Editorial

Rethinking Radical Inclusiveness: A Theoretical Provocation

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The notions of human rights and identity politics have been widely drawn on in the contemporary understandings and practices of developing more inclusive cities. Examining the UN Habitat III Issue Paper on Inclusive Cities (2015), in this article I attempt to identify and problematize some assumptions that might have underpinned our efforts to improve the inclusiveness of our cities. I argue that a liberal view of human being has constrained the understandings about who “everyone” is, the nature of their sense of self, and what they want; which subsequently might exclude and marginalise those who do not fit our conceptions. Alternatively, I will draw on poststructuralist theorisation of discourse and subjectivity to offer a new way of thinking about human rights and identity politics, and discuss how it might contribute to our understanding and practices of inclusiveness.

Keywords: inclusiveness, inclusive cities, identity politics, human rights, subjectivity

In this editorial article I seek to offer a theoretical provocation in relation to the notion of inclusiveness and inclusive cities. My discussion here is predicated on a premise that an inclusive city starts from inclusive ways of thinking, and promoting inclusive ways of thinking involves continuous resistance towards our current ways of seeing and being inclusive. Following this premise, I attempt to identify and problematize some assumptions that might have underpinned our efforts to build more inclusive cities. Specifically, I will draw on poststructuralist conceptualisation of discourse and subjectivity to offer a new way of thinking about human rights and identity politics, and how it might contribute to our understanding and practices of inclusiveness.

I will start by citing one of the recommendations from the UN Habitat III Issue Paper on Inclusive Cities (2015, May 31, p. 8):

Urbanization processes should be more firmly entrenched in a human rights framework that ensures the alignment of goals and implementation processes to specific human rights obligations while promoting the accountability of local governments with respect to evolve from technocratic models to rights-based models that ensure