Inclusion and exclusion represent the two sides of citizenship’s coin. Whereas much of the literature on citizenship has traditionally focused on its inclusionary face, more radical contemporary writings tend to portray citizenship as a force for exclusion which creates non or partial citizens. Thus, some would argue that citizenship is an unhelpful concept in the development of a feminist political economy.

Exclusion and inclusion operate at both a legal and a sociological level through ‘formal’ and ‘substantive’ modes of citizenship. Formal citizenship denotes the legal status of membership of a state, as symbolized by possession of a passport. Substantive citizenship refers to the enjoyment of the rights and obligations associated with membership and sometimes simply legal residence. ‘Really existing citizenship’ is the term coined by Maxine Molyneux (Chapter 7 in this volume) to distinguish between how these rights can operate in theory and practice. At both the legal and sociological level, inclusion and exclusion represent a continuum rather than an absolute dichotomy. Thus, members of a society enjoy different degrees of substantive citizenship according to their positioning on a number of dimensions including class, gender, sexuality and ‘race’. Likewise, nation-state ‘outsiders’ stand in a hierarchy, from those admitted to full legal citizenship, through those with legal resident status, down to asylum-seekers and then ‘irregular’ immigrants. However, for those physically prevented from entering a territory, exclusion does operate as an absolute.

This chapter will discuss citizenship’s exclusionary tensions from the perspective of both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of the nation-state. In each case, it will suggest ways in which citizenship’s inclusionary face can be strengthened as the basis for arguing that citizenship does provide a feminist political economy with a helpful theoretical and political tool. In doing so, the chapter will draw on the two main citizenship traditions – liberal/social rights and civic republican – which construct citizenship respectively as a ‘status’ and a ‘practice’ (Oldfield, 1990). In conclusion, it will argue for a critical synthesis of these two traditions as part of a feminist
reconstruction of citizenship. Such a reconstruction involves a number of elements central to a feminist political economy and developed elsewhere in this volume, in particular: an internationalist approach and the interrogation of the binaries inscribed within the public–private divide and the opposition of structure and agency.

‘Insiders’

Exclusion

Within nation-states, the exclusion of women has been pivotal to the historical theoretical and political construction of citizenship. In classical times, men were able to fulfil their responsibilities as citizens in the public sphere because there were women and slaves to attend to their needs in the private sphere. Associated with and confined to the private sphere, women were deemed unfit for the responsibilities of active political citizenship. The citizen has been represented in political theory as the abstract, disembodied individual. Feminist theorists have exposed the ways in which this image has served to mask the very male citizen lurking behind it, and a white, heterosexual, non-disabled one at that. Citizenship’s bogus universalism has meant that women, black and minority ethnic groups, lesbians and gays, disabled and older people have represented the ‘other’, unable, in Anna Yeatman’s words, ‘to attain the impersonal, rational and disembodied practices of the modal citizen’ (1994: 84).

Although now officially accepted into the ranks of formal citizenship, the claims of women and other marginalized groups remain fragile. Women’s admission to citizenship has been on different terms to those enjoyed by men. Their ability to act as citizens in the public sphere continues to be constrained by their responsibilities in the private, with implications too for the rights they enjoy as citizens. Participation in the formal labour market and politics can be severely constrained by responsibilities for the care of children and older people. Without mainstream paid employment, access to social security rights as autonomous individuals is limited. The result can be economic dependency, which means that a woman’s relationship to social citizenship rights is mediated through her male partner who enters the public sphere in her name. Migrant women tend to be cast as economic and legal dependants, without separate public status under immigration laws, with implications for their rights of entry and subsequent citizenship rights. Homeworkers, employed in the isolation of individual homes, are, as Joanne Cook explores in Chapter 8, ill placed to fight for and to access employment and other rights.

Yet as in neoclassical economics, in traditional political thinking the public–private divide is treated as a rigid and fixed given, in which the two sides are completely separate. This underpins the very meaning of citizenship