

Madhushree Sekher · Radu Carciumaru  
*Editors*

# Including the Excluded in South Asia

Power, Politics and Policy Perspectives  
from the Region

 Springer

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# Foreword

Despite its intuitive appeal and wide political use, social inclusion displays all the features of an essentially contested concept on closer scrutiny. Despite the alacrity with which advocates from all sides of the ideological divide use it in their political rhetoric, there is no deep consensus on its operational meaning. The endless debate between protagonists of caste as the criterion of ‘reservation’ as opposed to class points towards one of the main difficulties of social inclusion as a useful category of analysis. Is ‘exclusion’ germane to the primordial identity of the actor (for example, untouchability), or is it the function of an existential condition such as poverty? Where should action aimed at ridding society of social exclusion be located? Operationally, should social action to correct for structural inequality start at birth, or progressively, through the different entry points to active life such as schooling, higher education, recruitment and promotion? Most seriously, why does democracy—an accessible universal ladder for representation, participation and mobility—come across as inadequate when it comes to social exclusion? Do groups who consider themselves to be outside the charmed circle of the privileged perceive the source of their problem as endogenous or exogenous? Finally, these issues might appear to be beyond the ken of conventional social analysis. To the discomfort of the empiricist, these disputes cannot be settled by direct measurement. Empirical investigation is unlikely to yield answers that would be acceptable to advocates ranged on opposite sides of the ideological divide.

This important and timely text provides conceptual, analytical, methodological and comparative answers to some of these questions. The collection of essays moves on effortlessly beyond the everyday reality of injustice, inequality and exclusion to concepts that underpin them, and institutional arrangements that might deliver much needed course correction. The actor-centred approach of this volume puts the onus of articulation of injustice and exclusion on actors linked to social cleavages of caste, race, tribe, religion and class. The authors link the agency of the actor with the process of aggregation of individual choices into social outcomes. In a deft move that connects agency and process, the book moves on to the level of the political system. One thus finds, in the rich cases studies drawn from India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, a comparative analysis of inclusion and

exclusion that conflates 'politics within the system' with 'politics of the system'. The neo-institutional approach that analyses the evolution of norms and innovation of new, corrective institutions and provides conceptual bridge to essays that might otherwise appear to be set on their own, individual trajectories, is both imaginative and helpful for further analysis.

While social exclusion linked to identities appears to be the flavour of the month in this genre of social analysis, this book will attempt to go beyond such banalities. It argues that hierarchies and inequalities based on social identities cut across and affect various groups of excluded. Consequently, these phenomena create or lead to various processes of exclusion. Thus, the collection of essays successfully demonstrates that academic analysis of social exclusion should not be limited to differences that characterize the exclusionary processes. Instead, it argues that research should also focus on strategies of inclusion. As such, the book demonstrates that social exclusion is not simply a description of groups that face exclusion, but also an effort to understand the systems and processes that create social exclusion in a systematic way. This knowledge alone can help create opportunities for correcting the course of the social process that leads to the unfortunate reality of deep social exclusion.

With its comparative approach and the thematic integration effectively executed in the introduction, the book should be of great value within South Asia where the post-colonial states that share a common origin have followed contrasting paths towards social justice. Beyond South Asia, the book should have great resonance among the global community that focuses on democracy and social justice. They should find in this book some innovative juxtaposition of majoritarian democracy and sectional justice by the way of reservation policies. Long established Western liberal democracies, now struggling with unforeseen problems of migration, cross-border terrorism, violent populism and alienation of disenchanted voters will benefit from its comparative and theoretical insights. I warmly welcome this useful addition to our knowledge in a critical area of political and social contestation.

July 2019

Subrata Mitra  
Professor *emeritus*  
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# Preface

Focusing on South Asia, the book analyses and discusses the multiple dimensions of social exclusion/inclusion seen in the region, to not only capture how ‘social exclusion’ is intrinsic to deprivation or deprivation in itself, but also the processes of political engagement and social interactions that the socially excluded develop as strategies and networks for their growth/advancement. In the process, the book attempts to grapple with the question of whether governance processes adopt a more dynamic approach to provide spaces for the ‘socially excluded’ to have their own ways of tackling exclusion, thereby raising discussions around the contested positions that underlie development discourse on social exclusion and social inclusion. With inter- and transdisciplinary contributions from scholars from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Germany, the book explores emerging and relevant issues on social exclusion/inclusion in South Asia, such as:

- The mainstream concerns like diversity and attention to strands of social exclusion (e.g. race/ethnicity, caste/tribe, religion, etc.).
- The pro-devolution discourse, looking at issues of inclusive and participatory democracy.
- The neo-institutionalist perspective, looking at new governance structures, and the system openness (spaces), and equality opportunities that exist therein.

While social exclusion linked to identities is being studied, this book attempts to argue that hierarchies and inequalities based on social identities cut across and affect various groups of excluded. This creates or leads to various processes of exclusion. The book, therefore, argues that social exclusion should not be limited to privileging the differences that characterize the exclusionary processes, but should also comprise underpinning strategies of ‘inclusion’, emphasizing the need to focus on imperatives to ‘include’. In the light of this perspective, the book acknowledges that social exclusion is not only studying the different identities that face exclusion, but also understanding the systems and processes that create social exclusion, or create opportunities for inclusion of the excluded.

The book, thus, comprehensively presents an analysis of the discourse on social exclusion/inclusion in South Asia, by looking at—(1) the nature of social exclusion practiced in the society, and how the constitutional provisions, laws and institutions have been able to address exclusionary/discriminatory processes through policies and development and empowerment facilitation; and (2) the contribution of inclusive policies for welfare and inclusive development, to address the issues of exclusion.

Mumbai, India  
New Delhi, India

Madhushree Sekher  
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## Contributors

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Educational Discourse', *Hizmet Studies Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Autumn 2015 (Belgium), pp. 9–30, The Arab Spring: A View From India' in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratisation* (Routledge, London, 2014), pp. 636–649, and 'Islam and Violence', *GITAM Journal of Gandhian Studies*, Vol. 3, No 1, 2014. His area of research interests includes International politics, politics in Middle East, political theory, religion and politics, political Islam, globalization and Muslim societies.

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**Mr. Mark Schubert** is presently pursuing his Bachelors Degree in Law at the Open University of Sri Lanka. Since graduating from Colombo University, he has worked at the Social Scientists’ Association, Colombo in the capacity of Research Assistant initially, and subsequently as Researcher. He has almost 5 years’

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He also served as consultant for ADB, OECD, UNDP and World Bank, and provided technical assistance to developing country governments including Bangladesh, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, India, Nepal, Somalia and Vietnam.

He is a development economist with experience in providing technical assistance in the preparation of human development reports, poverty reduction strategy papers and tracking of MDGs. As a 'Senior Trainer', he designed, developed and conducted a workshop on 'Food Policy Analysis' (sponsored by the FAO, IFPRI and



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Also, he designed an empirical methodology corresponding to the one in Human Development Report 2011 and estimated Inequality Adjusted Human Development Indices for states in India. He drafted and finalized a Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System for the three administrations of Somalia. He also prepared the concept paper on Sustainable Development Goals for Somalia.

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# Social Exclusion and Including the Excluded: A Perspective



Madhushree Sekher and Radu Carciumaru

**Abstract** The development literature in recent years has seen the emergence of the concept of ‘social exclusion’, which focusses attention on the relational aspects of deprivation. Social exclusion may be regarded as intrinsic to deprivation or deprivation in itself. It could also be seen as instrumental in leading to other aspects of relative deprivation reflected in socio-economic disparities. Social exclusion in its multiple dimensions, also, provides a useful framework to capture the processes underlying group-level inequalities and poverty in a society. Seen from this lens, social and political participation is important for social inclusion, because deprivation is not just income poverty. Political engagement and social interaction are two lenses for accessing the inclusion of the socially included.

## Introduction

The development literature in recent years has seen the emergence of the concept of ‘social exclusion’, which focusses attention on the relational aspects of deprivation. Social exclusion may be regarded as intrinsic to deprivation or deprivation in itself. It could also be seen as instrumental in leading to other aspects of relative deprivation reflected in socio-economic disparities. Social exclusion in its multiple dimensions, also, provides a useful framework to capture the processes underlying group-level inequalities and poverty in a society. Seen from this lens, social and political participation is important for social inclusion, because deprivation is not just income poverty. Political engagement and social interaction are two lenses for accessing the inclusion of the socially included.

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Accordingly, to better understand why social inclusion is increasingly promoted and accepted as part of government policies and public services and the ways by which modern societies seek to achieve social and economic legitimization through ‘*inclusive governance*’ need to be better understood. Promoting inclusion, integration or cohesion has become a key part of the contemporary political agenda. In fact, an imperative need of social policy and governance around the world, including India, is not only to focus on tackling social ‘exclusion’ but also to move towards ‘inclusion’ by ensuring that citizens play a part in mainstream society and in their own development. The development agenda, today, therefore has a strong emphasis on citizen participation in governance reforms, not only through formal processes but also more in informal ways by which people influence decisions that affect them, and also their involvement in activities of community and in community mobilization.

At the same time, inclusive governance does not necessarily reflect a deepening of the modern democratic ideals of liberty and equality. Rather, it could be a measure to ensure that all subscribe to and accept a range of uncontested objectives, which, by default, does not recognize any other alternatives to tackling social inequalities, but that which is acceptable to the mainstream. It is, therefore, also important to take cognizance of the ways in which the ‘socially excluded’ develop their own social networks and strategies, not merely as a response to exclusion but also for their survival and development. It is, thus, important that governance processes adopt a more dynamic approach that provide spaces for the ‘socially excluded’ to have their own ways of tackling exclusion and working for their own development.

Two key theoretical debates influence this position:

- (i) The dominant neo-classical paradigm focusses on human well-being, assessed by the availability of disposable income or goods consumed, which is measured by the levels of utility achieved in the consumption of commodities (water, land or labour) and wherein social order emerges by the ways utilities and gains are maximized. Within this neo-classical paradigm, justice is assessed in terms of how and when the utility level of someone increases without a decrease in the utility level of another person.
- (ii) Second is the capability approach, which challenges the neo-classical understanding of human well-being as defined within the utility/commodity space, and which postulates human well-being as not so much in terms of what people are or do, but in terms of what they are *free* to be and do/what they are able to be and do—*being able to participate in the life of the community* (Sen 1999). This approach, by not specifying any particular good as being above others, and making individual freedom and pluralism as central to human well-being, provides the general framework for analysing individual advantage and deprivation in contemporary society within a set of ‘*functioning*’—the ‘functioning’ of the society/community; the ‘functioning’ of the state/government; and the ‘functioning’ of the market.

There is, thus, a need to focus attention on ‘institutions’. This will be a step towards better understanding that ‘social inclusion’ is not so much a matter of promoting individual capabilities but a matter of institutions (*structures*), of the state or the

society/community, that ensure living for good life (*human well-being*) and protection from human fallibilities.

## **Inequalities Intrinsic to Nation-States and Their Welfare Mechanism**

Nation-states play a pivotal role in the sustenance of today's modern world. The state guards our basic fundamental human rights by holding a monopoly over violence. Alongside it provides welfare measures to its citizens ranging from infrastructural, educational, health, telecommunicational and economic assistances through tax payer's money and other additional sources. It defends its citizens both within and outside its territorial area from external threats. Nation-states are at the heart of everyday struggle. Every issue that has had repercussions on a section of the society, such as religious minorities or tribals, in an unacceptable way needs suitable state interventions, along with change in social behaviour. Thus, it is essential to understand state machinery and its functioning, only through which can we attempt to remove social exclusion from all spheres. Alongside the nature of nation-state is such that it has the organizational structure strong enough to create symbols and diffuse those symbols into the society, that is symbols pertaining to certain values and beliefs that can be embedded into the society through religious institutions, publishing houses, schools and many more.

Today's state is an evolution of the organizational structure of the past. Our human society has evolved through various stages from hunter-gatherer to agricultural societies which inevitably lead to the industrial and post-industrial societies. Focussing on the evolution process from the hunter-gatherer society to that of the agricultural society, this particular evolution has led to major breakthrough and is indebted with the most influential characteristics prevalent in today's world, that is, the introduction of the conception of private property and accumulation of wealth. This conception of private property and accumulation brings in aspects of resource inequality. Accumulation of wealth requires an organizational structure whose basic purpose was to sustain conditions of protected living and sustenance of the societal structure. This essential political character of the agricultural society brought the then monarchic and self-governing settlements. The monarchic settlements were those settlements in which the merchant would pay the bandit to protect himself from the bandit and external sources. The bandit acts as both the sword and the shield. Self-governing were those settlements in which the merchants used their own time and resources to protect themselves and did not rely on anyone else. The resource inequality subsided into political or the then organizational structure since individuals and groups with animal resources and modes of agriculture dominated and made decisions regarding the organizational structure. Resource inequality gets transcended into other modes of inequality, be it social, economic, political and spatial inequalities. One lens for capturing intrinsic inequality and understanding who get excluded is to look at the

ways modern societies seek to achieve social and economic legitimization through ‘inclusive governance’ (Ryan 2007). Promoting inclusion, integration or cohesion has become a key part of the contemporary political agenda. An imperative need in social policy making of governments around the world, including India, is to not only focus on tackling social ‘exclusion’ but also to move towards ‘inclusion’ by ensuring that users of welfare services play a part in mainstream society and in their own development, rather than just being dependent on welfare services and benefits. Seen in this context, there is a strong emphasis on participation in governance reforms, not only through formal processes but also more in informal ways by which people influence decisions that affect them, and also their involvement in activities of community and in community organizing. At the heart of this are the distributional processes and welfare mechanisms to include the excluded.

## **Political Engagement and Social Interaction as a Tool to Study Social Exclusion**

There are existing researches on how group-based identities affect political processes, wherein distinctive groups adopt certain political identities. In this paper, we intend to highlight certain communities that are excluded/marginalized, and how the practice of marginalization is evident even in the sphere of political engagement and social interaction. Political engagement refers to the actions of individuals and groups which seek to influence or support government or political parties. Political engagement can be accessed through various civil activities such as voting, protests or movements. It has profound consequences for governance, policy selection and development outcomes (Khemani et al. 2016). Political engagement happens irrespective of the institutional governance structure (democracy, autocracy etc.). Social interaction, on the other hand, refers to the dynamic order of social actions between individuals or groups. These interactions form the basis for social structure and are a key object of basic social inquiry and analysis.

For instance, in India, according to Census 2011, scheduled caste has 16.2% and scheduled tribes had 8.2% proportion in the Indian population. The Muslims constitute 14.23% of the Indian population. But their social, political and economic engagement in the country’s development process and growth story is low.

The lack of engagement is a result of the inherited systemic processes and structures on which the Indian state and society has been erected.

## Inclusion of the Excluded Through Strengthening Institutions

Institutions are broadly defined under two literatures: first, according to the likes of Samuel P Huntington who refer to institutions as ‘stable, valued and recurring patterns of behaviour’, and secondly, we have Geoffrey M Hodgson who states that institutions that are ‘integrated systems of rules that structure social interactions’ (Hodgson 2015). Here institutions would be referred to as bodies or agencies that bring about interaction between various key stakeholders.

The inequalities present in our state and society are intrinsic to the existing order of norms, values and institutional setup. It is essential to focus on the institutions and their functioning. The institutional structure of the state is the very backbone of the state machinery. The institutions supervise and safeguard the state and its society. It is these institutions that act as a pillar, helping sustain democracy. We can take, here, the case study on the industrial growth policy of Japan highlighting the tremendous growth from being devastated in World War II to becoming the second biggest economy in the world by 1990s (Johnson 1982). The major reasons for such a growth were the cooperation of *Keiretsu* (manufacturers, suppliers, distributors and banks in a closely knit group), powerful enterprise unions, good relations with government bureaucrats and the guarantee of lifetime employment (Johnson 1982). Such an institutional structure supported both the economy and the state to sustain the society and its needs.

The institutional structure has to be re-oriented or its practices enforced in a manner that excluded groups get to participate in the mainstream. Political institutions should become more inclusive in giving participation to excluded communities. This would enable excluded communities to gain recognition and negotiate with the state and political forces with their claims. M. V. Nadkarni highlighted the process of broad-basing, through which increasing numbers of social groups enter the mainstream of social, political and economic activities, and progressively derive the same advantages that groups from the mainstream share (Nadkarni 1997).

It is, thus, important that processes for inclusion of the excluded adopt a dynamic approach that provides spaces for the ‘excluded’ to have their own ways of tackling exclusion and, working for their own development. In this regard, it is important for governments and governance processes to recognize that participation in/as part of ‘mainstream society’ is not the only possible response to ‘exclusion’, and that the people’s user and self-help movements have strengths and capacities that also need to be acknowledged. Two key theoretical debates influence this position.

This brings us to the following issues which underlie the concern in this volume for understanding inclusion of the excluded:

- The interconnectedness of human development and capability/freedoms that people have;
- Institutions as manifestation of power and as ‘structures’ of engagement through which the freedoms can be expanded;

- Democratic/participatory decision-making expressed through the institutions as an exercise of freedom in the community.

Institutions are of the fundamental nature that can mend the functioning of the society. The institution of public policy slowly creates a change in the values and belief system of the society. This change can be guided and monitored according to the results required.

## Organization of the Book

This volume raises discussions around these contested positions that underlie development discourse on social exclusion, and inclusion of the excluded. Contribution of scholars of different disciplines from India and the South Asia region discusses the emerging issues, looking at the system of participatory democracy; the governance structures, and the system openness and equality opportunities that exist therein; and the mainstreaming of concerns like diversity and attention to some strands of social exclusion such as caste and religion. The discussions in the book have been grouped along the following lines.

(i) The discourse of development and contextualizing social exclusion/inclusion, (ii) inequalities and politics of inclusion, (iii) democratic participation, and the role of state, institutions and representation processes, and (iv) policy interventions towards attaining inclusion through governance systems and opportunities for inclusion.

### (i) *The Discourse of Development and Contextualizing Social Exclusion and Inclusion*

The discourse surrounding development and social exclusion and inclusion revolves around multiple ideas, including resources and their allocation, structured inequalities, and influencers in decision-making. This section succinctly and comprehensively provides an understanding of social exclusion has gone far beyond per capita income to address various kinds of distributional concerns. Disaggregating the social exclusion concept, an expansive approach includes a broad range of social, economic and political conditions that affect human well-being. Contemporary development policy literature is replete with references to terms like 'inclusion', 'exclusion', 'mainstreaming' and 'marginalization' without a well-defined concept or measure for each of these terms. Of course, these terms pertain to the different distributional dimensions of the development process. The chapter by M. H. Suryanarayana provides a conceptual framework to define these dimensions in an integrated framework. It defines empirical measures for the corresponding outcomes to facilitate policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, with reference to the Indian experience.

The case of Sri Lanka, in the chapter by Siripala Tellambura Hettige, provides an interesting analysis of the continuing resistance on the part of the nationalist groups connected to the majority Sinhalese community to efforts aimed at finding a constitutional solution to the problem of national disunity. He argues that the

reproduction of exclusive ethnic identities through social and cultural processes, existing economic and policies that perpetuate gross social and economic inequities and the persisting gap between the centre and the periphery are the main reasons for this situation.

Looking at the spread of the concept of social exclusion/inclusion in Nepal, the paper by Om Gurung critically analyses and provides deeper understanding of Nepal's structural history, respect and recognition of social diversity, group identities, and representation of the excluded groups in the state politics, as key conditions to make the country an inclusive society.

## (ii) *Inequalities and Politics of Inclusion*

The next section in the volume presents a set of papers that articulate the fact that social exclusion lies at the heart of the processes that generate inequality among social categories. Existence from the effects of social exclusion, and therefore, inclusion, depends on the programmes and policy initiatives that create opportunities to bypass exclusionary conditions and processes. Taking cues from the experience of democracy in the region, the papers in this section argue that democratic institutional structures interact with exclusionary and inclusive process at various levels.

Looking at the case of Muslim community in India since independence of the country in 1947, the chapter by Anwar Alam argues that the lack of participation of the community in the development process of the country, in effect, negatively affects the choices and capabilities of the community to partake into the 'developmental goods'. This has partly emerged from the notion of 'Muslim politics', which pays heavy premium on the 'politics of identity' and 'security', and its imagination of Indian state system.

The chapter by Radu Carciumaru looks at constitutional reforms in post-civil war Sri Lanka, especially since 2015 with the Nineteenth Amendment and the setting up of the Constitutional Assembly, and explores the role of ethnicity in shaping the constitutional reform process in the country and the challenges it poses. It compares the Sri Lankan case study to constitutional designs in other plural (deeply divided) societies from South Asia, such as India and Nepal.

Continuing the discussion on the politics of inclusion, the next chapter by Madhushree Sekher and Suchandrima Chakraborty looks at how inequality and concerns of excluded get reflected in, and impact public policies. Looking at the institutional landscape of competing pressures that forms the core of the politics of public policy legislation in India, the chapter provides an analysis of formulation and provisioning of public services, and the consequent politics of inclusion, in the country.

## (iii) *State, Institutions and Representations*

Arguing that social exclusion is reflected in and perpetuated by the dominant social structure and the structures of opportunities that the excluded face, this section draws focus on the role of various agency and processes to include the excluded, the exclusions that can/may happen in this process. Viewing civic participation as a broad indicator of democratic culture in a contemporary society and as a testimony to a functional democracy in a country, the paper by Sk. Tawfique Haque and Md.



Akram Hossain addresses two research questions: (i) What is the level (in terms of both quantity and quality) of participation of Bangladeshi people in political activities? (ii) Does this participation vary across the demographic identity of citizens? The paper assumes that the intensity and quality of participation would vary across the demographic identity such as gender, religion, ethnicity, income, age and education. In this context, minority groups, disadvantaged and backward population might be left out from political engagement.

In their paper on democratic institutions in Sri Lanka's local-level politics, Shashik Dhanushka Silva and Mark Schubert explore the clientelistic nature of politics and practices in the country's local government that often either hinders inclusion or reproduces exclusion. In line with this context of governance and exclusion, the chapter by Allen Thomas explores the various manifestations of social exclusion that emerge from the interaction between state and society on the structural arrangements prevalent in nation-states. These structural arrangements highlight the governing principle and logic of the structures that preside over the various state institutions and society, leading to incidences of exclusion.

#### (vi) *Governance Systems and Opportunities for Inclusion*

This section vividly focusses on encompassing the various concerns of social exclusion and developing policy interventions in order to create a more inclusive society. The chapters in this section enumerate an analysis of various policy interventions and the outcomes, thereby pointing out to the fact that tackling social exclusion requires concerted and long-term efforts, not only through government initiatives that address issues of legal rights and distribution of resources but also governance processes that aim at changing attitudes and perceptions. Himanshu Jha, in his chapter analyses the Right to Information intervention in India. Adopting a political economy perspective, Seema Mallik, in her chapter argues that development strategies driven by heavy industrialization and mining, further increase the vulnerabilities of the poor, mainly tribals who are forest-dependent communities and face eviction due to such development strategies. In order to make development inclusive, government strategies need to be more socially embedded. Focussing on the working of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and the process of urban solid waste management, the chapter by Shailesh Darokar looks at the life of conservancy workers and highlights the challenges they face through a few narratives of the workers themselves. P. Geeta Rani and Jince Shajan, in their chapter, attempt to look at diversity through the lens of numerical representation of different social groups in professional higher education in India. Continuing with the argument being made in this section, the chapter by Mansi Awasthi examines the shaping of inequalities and opportunities through an analysis of the interplay of government and the institutions of interactions in the Indian province of Uttarakhand. It stresses that the spatial dynamics and experiences of the process of industrial transformation and inter-firm networks create a hierarchy of production, employment and space.

Focussing particularly on India and the Indian sub-continent, the book thus, discusses the multiple dimensions of social exclusion/inclusion seen in the region, to not only capture how 'social exclusion' is intrinsic to deprivation or deprivation in-

itself but also the processes of political engagement and social interactions that the socially excluded develop as strategies and networks for their growth/advancement. In the process, the volume attempts to grapple with the question of whether governance processes adopt a more dynamic approach to provide spaces for the ‘socially excluded’ to have their own ways of tackling exclusion? Thereby, the volume raises discussions around the contested positions that underlie development discourse on social exclusion and, inclusion of the excluded.

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**Part I**  
**Contextualizing Social Exclusion/  
Inclusion**