshape social attitudes and behaviour is something that requires further critical reflection, this is not the subject of the present paper.

Notwithstanding the above, urban design practice is unlikely to effectively tackle spatial exclusion in the absence of different, more inclusive, parameters with an aim different to that of either controlling or disabling both access and use. The potential implications of this on the discipline's code of practice and design principles can be notable.

Bearing in mind this permeability of an inclusive urban design theory, it can nonetheless be argued that an inclusive space is difficult to achieve in the absence of an InUD process inclusive throughout. What is understood here by an inclusive urban design process means a reflection of inclusivity principles at all stages: designing, developing, using and managing (Carmona, 2014b).

As argued previously, inclusive outcomes fall outside traditional understandings of good design principles, functional spaces and end users. As such, the established state-of-the-arts tools and methods are potentially problematic in the case of, until recently, little understood groups of urban users. This could be one of the reasons why inclusive urban design practice has progressed slowly over time and is clearly illustrated in successful inclusive projects (Burton & Mitchell, 2006; Loschiavo dos Santos, 2007) where the methodologies used were not customary to the discipline. The underling argument for engaging with alternative methodologies is that a presumably inclusive urban design product – space or artefact - is unlikely to be successful if it is the mere result of a blueprint exercise.

It is therefore suggested that the in-place knowledge of excluded groups is invaluable to an operating inclusive principle (Imrie & hall, 2001). This in-place knowledge has a twofold purpose: it reports on the 'imaginary geographies' of exclusive places, as discussed previously, and informs inclusive solutions for a better quality of public space design. What this means is that an inclusive principle is fundamentally an empowering principle. Empowering is to be understood here partly as non-disabling (Hanson, 2004; Imrie & Hall, 2001, 2003) and partly as endowing agency to the target group (CABE, 2006; Imrie & Hall, 2001; Loschiavo dos Santos, 2007). Endowing agency means working *with* rather than *for*, like in traditional urban design practice, excluded groups; this is to say that so far marginalised groups are no longer likely to be treated as passive space users, but pro-active agents with the possibility of being involved at different stages of the urban design process.

In order for this to be attainable, existing tools and methods need to be tailored with the specificities of each target group in mind. Upheld methodologies such as public participation (Healey, 1997) require readjustment for this purpose, given that working with more vulnerable groups may well be problematic in practice. Social studies are rich in group engagement methods which could be adapted to the field of (inclusive) urban design, for example talking in place (Anderson, 2004; Gowan, 2010) or photovoice (Cappello, 2005; Wang et al., 2000). Similar alternative modes of engagement and the possibility of transferring them to InUD require further exploration so that the inclusive urban design framework is put to practical use.

6. Conclusion

The present paper proposes a re-assessment of the core principles and outcomes of the inclusive urban design debate. Challenging limitations identified both in theory and practice is the first step towards a re-conceptualisation of inclusive urban design.

A redefinition of inclusive urban design is built partly on social theories of socio-cultural constructs of (public) space, its normative users and uses and partly on a phenomenological – subjective - approach to documenting urban experiences. Arguably, an inclusive approach to urban design needs to be estranged from 'normal'/'deviant' space dichotomies and aimed at achieving places that are flexible in design and respond to a diversity of site specific urban users. Spatially, exclusive and inclusive places may well overlap – a space which allows for the presence of certain users may 'reject' the presence of others. For this reason, an inclusive design is not equivalent with a type of universal design. It is difficult to assume that a form of urban design can accommodate the conflicting needs and experiences of a plurality of space users. However, it will ideally pose no intentional barriers to the use of public space and will acknowledge, if not account, by means of the urban design process the diversity of public space users.

A critical reflection on both theoretical and methodological frameworks of inclusive urban design illustrated that inclusive urban design as a discipline branch holds insufficient comprehension of exclusion experiences and how these are embedded in the built environment. This relationship is all the more difficult to integrate in the urban design process given that the discipline's established tools and methods are not suited for this purpose. Therefore, the hereby proposed conceptual framework puts emphasis on understanding processes of urban exclusion and the spatial forms that this exclusion takes by primarily engaging actively with targeted excluded groups.

Urban exclusion is a factor which cannot be overlooked when discussing good quality built environments, nor feelings of community and belonging in the city. For this reason, the debate on the inclusivity of the public realm is underlining to all discussions on city-making processes and, subsequently, to practices of urban design.

7. References

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