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“Conceptualization of Social Exclusion in Africa: In Search of Inclusive
Development”

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Introduction

Over the past decades, African countries have experienced unprecedented economic growth, averaged over 5 per cent with a number of countries reaching between 7 and 11 per cent of growth in GDP. Unfortunately, it will soon become quite clear that achieved growth has not translated into a ‘meaningful social development outcomes’ and, logically, its sustainability depends on its inclusiveness. Even just a quick overview of some of the basic and fundamental development indicators and indices, defy a mainstream economic wisdom on economic growth as a sole and sufficient precondition for overall development and improvement in welfare of citizens. Most of the African countries are still struggling with the extremely high levels of absolute, chronic and multidimensional poverty, high levels of inequality, unfavourable condition on the (formal) labour market with a low employment rate and high unemployment rates, while young people are especially at risk. At the same time, basic social services are unavailable, unaffordable and inaccessible to many people across the continent. Minimalist welfare state, often reduced to (limited) social protection has just additionally exacerbated the exclusion of the poorest. Apart from having only limited access to social and economic opportunities, at the same time these groups have become more vulnerable, and more exposed to external shocks.

Social inclusion, as well as the appropriate integration, has been seen as a precondition for achieving inclusive and sustainable development, while the very success of the policies and programs designed to combat social exclusion would be determined not only by how severe the socio-economic situation is, but also by the ways in which the concept is defined. This would, among other things, require a shift in thinking, as well as in policy design, from a simple model of deprivation, and the policy response that followed it, to a holistic one. Introduction of the concept of social exclusion could be quite useful. Its forceful pointer to multimimensionality of human deprivation and its focus on relational processes that are integral part of it, are both extremely important and relevant.

Social exclusion is a structural problem; it a complex, multidimensional phenomena that usually manifest itself as an inability of an individual or the whole groups to participate in economic, social and political aspects of life, usually because of certain constraints that are imposed to them, rather than by a choice. It takes us beyond mere descriptions of deprivation

and focuses the attention on social relations, processes and institutions that underline and are part and parcel of deprivation.¹

The concept of social exclusion should be treated as a valuable analytical framework used, among other things, for better understanding of the factors causing individuals and groups to be excluded from goods, services, rights and activities in any given society from the basis of citizenship. It belongs to the group of concepts whose understanding is shaped by particular national and often sub-cultural context in which it has been analysed. Compared to the traditional concept of poverty, social exclusion as a process of progressive social rupture is a more comprehensive and complex conceptualisation of social disadvantage, within which material and non-material dimensions are implicated, so too are individual and group dynamics.²

Apart from being a potentially useful illuminating lens, the concept of social exclusion can also serve as a kind of ‘mobilizing concept’, providing a basis for a social policy reform and reconceptualisation of national development agendas. One of the building blocks of an inclusive development is a (‘transformative’) social policy and introduction of the social exclusion concept could help identify its main areas.

The main intention of this article is to contribute to the better understanding of the social exclusion concept, as well as to the critical reconsideration of its relevance to the struggle against poverty in Africa. It also seeks to examine the importance of it for establishing a different kind of social policy that would go beyond a social protection and embrace much wider vision of a society.

Understanding social exclusion

The concept of social exclusion has particularly eclipsed that of poverty in the European political and academic debates over the last couple of decades. Despite its popularity and rapid expansion, especially across developed world, there is only limited consensus as to either its precise meaning or its relationship to the concept of poverty. Even though the flexibility and obvious ambiguity of the concept affect analytical clarity of it, the

¹ de Haan, A. (1998). *Social Exclusion: Enriching the Understanding of Deprivation*. IDS Bulliten.

² Silver, H. (2007). *The Process of Social Exclusion: The Dynamics of an Evolving Concept*. CPRC Working Paper No. 95.

social exclusion concept has proven to be extremely useful not only as a multi-focal lens that successfully illuminates different aspects and dimensions of human deprivation, but it can also serve as a ‘mobilizing concept’ which informs, inspires and guides social policy agenda and social reforms.³

The birth of the concept of social exclusion is usually traced to France, where it was deployed in the 1970s and early 1980s to refer to a range of marginalized social groups who had fallen through the net of the French social security system. Soon after that, the term was adopted by European Commission, partially to accommodate the reluctance of some member governments to use the term ‘poverty’, but over time it became firmly embedded in the EU discourse⁴, and was established as a ‘lynchpin’ of EU social policy and also a fundamental idea for the reform of the national welfare states in Europe, including both, EU and the non-EU countries⁵. The concept gradually diffused from the North to the South, initially mostly through the efforts of the international organizations, especially the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The concept is highly relevant for richer as well as poorer countries; the fact is simply that developed countries, especially the European Union went much further in its implementation and its operationalisation.

The emergence of the concept and its rapid development was actually enabled by a number of factors. Deep economic and social transformation in Western countries, as well as decades of theoretical and empirical research, have significantly contributed to a wider appreciation that human deprivation cannot be simply reduced to its material dimension and a lack of financial resources. The increase of job precariousness and labour market segmentation, intensification of migration flows, weakening of family ties and growing individualism, rising violations of human rights and steady and continuous decline in social and political participation, all revealed inadequacy of the conventional measures of poverty, and, among other things, implied an urgent need for a new concept of human deprivation.⁶ At the same time, attacks on the welfare state became more decisive. Not all the countries were equally exposed to the severe restrictions, but they were still quite successful in revealing the

³ See de Haan, A. (1998). *Social Exclusion: Enriching the Understanding of Deprivation*. IDS Bulliten; Lister, R. (2004). *Poverty*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Silver, H. (2007). *The Process of Social Exclusion: The Dynamics of an Evolving Concept*. CPRC Working Paper No. 95

⁴ Lister, R. (2004). *Poverty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁵ Daly, M. (2006). *Social exclusion as concept and policy template in the EU* (Centre for European Studies, Working Paper Series 135). Cambridge, MA: Centre for European Studies.

⁶ Devicienti, F, & Poggi, A. (2011). Poverty and social exclusion: Two sides of the same coin or dynamically interrelated processes? *Applied Economics*, 43(25), 3549–3571.

perverse effects of certain social policies and the gaps in the social security systems through which thousands of individuals were simply falling into more precarious situation.⁷

Since its establishment, the debate on ‘social exclusion’ has mostly taken place in developed countries and this has manifested in the ways in which it is usually defined and operationalised. Thus, the conceptual frames, that have underpinned much of the literature on social exclusion, regardless of the levels of progressiveness of their authors, have been predominantly rooted in Anglo-Saxon and European traditions, and they mostly ignored contributions made by the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America.⁸ Saloojee and Saloojee rightfully assert that the discourse on social exclusion cannot be considered as an exclusively a Western discourse for a number of reasons. They argue that the reality of social exclusion is felt most in the developing world.⁹ Also, the universality of solidarity, particularly in combating the multiple forms of exclusion on a global as well as on the national scales (the fight against slavery, colonialism, settler colonialism, neo-colonialism and neoliberal globalisation) is a real and a tangible expression of the politics of inclusion that definitely transcends French Republicanism. The fight for freedom, equality and social justice are equally universal expressions and should not be considered as manifestations of European exceptionalism.

Although the term ‘social exclusion’ was coined during the 1970s, the reality captured by this concept, has a long history behind it, both in Europe and in the non-European parts of the world. For example, European colonisation of other continents accentuated the process of exclusion worldwide; colonised people lost the power to decide upon their own destiny and often the right to live in accordance with their cultures and beliefs.¹⁰ They were also excluded from the benefits to be deprived from the exploitation of their natural resources and all of this only emphasised the impoverishment of living conditions in the countries concerned.

“Social exclusion is usually defined as a dynamic process of progressive rupturing of the ‘social bond’ at the individual and collective levels. It precludes full participation in the normatively prescribed activities of a given society and denies access to information, resources, sociability, recognition and identity, eroding self-respect, and reducing capabilities

⁷ Estivill, J. (2003). *Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion*. ILO.

⁸ Saloojee, A. Saloojee, N. (2011). From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion: Theory and Practice over two continents. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 4, number 2.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Estivill, J. (2003). *Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion*. ILO.

to achieve personal goals”.¹¹ By ‘social bond’, Silver¹² considers social relations, institutions, and imagined identities of belonging, constituting social cohesion, integration or solidarity. This quite broad understanding of ‘social bond’, if operationalised properly, provides for an identification of all the mechanisms of exclusion, even those usually hidden or disguised, and the roles and responsibilities of different actors in this process. In order to improve the utility of the notion of ‘social bond’, Saloojee and Saloojee¹³ suggest that the discussion on the power embedded in social relations should be taken into consideration. At the very heart of the ‘social rupture’, they argue, is power and powerlessness. The excluded are those who by virtue of their social location and unequal access to valued goods and services have no access to power. This is not about human agency; it is about concentration of power in the hands of elites where the power is continuously circulated among a small group who share a fraternity of interest in maintaining the *status quo*. And, of course, it is extremely important to take into account all other forms of socially constructed exclusions.¹⁴

One of the distinctive features of the social exclusion concept is its time and space sensitivity, which implies that its usage varies and it is strongly influenced by a number of ‘local’ factors, but also they should be seen as a dynamic and therefore require evaluation on regular basis.¹⁵ It belongs to the group of concepts that are ‘context-dependent’, and that means that it not only asserts that context matters, but it also confirms that mechanisms used by a nation states and localities influence significantly the processes of economic, social and political exclusion as well as the politics of inclusion.¹⁶ Therefore, it is completely understandable that there are competing paradigms of exclusion and inclusion, reflecting different traditions and debates, fiscal systems, and, of course, institutional frameworks; various concepts of social exclusion reflect and describe a multitude of ways in which parts of society fit together and share values.¹⁷

Saloojee and Saloojee¹⁸, however, argue that establishment of the social exclusion concept as the concept of global relevance, would require at least four ‘interventions’ in the

¹¹ Silver, H. (2007). *The Process of Social Exclusion: The Dynamics of an Evolving Concept*. CPRC Working Paper No. 95. pp.1.

¹² Silver, H. (2015). *The Contexts of Social Inclusion*. DESA Working Paper No. 144.

¹³ Saloojee, A. Saloojee, N. (2011). From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion: Theory and Practice over two continents. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 4, number 2.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Silver, H. (2015). *The Contexts of Social Inclusion*. DESA Working Paper No. 144.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Saloojee, A. Saloojee, N. (2011). From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion: Theory and Practice over two continents. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 4, number 2.

existing, mainstream discourses, that would take into account shared experiences of the countries of Global South, and in that way overcome some of the limitations of current way of thinking:

a) The centre/periphery literature suggest that there is a need to incorporate into the exclusion/inclusion discourse issues of structural adjustment, global trade, migration flows of people and capital, global poverty, technology transfers and the role of the global institutions of governance,

b) The Western discourse focuses on the relationship between labour market and social exclusion. In the context of Global South this needs to be broadened out to include a discussions of global not only domestic labour markets, to the access to land, to the informal economy, to subsistence production;

c) Focusing on rights and human agency is very important and a global inclusion discourse needs to examine modes of popular participation in countries and communities of the Global South; and

d) It is important to start with social institutions in which rules governing exclusionary and inclusionary practices are negotiated, but also going beyond them.

According to Gore¹⁹, insights into an African literature could be extremely valuable to the whole thinking about social exclusion. He identifies four major types of insights that can be obtained from the existing literature, and they are: ‘on the nationality of social exclusion’ and the significance of the nation State in the institutionalization of exclusionary practices; on the ‘social identity and rules of entitlements’ where African literature provides various insights into the ways in which social identity is implicated in the rules of entitlement which govern access to and exclusion from resources and other social goods; on the ‘relationship between exclusionary and inclusionary practices’ where African literature offer insight into the ways in which exclusionary practices are linked to the terms on which people are integrated into an economy and society; and on the ‘relationship between social exclusion and economic crisis’ where African literature successfully analyses practices of inclusion and exclusion that have contributed to the economic crisis in Africa.

Social exclusion, if understood in its ‘core sense’, is associated with ‘multidimensional disadvantage’ and represents ‘a rupture’ or a ‘catastrophic discontinuity’

¹⁹ Gore, C. (1996). Social Exclusion and Social Change: Insights in the African Literature. In: (eds.) Rodgers, G. Gore, C. Figureido, J. *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric, Reality, Responses*. International Institute for Labour Studies.

in relationships with the rest of the society, which is, to some considerable degree, irreversible²⁰. Its dimensions usually include social, economic and political aspects of disadvantage, that are often interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Which dimension is going to be dominant, is mostly determined by the specific context. It is also important to note that exclusion happens at each level of society.

In addition to multidimensional aspects of social exclusion, Room identifies another key shift of emphasis made by the introduction of the social exclusion concept: ‘from a static to a dynamic analysis’. This analysis involves a concern with process, in terms both individual and of societal agents of exclusion.²¹ “In relation to this, many accounts even emphasize that social exclusion should be primarily understood as a process rather than a condition and a category; either way, there is a broad agreement that the emphasis on the process is one or even the most useful, distinguishing feature of the social exclusion concept”.²² Saloojee and Saloojee²³ summarize this ‘shift’ quite successfully, stating that actually social exclusion is about process and outcome; agency and structure; it is about a role of political, economic and social institutions and decisions that reinforce poverty and exclusion.

When it comes to the relationship between the concept of poverty and the social exclusion concept, basically, they should be treated as two separate concepts that are considered to be concomitant, overlapping and often complementary with some important differences between them.²⁴ Compared to the traditional concept of poverty, the concept of social exclusion puts greater emphasis on non-material aspects of social divisions, especially their political and cultural forms, besides economic and social one. At the same time, social exclusion is particularly focused on ‘horizontal’ ties of belonging, while poverty is concerned with ‘vertical’ distribution.²⁵ It allows us to take a closer look at issues relevant for understanding cultural and social injustices generated by inequalities of gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality and disability and various ways this may intersect and be compounded by

²⁰ Room, G.J. (1999). Social Exclusion: Solidarity and Challenge of Globalisation. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 8: 166

²¹ Ibid.

²² Lister, R. (2004). *Poverty*. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp. 95.

²³ Saloojee, A. Saloojee, N. (2011). From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion: Theory and Practice over two continents. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 4, number 2.

²⁴ Estivill, J. (2003). *Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion*. ILO.

²⁵ Silver, H. (2007). *The Process of Social Exclusion: The Dynamics of an Evolving Concept*. CPRC Working Paper No. 95.

the issues of distribution.²⁶ As mentioned earlier, it brings to the analysis of poverty some new valuable insights especially regarding the relations and rights, social divisions and multidimensionality, processes, power relations and the role of institutions in preventing but also in continuous reproduction of exclusion. There are some important similarities between the concept of social exclusion and the concept of relative deprivation, but the social exclusion concept goes further and provides in depth analysis and insights especially regarding the dynamics and the role of different actors involved in it, compared to other similar concepts. Sen²⁷ argues that the value of social exclusion concept lies not in its novelty or even greater comprehensiveness, but in its illumination of the ‘role of the relational features in the deprivation of capability and thus in the experience of poverty’.

When it comes to measuring of social exclusion, it is important to emphasise that the complexity and relativity of the concept, its sensitivity to context and time, and its variation across salient dimension, processes and domains of social relations, have made its measurement extremely difficult.²⁸ The concept of social exclusion created a possibility of establishing a set of comparable indicators of human deprivation, that move beyond economic rights and shift focus to civil, political and social rights in order to examine the ways in which people are excluded from and might be included into democratic and legal systems, family and community, but only if defined and operationalised properly.²⁹ There is definitely a need for longitudinal studies that are able to take into account the passage of time, the weight of economic cycles and of long-term demographic, social, and political changes, and this requirement has been successfully met in the developed world. Also, one of the biggest challenges would probably be capturing the relevant non-material aspects of human deprivation and translating them into measurable indicators. Unfortunately, across much of the Global South, especially across the African continent, the quality of data varies; the production of statistics may be difficult because of the failure of the most African states to

²⁶ Williams, F. (1998). Agency and structure revisited: Rethinking poverty and social exclusion. In M. Barry & S.Hallett (Eds.), *Social exclusion and social work: Issues of theory and practice* (pp. 13–32). Lyme Regis: Russell House.

²⁷ Sen, A. (2000). *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny*. Asian Development Bank: Social Development Papers No.1

²⁸ Silver, H. Miller, S.M. (2003). Social Exclusion: The European Approach to Social Disadvantage. *Indicators*, 2:2, pp. xx-xxx.

²⁹ Williams, F. (1998). Agency and structure revisited: Rethinking poverty and social exclusion. In M. Barry & S.Hallett (Eds.), *Social exclusion and social work: Issues of theory and practice* (pp. 13–32). Lyme Regis: Russell House.

meet some of the basic conditions of relevance, timelessness, accuracy, comparability and access.³⁰

Social exclusion of/in Africa

Evaluating the state of African countries at the beginning of the twenty first century, once again reassure us that making generalisations about a continent characterised by such diversity, is if not impossible, than extremely challenging while the conclusions drawn are bound to be incomplete and partial. Yet again, it is possible to identify some commonalities as well as certain trends and patterns that could be quite helpful for formulating conclusions. Even though it is not a homogenous picture, what could easily be identified as prevalent and shaping if not determining the development outlook of the continent are instabilities, informalities and deficiencies that exist in the majority of African states. Overview of the basic development indicators in comparative perspective, places the region of Sub-Saharan Africa at the very bottom of all relevant international rankings. At the same time, series of civil and interstate wars, followed by the endemic violence can be found in a number of countries, while the political elite have found ways to capitalize on conditions of insecurity and private violence with the result that the bureaucratic state in Africa has in many parts of Africa been ‘hollowed out’.³¹

It is extremely demanding offering a balanced picture of the continent which would take into account the complexities in which the most of the continent is entangled, and, at the same time, successfully avoiding the traps that Afropessimism as well as the Afrooptimism carry with them. One of the preconditions is, of course, placing its development challenges in a wider historical perspective that would allow identifying all the major factors that contribute to it, internal ones but more importantly the external ones. If not, we will not be able to address them properly.

The most severe social problem that African countries face is logically the problem of extreme, absolute poverty, its scope and intensity. African countries have been exposed to

³⁰ Estivill, J. (2003). *Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion*. ILO.

³¹ Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. London & Durham: Duke University Press.

different forms and levels of poverty. Human Development Index (HDI) in most of Sub-Saharan countries have stagnated or declined during the last couple of decades, and 28 out of 31 low human development countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa. The average value of HDI is 0.50 compared to its global average value of 0.70.³² Results for the income poverty are equally worrying. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where income poverty has not fallen since the 1990s. In the 1990, 57% (129 million) of population were living below absolute poverty line, while in 2010 that number rose to 414 million. Also, the share in global poverty has increased from 15% in 1990, to 34% in 2010.³³ That is one of the reasons why a number of international organisations, especially the World Bank, are talking about ‘Africanisation of global poverty’.³⁴ Poverty which African countries are facing is usually multidimensional, widespread, chronic rather than transitional. The survival imperative in the region has been extremely prevalent; there are no forms of social, religious, political life that are not related to it.³⁵

The region of Sub-Saharan Africa is also the only region in the world that not only experience high levels of food insecurity but the only region where the number of people who are affected by chronic hunger, is rising, compared to other developing regions where the number of hungry people declined since the 1990-1992, in Sub-Saharan Africa, that number increased from 176 million (1990-1992) to 214 million in 2012-2014.³⁶ Along with chronic hunger, people in the region are experiencing high levels of so called ‘hidden hunger’ (chronic deficiency of essential minerals and vitamins) that have long term and usually irreversible consequences.

According to Mkandawire³⁷, for most African countries the single most important cause for deepening of poverty has been a combination of ‘maladjustment’, highly truncated social policies, and persistence of unrepresentative and authoritarian regimes that have either stubbornly refused to address obvious crisis confronting their countries or have idiosyncratically complied to external diktat without engaging in national debates to address

³² United Nation Development Programme. (2014). *Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerability and Building Resilience*. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Mkandawire, T. (2010). How the New Poverty Agenda Neglected Social and Employment Policies in Africa. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 11: 1, pp. 37-55.

³⁵ Ćirjaković, Z. (2013). *Globalna Afrika: posledice globalizacijskih i modernizacijskih procesa južno od Sahare*. Beograd: Arhipelag.

³⁶ International Food Policy Research Institute & Concern Worldwide & Wealthhungerhlife. (2014). *Global Hunger Index: the Challenge of Hidden Hunger*.

³⁷ Mkandawire, T. (2010). How the New Poverty Agenda Neglected Social and Employment Policies in Africa. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 11: 1, pp. 37-55.

the crisis. Therefore, understanding the most severe social problems would require not only deconstructing the internal mechanisms and processes that contribute to their emergence, but also, which is equally important, understanding the external factors that keeps the whole continent on the periphery and marginalised.

Patterns of poverty and exclusion within most of the African countries are usually strongly influenced and reflect geographical location in which an individual is born and lives. The countryside remains the home of the majority of the poor in most of Africa and almost 70 per cent of the poor live in rural areas³⁸ People living in rural areas, dependent on agriculture and tropical ecologies, face risks and vulnerabilities more frequently than others, and this is the case for the majority of Sub-Saharan African population. Handley and associates³⁹ identify some of the most important risks and vulnerabilities that drive and maintain poverty in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, but also have much wider impact, and they include: harvest failure, market failure and volatility, conflict and health shocks. Harvest failure is a key risk for rural households. At the same time, it does not only affects crop dependent households, but strongly influence the wider rural economy as well as national well being and stability. It also represents one of the causes of food crisis and food insecurity.⁴⁰

Market failure and market volatility increase the prevalence of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, and this is because in many instances the poor do not poses the level of assets required to protect themselves from market shocks. Market fragmentation means that markets are poorly integrated over both, time and space. This not only affects psychical markets, but reduces producer’s and trader’s access to information that signals price changes which limits their ability to change their patterns of production and trade and to avoid economic shocks.⁴¹ Market volatility has equally negative consequences, not only for producers, but also for net consumer households. There is a strong association between high incidence of conflict and multidimensional poverty, and there is a rich empirical body that confirms that. For example, between 1996 and 2006, nearly 40 per cent of low human development states globally were found to be affected by armed conflict, compared with less than 2 per cent of high human

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Handley, G. at el. (2009). *Poverty and Poverty Reducion in Sub-Saharan Africa: an Overview of the Issues*. Working Paper No 299. London: Overseas Development Insitute.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Ibid.

development states and third of medium human development states.⁴² Violent conflict has a direct as well as indirect impact on development, manifested in deaths, injuries, destruction of household assets and displacement, but also, it destroys infrastructure, disrupts livelihoods, reduces savings and investments, undermines law and political processes and causes social and cultural erosion.

When it comes to relationship between poor health and poverty as well as development in general, it is a complex relationship and works in both directions. Health indicators for Africa are extremely unfavourable, especially if compared to developed countries. Average life expectancy is below 60 years, while in developed countries it goes over 80. Child mortality is high, and stands at 94 per 1.000, compared to 6 per 1.000 in developed countries.⁴³ These comparisons simply highlight one of the most basic facts about health and development: over the long term, and with some important variations, wealthier is healthier.⁴⁴ Poor are disproportionately affected by poor health, while at the same time they are more likely to experience extreme difficulties in accessing appropriate care. “The health problems confronting Africa are numerous and varied but, perhaps most worryingly, many are preventable through either treatment of improved sanitary conditions. According to the reports from African Red Cross and Red Crescent Health Initiative, 70 per cent of all childhood mortality is the result of five major conditions: diarrhoea disease, acute lower respiratory tract infections, malnutrition, malaria and measles. Often children suffer multiple conditions simultaneously so managing just one condition would not necessarily prevent death from other underlying disease”.⁴⁵ Sub-Saharan Africa remains the sub region with the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS infectious in the world; while the individuals with HIV/AIDS remain largely marginalized from society, labour market and often their own families. In the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, the AIDS epidemic has been responsible for unprecedented decline in life expectancy in most of the countries. The AIDS epidemic just in 2007 left 14 million children without one or both parents. Children ‘orphaned by AIDS are at an

⁴²Haslam, P., & Schafer, J., & Beaudet, P. (Eds.). (2012). *Introduction to International Development: Approaches, Actors, and Issues*. Canada: Oxford University Press.

⁴³ United Nation Development Programme. (2014). *Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerability and Building Resilience*. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>

⁴⁴ Haslam, P., & Schafer, J., & Beaudet, P. (Eds.). (2012). *Introduction to International Development: Approaches, Actors, and Issues*. Canada: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁵ Deegan, H. (2009). *Africa Today: Culture, Economics, Religion, and Security*. London: Routledge. pp.129.

especially heightened risk of malnourishment, illiteracy, lack of education, medical neglect, not being immunised, and being ostracised from society’.⁴⁶

Tackling the high levels of inequality is extremely important and should be addressed simultaneously with antipoverty strategies and efforts. Income inequality, as well as other types of inequality, is of the persistent, deeply rooted and typically a result of political forces that enable powerful groups to maintain their position. High levels of income inequality are usually strongly related with a low school enrolment, low life expectancy, high fertility, and high levels of corruption. It should be perceived as a part of a vicious cycle that usually leads to low capability levels, which in turn reduces the ability of the people to escape poverty and ‘horizontal inequalities’.⁴⁷ In terms of income inequality, Sub-Saharan Africa represents one of the most unequal regions in the world. The average gini coefficient is 47.4 and the poorest 20 per cent of the population earn only 5.3 per cent of total income.⁴⁸ High levels of income inequality represent one of the most important determinants of poor economic growth.

Urban poverty is also rising. Mkandawire⁴⁹ identifies two extremely important factors contributing to this trend: the decline of real wages and decline in employment opportunities. The lack of employment opportunities and dismantling of many protective labour laws have led to greater informalisation of labour areas. There is no doubt that those who make their living in those sectors exhibit enormous ingenuity and resilience. However, for majority of the population in that sector, such ‘survival strategies’, are not only temporary but permanent features of life of hard work, self-exploitation and poor remuneration.⁵⁰ It is important to note that the very existence of informal economy, among other things, challenges the notion of social contract, which represents a corner stone for legitimacy of the state. But, at the same time, informal economy is the sole source of livelihood for the vast majority of households.⁵¹

It is important to note that development prospects of the region will be largely determined by the efficiency as well as the very nature of the responses to the challenges of the rapid urbanisation that the continent is going through. Sub-Saharan Africa currently represents least urbanized region of the world, with only 39.7 per cent of population live in

⁴⁶ Sachs, S.E. Sachs, J. (2004). Africa’s Children orphaned by AIDS. *Lancet* 364: 1404.

⁴⁷ Handley, G. at el. (2009). *Poverty and Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa: an Overview of the Issues*. Working Paper No 299. London: Overseas Development Institute.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Mkandawire, T. (2010). How the New Poverty Agenda Neglected Social and Employment Policies in Africa. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 11: 1, pp. 37-55.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Pellissery, S. (2013). The Informal Economy: Dilemmas and Policy Responses. In: (eds.) Surender, R. Walker, R. *Social Policy in a Developing World*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 81-101.

cities, compared for example with Europe, where 73.8 per cent live in cities.⁵² However, according to the World Bank estimations, by 2030, that number will double. One of the key characteristic of the African urbanisation is that it hasn’t been followed by industrialization. The rapid urbanisation in Africa, and Global South in general, was and still is, largely a consequence of limited opportunities in the agricultural sector in rural areas, and what has been perceived as expanding opportunities in the cities.⁵³ The population that migrated from rural to urban areas mostly occupied unwanted pieces of land and public spaces, slowly transforming them into informal settlements or slums. The whole life experience of this population is defined by the ‘marginal’ position they occupy, since the slums almost always lack basic infrastructure and being excluded from legal recognition with all its implication, and also, this population don’t take mainstream formal jobs, but peripheral jobs and provide support services for formal economy. Slum dwellers are also exposed to the ‘double disease burden’. Insufficient protection from violence is also a way of excluding the poor from the potential benefits of an urban existence in the big African cities. Apart for the slums, which are usually locate at the outskirts of the city, segregation of the poor can also be found within the big African cities, as a general mechanism of spatial exclusion, and the more specific one is ghetoisation or confinement of a racial, religious, indigenous or subculture groups to a specific area and that necessarily produces and perpetuates spatially based inequalities.⁵⁴

Infrastructure deficit is chronically among the key obstacles to realizing growth and development in Africa, at the individual as well as at the collective/national level. African countries are facing some serious challenges regarding the state of its infrastructure. African’s infrastructure networks increasingly lag behind those of other developing countries and are characterised by missing regional links and stagnant household access; its infrastructure services are twice as expensive as elsewhere, reflecting both diseconomies of scale in production and high profit margins caused by lack of competition. Power is by far Africa’s largest infrastructure challenge, with 30 countries facing regular power shortage and many paying high premiums for emergency power.⁵⁵ Safe and convenient supplies save time and prevent the spread of a range of serious disease; electricity powers health and education services and boost productivity of small business; road networks provide links to local and

⁵² Davis, M. (2007). *Planet of Slums*. London: Verso Books.

⁵³ Pellissery, S. (2013). The Informal Economy: Dilemmas and Policy Responses. In: (eds.) Surender, R. Walker, R. *Social Policy in a Developing World*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 81-101.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

global markets while ICTs democratise access to information and reduce transport costs by allowing people to conduct transaction remotely.⁵⁶ The one of the biggest challenge would be overcoming the huge digital divide that exists between Africa and the rest of the world, especially developed parts of it. It is also one of the preconditions for making more inclusive information society. “For people in African countries, bridging the digital divides a means of sharing the wide range of opportunities already available to those who are connected. It gives them a means not only for making better decisions, but also for participating in decision making”.⁵⁷ Access to ICTs is actually one of the basic components of civic life. From an economic perspective, the development and the use of ICTs is widely believed to be a source of competitive advantage. Services should be affordable, accessible and of certain quality.

Understanding the complexity of development challenges and risks that African countries face, would be impossible without in depth analysis and understanding of the very nature of the ‘African state’ itself, or at least some of the main characteristics of its political system. ‘Neopatrimonial’ character of the political systems remained dominant in most of Africa, significantly determine the nature of economies of these countries; which are usually, if not exclusively, quasi-capitalist, which leaves the State as the primary source of wealth in the country. Economic performance of the most of African countries is generally poor. Its main characteristics are:

- A weak separation of the public and private spheres;
- A private appropriation of public resources;
- A regular use of clientelism, nepotism and other vertical exchange relationship to maintain a power;
- Weak cross-cutting horizontal interests and relationships;
- The zero-sum nature of politics;
- An absence of issue-based politics and political parties;
- A concentration of power in an individual who stands above the law and
- Patron-client relations that are replicated at and link all levels of society⁵⁸

The process of democratization that started in the 1990s, for many of African states, did not bring expected changes and did not adequately responded to the genuinely and widespread

⁵⁶ Foster, V., & Butterfield, W., & Pushok, N. (2009). *Building Bridges: China’s Growing Role a Infrastructure Financier for Sub-Saharan Africa. Trends and Policy Options No.* Washington: World Bank.

⁵⁷ Haslam, P., & Schafer, J., & Beaudet, P. (Eds.). (2012). *Introduction to International Development: Approaches, Actors, and Issues.* Canada: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁸ Handley, G. at el. (2009). *Poverty and Poverty Reducion in Sub-Saharan Africa: an Overview of the Issues.* Working Paper No 299. London: Overseas Development Insitute.

aspirations of African people for democratic governance in Africa. Instead of that little has been done to alter the fundamental dynamic of ‘weak’ and predatory states. “For one thing, the democratization, in its ironic twist, only became a way of placing the blame for the structural problems of African economies squarely on the shoulders of African governments, and by implication on African voters themselves”.⁵⁹ It is not an overstatement to argue that citizens of the most African states are still treated as subjects; they are subjected to the ‘highly personal and predatory exercise of political power’, characterised, among other things by the lack of transparency and accountability, as well as the frequent and severe violations of human rights.

Understanding developing challenging that African countries are facing, necessarily requires assessment of the position that the continent occupy at the global level. Africa, as well as the other parts of the Global South, has a long history and understanding of and engagement with exclusion and marginality and poverty – history of colonialism and through the way in which African economies have been peripherally integrated into global economy. The notion of the uneven and unequal integration into the global economy as the source of the exclusions on the national and regional scale runs counter to the European view of social exclusion, but it is highly relevant for understanding these phenomena within the ‘African’ contexts.⁶⁰ This ‘global approach’ to social exclusion as well as inclusion politics has proven its relevance during the last decades, when the outcomes of structural adjustment programmes and latest global economic crisis, only deepened the exclusion of the majority in Africa, and the Global South as a whole. The international economic, political and social processes over the last couple of decades have had a very uneven effect on different regions and localities of the world, which logically led to the uneven development, and in the case of African states, to the further deterioration of social and economic infrastructure (Silver, 2015). Globalisation on the one hand weakened the nation state, but at the same time, made the local action, ties and identities even more important that they were before

‘Marginalisation’ of Africa occurred not because insufficient integration, but because of the conditions under which she was integrated. Among other things, other areas of the world, moved to the export of manufactured goods, while Africa’s industrial potential

⁵⁹ Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. London & Durham: Duke University Press. pp. 12.

⁶⁰ Saloojee, A. Saloojee, N. (2011). From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion: Theory and Practice over two continents. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 4, number 2.

declined, thanks to the excessive deregulation associated with structural adjustment.⁶¹ In the latest round of the ‘worldwide capitalist restructuring’ with its frenzied construction of ‘global economy’, there is little or no place for Africa outside its old colonial role as a provider of raw materials.⁶² Africa’s share in global economic activity is small and declining. Over time, despite bold predictions and promises that the global processes and neoliberalisation of markets will make the world ‘flat’ Africa became ‘an inconvenient case’ in the studies of globalisation.

According to a number of scholars,⁶³ the latest phase in the relationship between developed countries of the Global North and African countries could be easily qualified as the state of ‘postmodern imperialism’. James Fearon and David Laitin defined it as a “... similar to classical imperialism, efforts made involve remarkable degree of control over domestic political authority and basic economic functions by foreign countries”.⁶⁴ This new form of imperialism, domination and submission or neo-colonial ‘stretching’ of sovereign European nation states beyond their borders, do not accomplish by using its military power and methods of brutal oppression, but by highly sophisticated mechanism of ‘market means’ and financial injections of foreign aid.⁶⁵

The economic benefits of trade, for the most part, are generally accepted truth; economic theory tells us that trade contributes to growth in at least two ways: by exactly increasing the amount of actual goods and services that a country sells abroad and by driving up the productivity of the work force.⁶⁶ Over the past half-century, the total amount of world trade has grown substantially and the share of expanding the world trade held by advanced industrialised countries in the North has remained relatively the same, while the majority of the developing countries in the Global South have experienced a diminishing percentage – Africa’s share of world’s merchandise exports declined from 5.5 per cent in 1960 to 3.1 per cent in 2009.⁶⁷ Developed countries use trade restrictions such as quotas and barriers to ‘protect’ their markets from African goods. This has negative effects not only for individual

⁶¹ Bond, P. (2006). *Looting Africa: The Economics of Exploitation*. London & New York: Zed Books

⁶² Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. London & Durham: Duke University Press.

⁶³ Easterly, W. (2006). *The White Man’s Burden*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.237.

⁶⁵ Ćirjaković, Z. (2013). *Globalna Afrika: posledice globalizacijskih i modernizacijskih procesa južno od Sahare*. Beograd: Arhipelag.

⁶⁶ Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead Aid*. London: Penguin books.

⁶⁷ United Nation Conference on Trade and Development. 2010. At: unctadstat.unctad.org/tableviewer/tableView.aspx (October, 2010).

African countries, but also on the regional cooperation and integration processes, because countries tend to become highly competitive among themselves in order to gain access to the markets of developed countries.⁶⁸ It is not that Africa is not integrated into the global economy, on the contrary, the focus should be on the ‘unprofitable insertion into the world economy’.⁶⁹ Also, at the same time, by using agricultural subsidies they jeopardise livelihoods of millions of people in Africa depending on agriculture. The members of the OECD spend almost US \$ 300 billion on agricultural subsidies and this is almost three times the total aid from OECD countries to all developing countries.⁷⁰ These subsidies have dual effect. Western farmers get to sell their produce to a captive customer at home above world market prices, but also, they can afford to dump their excess production at lower prices abroad, thus undercutting the struggling African farmer, upon whose meagre livelihood the export income crucially depends.

Interantional development assistants represent another quite sophisticated mechanism who insted of contributing to the economic growht and imporving general welfare of citizens of poor countries, mostly contributes to continuation of their marginal and disadvantage position. The global aid architecture or the ‘Cartel of good intentions’ has been established right after the end of the World War II, following the process of disintegration of the European empires and decolonization of Africa. Since its establishment, the redistribution of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been taking place within the boundaries drawn by the selfish interests (economic, political, geostrategic...) of developed countries, but also by the attempt of the international donor community to fundamentally transform African societies in accordance with Western model, which is considered to be a precondition for the sustainable economic growth and development. Foreign aid provided by the developed countries has never been unconditional, but since the 1980s, the conditionality of aid became more explicit. “The economic and political reforms of the last two decades were meant to bring African states and economies into line with a standard global model, resulted in the creation of an Africa that is actually more different than ever from the imagined global standard”.⁷¹ During the last six decades, intensity of foreign aid to Sub-Saharan Africa became, historically and comparatively, unprecedented. Unfortunately, rich empirical body of literature has shown that aid to Sub-Saharan Africa has not only been ineffective and

⁶⁸ Bond, P. (2006). *Looting Africa: The Economics of Exploitation*. London & New York: Zed Books.

⁶⁹ Bond, P. (2006). *Looting Africa: The Economics of Exploitation*. London & New York: Zed Books.

⁷⁰ Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead Aid*. London: Penguin books.

⁷¹ Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. London & Durham: Duke University Press. pp. 13.

inefficient, but also a counterproductive, undermining some of the fundamental values and institutions, crucial to the national development.⁷² In her book *Dead Aid* (2009), Dambisa Moyo with a surgical precision identifies foreign aid as ‘the silent killer of growth’. She argues that foreign aid not only had a number of ‘economic limitations’ (can stimulate inflation, reduces savings and investment, chokes off the export sector...), but also fosters corruption, foments conflict, has negative effect on the development of the civil society and does not strengthen social capital and thus erodes the essential fabric of trust that is needed between people in any functioning society.

Initially, the literature on poverty, deprivation, marginalisation in the Global South, displayed a scepticism about the applicability and even appropriateness of the social exclusion concept in the countries of the Global South, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, mostly because of the fact that vast majority of people are experiencing severe forms of deprivation. But this is precisely why the social exclusion concept should be taken into consideration. He could be quite useful in analysis of socio-economic change in Africa, especially the whole process of impoverishment, by focusing attention not only on the mere description of the hardships poor people face, but on the relationship between poverty and agency; and by providing a framework to draw together separate literature on access to land, employment, organisation and representation, social services and to interrelate them in a way which illuminates trajectories of social change.⁷³

By implementing the concept of social exclusion, it would be possible to identify not only the causes of the exclusion and the different dimensions of it, but also to determine the very responsibility of different actors in the whole process, especially the role of the State. The role of the State during the apartheid in South Africa is particularly illustrative; it was the state who was conducting systematic, structural, legalized, institutionalized and intensely personalised racial discrimination and exclusion, which in turn led to radicalized poverty, unemployment, unequal wealth distribution, spatial segregation, unequal distribution of valued goods and services, including with respect of education, health care, pensions and

⁷² See Easterly, W. (2006). *The White Man’s Burden*. New York: Oxford University Press.
and Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead Aid*. London: Penguin books.

⁷³ Gore, C. (1996). Social Exclusion and Social Change: Insights in the African Literature. In: (eds.) Rodgers, G. Gore, C. Figureido, J. *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric, Reality, Responses*. International Institute for Labour Studies.

labour market integration.⁷⁴ The concept of social exclusion can contribute to the in depth analysis of socio-economic situation in African countries, particularly the very process of impoverishment as well as the specific roles and therefore responsibilities of different actors. It presents a valuable analytical concept, that helps gathering existing data on different dimensions of deprivation, collecting the missing information and putting all that in relation. As already mentioned, socially exclusion particularly affects those subject to multiple deprivations on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, citizenship status, labour market participation.⁷⁵ Social exclusion perspective could provide a framework for synthesizing and interrelating disparate debates on access to productive land and agricultural inputs, access to remunerate and secure urban jobs, and patterns of organization and political representation.⁷⁶

Gore (1995) rightfully identifies some of the potential benefits of putting into the social exclusion framework an existing analysis of poverty. It would be possible to analysis not only different dimensions of social exclusion, but also:

- Changing inter-ale relationship between different dimensions of exclusion from livelihood;
- Changes in relative importance of institutions in regulating patterns of exclusion and inclusion;
- Changes in the way in which social identities affect exclusion;
- Changes in the relative importance of and relationship between poverty and social identity in regulating access to resources and other social goods.⁷⁷

Implementation of the social exclusion concept will require overcoming methodological difficulties and limitations of the existing research endeavours, and their current inability to properly describe something that Ferguson (2006) refer to as “African” social reality. It should be, among other things, able to capture ‘an abundance of shadows’⁷⁸ which inevitable component of every discussion of Africa’s political economy. Which basically means that the utility of the social exclusion concept in illuminating not only various dimensions of poverty, beside material deprivation, but also in deconstructing the

⁷⁴ Saloojee, A. Saloojee, N. (2011). From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion: Theory and Practice over two continents. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 4, number 2

⁷⁵ Gore, C. (1996). Social Exclusion and Social Change: Insights in the African Literature. In: (eds.) Rodgers, G. Gore, C. Figureido, J. *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric, Reality, Responses*. International Institute for Labour Studies.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ (eds.) Rodgers, G. Gore, C. Figuerido, J.B (1995). *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric, Reality, Responses*. International Institute for Labour Studies.

⁷⁸ Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. London & Durham: Duke University Press.

structural causes of it, will ultimately depend on its ability to include in its analysis of the prevalent ‘shadow imaginary’, or the parallel structures that exist in within African states. Alongside the official economy, there is an ‘informal economy’ or ‘shadow economy’; doubling the formal state as it apparent or pretends to be, there is a ‘shadow state’ lurking beside it; alongside the uniform troops of the legitimate national army, are the private ‘shadow soldiers’ of private or irregular armies.⁷⁹ Ferguson (2006) emphasise that even though African state did formally broke the colonial shadow relation with the ‘West’ with decolonisation, declaring that African nations would henceforth ‘stand on their own’; but in an ironic twist, this only contributed to the localisation of the responsibility for ‘African poverty’ in the policies and programs of African nations states.

The African Social Development Index has been developed in order to measure exclusion in Africa, and was initiated by member states of the Economic Commission for Africa as a tool for capturing the continent’s current as well as specific social challenges that he is facing, while helping them to develop more inclusive and equitable policies. By following a life-cycle approach this newly developed index aims to measure impact of social policies on human exclusion in six key areas: survival, health, education, employment, productive income and decent life.

Developing the African Social Development Index has been an important step forward, and another evidence that social indicators research has over time became extremely sophisticated – being able at the same time to measure and reflect specific conditions, but also allude to or ‘indicate’ wider social conditions.⁸⁰ ‘Composite’ or ‘aggregate’ indicators have a number of advantages compared to income poverty line approach, and the most important being the fact that they do expand the understanding and the definition of deprivation. But, even though it is a step forward, and it is much closer to a holistic approach of poverty, some experts are critical of the social indicators approach because it is primarily concerned with the material conditions associated with poverty, almost completely neglecting the non-material aspects, which are equally important.⁸¹ “While it is important to ensure that people have access to schools or immunization or food, it is equally important, to stress the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Hall, A. Midgley, J. (2004). *Social Policy for Development*. London: SAGE Publication.

⁸¹ Ibid.

need for political participation, opportunities from self-expression, freedom from economic exploitation and other dimensions”.⁸²

Implementation of the social exclusion concept will help us reveal not only obvious and visible dimension of deprivation, but also those ‘hidden’ ones, and ‘social isolation’ represents one of them. Even the concept of social isolation is intricately linked to the causes and consequences of both poverty and social exclusion, they are not synonyms. “Formally social isolation can be defined as inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people at the different levels where human interaction takes place”.⁸³ And what is important is that a growing evidence suggest that social isolation is a core impediment to achieving well being that people living in absolute poverty regard ‘social isolation’ as pertinent to their understanding of poverty because social relations are fundamental to human well being.⁸⁴ On the contrary, being ‘socially connected’ actually means that one could participate in activities that strengthen their relations with their peers and communities, build resilience and the sense of belonging. “Social connectedness is also instrumentally important because it facilitates people’s access to opportunities and nurtures their participatory abilities”.⁸⁵ It can contribute significantly in diminishing intergenerational poverty by providing access to social capital, altering exclusionary processes that entrench intergenerational poverty and help reducing other forms of deprivation that characterise multidimensional poverty.⁸⁶

This new perspective of human deprivations is extremely important for understanding the position of the poor. Relational deprivation has adverse effect on people’s quality of life, health and well being; it erodes their sense of dignity and hinders them from realizing their rights. Studies conducted in Southern Africa have shown that income poverty, stigma, premature burdens of care in households affected by HIV/AIDS, school dropout and inability to access services all factor that put children and youth at risk of social isolation. At the same time, empirical studies suggest that levels of income and individual economic status appeared to be less important compared to number and quality of social relations and available

⁸² Ibid. pp. 49.

⁸³ Samulel, K. Uwizejimana, J.B. (2017). *Social Connectedness and Poverty Eradication: A South African perspective*. CROP. Global Challenges, Working Paper Series No. 2.pp.6

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid. pp.3

⁸⁶ Ibid.

communal capital, which should also serve as a good starting point for the policy makers indicating that policy should ‘target existing care and support networks’.⁸⁷

Social policy for (inclusive) development

Social policy has a very important role to play in development and especially in countries that are facing extremely difficult and complex development challenges and risks. ‘Transformative social policy’ could play a critical role in bringing about inclusive development, especially contributing to the social cohesion as well as the nation building.⁸⁸ Basically, it should reflect a fundamental shift in emphasis towards a cross-sector, integrated and a holistic approach to a human welfare.

In order to be a valuable contributor of inclusive development, social policy needs to be ‘re-examined’; it should be conceptualised in a much broader sense as encompassing any planned and concerted action that affects people’s lives and livelihoods, with the particular focus on those individuals or social groups that are excluded or at risk to be socially excluded. Social policy needs to be re-conceptualised and go beyond the roles it had traditionally played in the developing countries. For a long period of time, social policy has been primarily considered with either: social and welfare services of one kind or one another or safety nets to alleviate immediate crisis.⁸⁹

The definition of social policy by Mkandawire, is especially useful here and he argues that social policy should be understood as a “collective interventions directly affecting transformations in social welfare, social institutions and social relations... [and]... access to adequate and secure livelihoods and income”.⁹⁰ What should be taken into consideration while looking for and conceptualising solutions to social risks and challenges is that “management of social welfare and risk in Africa is mediated under a very different set of institutional conditions from those in developed countries; formulated and implemented by a wider range of social policy actors; and conveyed through a variety of different mechanisms

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Adesina, J.O. (2007). *Social Policy and the Quest for Inclusive Development: Research Findings from Sub-Saharan Africa*. UNRISD, Social Policy and Development: Programme Paper 33.

⁸⁹ Hall, A. Midgley, J. (2004). *Social Policy for Development*. London: SAGE Publication.

⁹⁰ Mkandawire, T. (2001). Social Policy in a Development Context. *Social Policy and Development Programme. Paper No. 7*. Geneva: UNRISD. pp. 1.

and policy instruments”⁹¹ That, among other things, means that mainstream (‘Eurocentric’) comparative welfare policy literature, should be consulted with a great caution.

It is important to emphasise that the very broadening of the social policy agenda, from charitable works and welfare service provision to a more encompassing concern for strengthening livelihoods, will necessarily imply a multiplication of both of policy objectives and of the types of institutions required in order to achieve them. This would also mean that the engagement and cooperation between major institutional sets of actors (State, civil society, business sector and international development and financial institutions) would have to be established. According to the Hall and Midgley, the new ‘social policy package’ should include not only social protection, but also fighting against social exclusion, promoting human rights, even conserving the natural resources that form the basis for many people’s livelihood.⁹² Along with the need to establish a different institutional as well as the normative arrangements, this would also require a different approach to human deprivation, not only to its material and non-material aspects, but also to the relational features of deprivation.

Establishing the ‘transformative social policy’ would require once again, re-examination of the role of the State not only as a social policy actor, but in the development process in general. Over the past decades, the position of the ‘African state’ has been viewed differently, depending on not only internal pressures, ideologies, capacities and resources, but also on the external pressures manifested through the conditions posed by the international development and financial institutions trying to implement the latest results coming from the Western economic wisdom.

Traditionally, the State has been seen as a major architect of social policy constructs and the main driving force behind social reform, even though this picture became slightly more complicated since the beginning of the 1990s. Arguably, however, the State remains the single most crucial social policy institution despite its failure in many contexts and despite the growing pressure upon internal affairs by international financial organisations.⁹³ Central government is still primarily responsible for providing basic social services; aside from social

⁹¹ (eds.) Surender, R. Walker, R. (2013). *Social Policy in a Developing World*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. pp. 3.

⁹² Hall, A. Midgley, J. (2004). *Social Policy for Development*. London: SAGE Publication.

⁹³ Hall, A. Midgley, J. (2004). *Social Policy for Development*. London: SAGE Publication.

spending, and far more significantly, governments determine development priorities, and, hence, the social impact and social policy implications to which such implications give rise.⁹⁴

The role of the State in Africa, but also elsewhere in the developing world, has been changing over the past decades, often due to the influence and pressure by the international financial institutions.

During the post-independence period until the beginning of the 1970s, in most of African countries, actually in most of developing world, the strong centralised government was seen as a precondition for achieving (economic) development. Most of them was following the advice coming from mainstream western theories about ‘growth first’ and ‘welfare after’, according to which, economic growth not social spending was what was needed.⁹⁵ Modernization, urban industrialization which would be followed by the rise in the employment, would eventually result in poverty alleviation and development. The majority

African states did embarked on relatively comprehensive social policy programs, mostly expending the existing colonial infrastructure, but they were viewed as ‘comprehensive’ only when compared to the pre-existent condition. International donors insisted that when it comes to ‘welfare agenda’ (that already existed in developed parts of the world), require much higher level of development. Needless to say that the improvement was quite obvious, but that was more due to the fact that the starting position was extremely unfavourable, especially if put into comparative perspective. It was achieved less than envisioned and hoped for.

Soon after, at the beginning of the 1970s, most African states, under the strong pressure from international donor community, moved towards project planning as a key vehicle through which government implement and shade policies. It was only the beginning of the more drastic change of the role of the State, which would occur in the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. The rise of neoliberalism, was followed by a certain ‘anti welfare shift’, and the efficiency and effectiveness of state apparatus was further called into question, when it comes to its role in achieving economic as well as social development.⁹⁶ Neoliberal agenda was manifested in the Washington consensus which was suppose to help ‘the rolling back of the state’, while the central planning was considered to be completely unacceptable. During this period, international financial institutions became even more

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ (eds.) Surender, R. Walker, R. (2013). *Social Policy in a Developing World*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

⁹⁶ Hall, A. Midgley, J. (2004). *Social Policy for Development*. London: SAGE Publication.

influential. World Bank and International Monetary Fund almost completely monopolised the development discourse, defining what poverty and development are, influence and policymakers. African countries were ‘forced’ to implement a ‘standard blueprint’, which basically included a little priority given the human development, cutbacks in social investments privatisation and abandonment of social planning.⁹⁷ What will become clear in the following decades is that by uncompromisingly imposing of its economic and therefore social and political prescriptions, seriously damaged long term development prospects of African countries. The fact that ‘African state’ has been fragile, made it susceptible to the exogenous ideas and influences during the most of the post-colonial period, which only further undermined the State, its legitimacy and capacity, in the long term. Their activities would significantly undermine the ‘embryonic welfare state’, not only in Africa, but also in Asia and Latin America.⁹⁸

Shortly after the first round of implementation of Structural adjustment programs, its limitations as well as negative consequences became evident and could not be ignored. World Bank and International Monetary Fund were under heavy criticism, and at the beginning of the 1990s, they called for the balance between the State and the market, each with its own distinctive and mutually supportive contribution to make to the development process.⁹⁹ The State was ‘brought back’, but its role has changed. According to the new development wisdom, the state interventionism should be minimal, and the State should primarily act as a facilitator of ‘balanced development’ providing a favourable environment and basically concentrating on those fundamental areas in which government has a unique role to play. Post-Washington Consensus approach was based on a more holistic understanding of development. Poverty became one of the central focuses during the 1990s, which basically meant that a shift was made from a narrow minded focus on economic growth that would automatically lead to poverty reduction, to somewhat more holistic approach to development. At the same time, once again, it became clear that there is and that cannot be a single recipe in the form of a ‘policy cocktail’ that a country should follow in order to achieve development. But, at the same time, despite this shift in thinking towards more social policies, the practice of international organisations, especially financial

⁹⁷ (eds.) Surender, R. Walker, R. (2013). *Social Policy in a Developing World*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

⁹⁸ Deacon, B. (2013). Globalisation and Social Policy in Developing Countries. in: (eds.) Surender, R. Walker, R. *Social Policy in a Developing World*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp.217-236.

⁹⁹ Hall, A. Midgley, J. (2004). *Social Policy for Development*. London: SAGE Publication.

institutions still falls into the trap of standardization and consequently economization, because, among other things, bureaucratic tendencies to reduce complexity in order to be able to act. In other words, there are limits to policy change within these organisations.¹⁰⁰

Generally speaking, it seems that since the 1980s, especially during the 1990s, policy attention has almost exclusively been focused on social protection instruments in order to mitigate the negative impact of structural adjustment programs. Developing a good social protection system is of course quite desirable, but that should exclude the other areas of social policy. Social policy should not be reduced to social protection. Pro-poor programs are not necessarily pro-poor and if not designed properly, they can even undermine the long-term development prospects. Often, the fall of poverty has had much less to do with policies aimed at poverty *per se* than with those aimed at much wider social objectives or improving social welfare based on a wide range of considerations including citizenship, nation building, judgements on who constitutes the poor, ideological predispositions with respect to the efficiency of free markets, theories on human behaviour, overall economic strategies as well as the ability and strength to resist the pressure posed by the international development and financial organisations.¹⁰¹

In recent years, the focus has turned to cash transfer programs, as the key policy instrument of choice for addressing poverty and vulnerability.¹⁰²

Against all odds, during the last two decades, a number of Southern African countries, had been widely hailed pioneer in the expansion of the social protection, and according to Ferguson¹⁰³, the programs that were developed represent “the big development story of the last twenty years”, or part of a “revolution from the Global South”, as it is referred by a number of authors. They were established and developed despite widespread scepticism about affordability and appropriateness of such programs and the assumption that extensive national welfare programs and institutions are possible only in developed states. They are rooted in a conviction that “it is better to give money to poor people directly so that they can

¹⁰⁰ Vetterlein, A. (2013). The Role of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Poverty Reduction: limits of policy change. In: (eds.) Surender, R. Walker, R. (2013). *Social Policy in a Developing World*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. pp. 37-58.

¹⁰¹ Mkandawire, T. (2010). How the New Poverty Agenda Neglected Social and Employment Policies in Africa. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 11: 1, pp. 37-55.

¹⁰² Adesina, J. O. (2011). Beyond Social Protection Paradigm: Social Policy in Africa’s Development. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 32: 4, pp. 454-470.

¹⁰³ Ferguson, J. (2015). *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution*. Duke University Press

find effective ways to escape from poverty”¹⁰⁴. That basically means that the central mechanism of the new anti-poverty programs is not credit, securitization or any other sort of neoliberal prediction, but a startlingly simple device of handing out small amounts of money to people deemed to need it.¹⁰⁵ So far, the whole system has been the most developed in South Africa with its national system of social payments, but similar programs are established in Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique, while in the countries like Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, pilot and regional programs have been developed.¹⁰⁶ The main characteristics of this new programs are that they are non-contributory, paid regardless of previous employment history, the size of household or number of children, relatively simply to administer and transparent, flexible enough to successfully respond to a constant changing reality, do not make moralizing judgements about ‘the deserving poor’ and do not require surveillance normalization.¹⁰⁷

In short period of time, they proved to be ‘extremely successful in reducing poverty’, but also in reducing the percentage of population experiencing hunger, while the positive development impact has been identified in educational and health outcomes. Research on cash transfers showed that even very small amounts of cash income can both catalyze and stimulate a range of economic and social activities, and enable people to better meet their needs as they themselves define them.

They do represent a beginning of a ‘new politics of distribution’ and a ‘new way of thinking’ about a number of things, including labour, unemployment, family and the very meaning of ‘social’ payments.¹⁰⁸ This new, emerging politics is based on a kind of claim-making, that involves neither a compensation for work nor an appeal for ‘help’, but rather a sense of rightful entitlement to an income that is tied neither to labour nor to any sort of disability or incapacity.¹⁰⁹ Cash transfer programs also represent valuable lesson on the long term benefits of the bottom up approach to serious development challenges and risk African countries are facing.

Despite their success, as well the possible long term implications, social protection should not occupy a ‘hegemonic position’ within not only social policy, but within national development strategies. National social policy agenda should be broadened should

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ ibid

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

correspond with the national vision of a ‘good society’, should ‘social cohesion and nation building’¹¹⁰ It should embrace a holistic approach, within which social and economic policies should be combined and complementary. It should combine universalistic approach with a wide range of targeted instruments and be based on the values of equality, solidarity and social justice.

Central to the idea of ‘transformative social policy’, brilliantly elaborated by Mkandawire and Adesina¹¹¹, is its grounding it in the norms of equality and social solidarity, where universal membership and coverage in provisioning will follow suit, while its main instruments will range from education to health care, agrarian reform, child care, old age care and fiscal instruments. While conceptualising this ‘new’ social policy, insights made by the application of the social exclusion concepts will be valuable, focusing attention on various aspects of human well being and human deprivation, but also to the relational dimensions which would allow addressing the structural causes of it. “Transformative social policy relates not only to the economy or protection from destitution, but to the transformation to the social relations as well.”¹¹²

Concluding remarks

The very risk of being excluded is not a static one, but rather dynamic and therefore, countries need to define and implement policies that are at the same time comprehensive but also flexible enough, so they could address properly not only various dimensions and manifestations of exclusion, but also to capture and to respond to the relational aspect of that process.

Economic growth that most African countries have experienced in the last two decades, unfortunately have not been translated into a significantly improved working and living conditions for most of the citizens of African countries. It is a growth, which has not

¹¹⁰ Adesina, J.O. (2007). *Social Policy and the Quest for Inclusive Development: Research Findings from Sub-Saharan Africa*. UNRISD, Social Policy and Development: Programme Paper 33

¹¹¹ See Adesina, J.O. (2007). *Social Policy and the Quest for Inclusive Development: Research Findings from Sub-Saharan Africa*. UNRISD, Social Policy and Development: Programme Paper 33 and Mkandawire, T. (2001). *Social Policy in a Development Context. Social Policy and Development Programme. Paper No. 7*. Geneva: UNRISD.

¹¹² Adesina, J. O. (2011). Beyond Social Protection Paradigm: Social Policy in Africa’s Development. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 32: 4, pp. 465.

been followed by development; on the contrary. The whole Sub-Saharan region is still struggling with a number of severe social problems.

One of the first steps in addressing the problem of ‘growth without development’ should be a different approach to the issue of human deprivation, and redefining the social policy agendas which would logically follow the newly acquired knowledge. Implementation of the social exclusion concept could be extremely useful in fulfilling these demanding tasks. This would require a massive investment in research and improvement of the data quality in all African states.

Initially, the literature on poverty, deprivation, marginalisation in the Global South, displayed a scepticism about the applicability and even appropriateness of the social exclusion concept in the countries of the Global South, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, mostly because of the fact that vast majority of people are experiencing severe forms of deprivation. But this is precisely why the social exclusion concept should be taken into consideration. It could be quite useful in analysis of socio-economic change in Africa, especially the whole process of impoverishment, by focusing attention not only on the mere description of the hardships poor people face, but on the relationship between poverty and agency; and by providing a framework to draw together separate literature on access to land, employment, organisation and representation, social services and to interrelate them in a way which illuminates trajectories of social change.¹¹³ The new insights could potentially serve as a foundation for a social policy reform. Establishing a truly transformative social policy would require a completely different, holistic approach to the questions of welfare and well being and that regards, the social exclusion concept could be a mobilizing force.

¹¹³ Gore, C. (1996). Social Exclusion and Social Change: Insights in the African Literature. In: (eds.) Rodgers, G. Gore, C. Figureido, J. *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric, Reality, Responses*. International Institute for Labour Studies.

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